



Dr. Calypso Reed has a knack for finding things. On the hunt for a priceless medallion in the rainforests of Peru, Cal is determined that her first solo expedition be a success. But she never counted on having hardheaded Nash MacClure follow on her heels, or expected the dark presence she feels watching her, waiting.

Nash can't get Cal out of his mind, or the night between them they never finished. Sent to watch out for her after her brother's premonition, Nash is determined to find out whether his feelings for Cal run as deep as he fears. But can he keep Cal safe long enough to make her see how right they are for each other?

Jungle Heat

By
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AUTHOR'S NOTE: This is a work of fiction. Names, characters places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to persons living or dead, business establishments, events or locales is entirely coincidental.

Chapter One

Hell no!

Calypso Reed shut off the overhead spray in the outdoor shower. She snagged the towel she'd brought along with her and managed to wrap it around her middle before he got within twenty feet of her.

No fucking way.

Cal glared at Nash McClure, his long strides devouring the distance between them. Cal didn't wait for him to reach her. She shoved open the neck-high door and stalked across the grass separating them. The angry pace carried her from the sheltered corner shower stall outside the lodge where the team was staying in until tomorrow morning.

She felt more than a dozen pair of eyes follow her as the surrounding archeologists, interns and a handful of others stopped what they were doing.

Cal didn't care. This was *her* expedition, her first time without her overprotective father or older brother hovering and she'd be damned if Nash was going to be their stand in.

Annoyance boiled into anger as she stopped in front of him. "What the hell are you doing here?"

Built like a Roman gladiator, Nash tended to intimidate people. From his six-foot plus frame to the wicked scar that hugged his cheek from ear to jaw, he tended to scare even his students. Cal found few men intimidating, even ones who towered over her, but something about Nash had always set her on edge. His dark eyes too easily pinned a person in place.

Which always made her more determined to remain unruffled by his presence.

Nash's heavy gaze slid up to meet hers, and instead of the customary frown she'd grown used to, he smiled at her. A lazy curving of his lips that made Cal remember the slow, easy feel of his mouth against hers.

"Nice to see you again, Dr. Reed."

Cal tugged her towel closer, a little too conscious of his attention dipping below her neck. Her insides warmed despite her annoyance, or maybe because of it. Nash McClure had a way of making her want him. Period.

"What are you doing here," she repeated, her voice as firm as she could manage without drawing more attention to them.

Nash tipped his hat back, the style a little too reminiscent of Indiana Jones, and grinned at her. "Maybe you should get some clothes on before we talk."

Cal cocked her head. "Am I making you uncomfortable?"

The frown she knew well clouded his face as he leaned forward. “Do you really want to know what you’re making me, right now?”

She didn’t move as he inched forward, forcing her to tip her head back to look him in the eyes. There was no way in hell she’d back up. “This is my expedition. So unless you’ve got a damn good reason to be here, I suggest you get your ass back in the Jeep and back to class.”

Although Nash appeared more content in front of a lecture hall packed full of students or colleagues, he looked damn good out of his suit. His brown hair was almost long enough to be considered shaggy, considerably longer since the Christmas party six months ago.

And before her thoughts could drift to the night that never was, Cal glanced past his shoulder and spotted Daniel behind him. Daniel and her father had been friends since attending university together. When her parents created the Avalon Foundation, Daniel went to work for them, following them around the world as they tracked down artifacts and lost treasures. He’d been out of the field for months, ever since his wife was diagnosed with cancer.

Daniel stepped up beside Nash, his smile warm and his gaze politely fixed on her face. “Good to see you, Cal.”

Cal slung an arm around his back in an awkward hug. “I didn’t know you were coming down here.”

“When Nash mentioned he was headed to Peru and your hunt for the Widow’s Medallion, I decided to tag along.”

Feeling Nash’s eyes bore into her, Cal focused on Daniel. “Yvette is doing well then?”

“Very well. She was sick of me underfoot and banished me down here for a couple weeks.”

“Remind me to give her a call and thank her.” Daniel’s arrival took the sting out of Nash’s appearance. Somewhat.

Across from her, Nash scowled. “Are you doing to get some clothes on?”

Offering up her most innocent smile, Cal glanced at him. “So *I am* making you uncomfortable.”

A firm hand encircled her wrist, dragging her away from Daniel.

Cal tried to rip her arm free. “Get your hand off me.”

“Why are you being such a pain in the ass?” Nash spoke through his teeth.

“Let...go,” Cal warned.

The corner of his mouth twitched. “Or what?”

His brown eyes flashed a second before she turned her back into his chest, gripped his upper arm and flipped him over her shoulder.

Somehow she managed to keep her towel intact, but suspected more than a few interns behind her got a good peek at her ass.

Cal didn't wait for Nash to get up from his sprawled position on the ground before she stormed towards the lodge.

There was no way in hell Nash McClure was staying.

* * * * *

From his spot on the ground, Nash concluded rather quickly he was an ass. Not because he'd provoked Cal, but because he'd watched her toss more than a dozen men to the ground in the eight years he'd known her and should have seen it coming.

Slightly annoyed, amused, and his ego only a *tad* bruised, Nash sat up. He watched Cal stalk towards the lodge and knew without a doubt Calypso Reed could take care of herself. Which led him to wonder what he was really doing here. Judging by the ache in his lower back he had to be a glutton for punishment.

Daniel leaned down and held out a hand. "Tell me again why you two aren't together?"

Nash didn't answer him as he stood, his gaze firmly planted on Cal's provocative form disappearing inside the lodge. If it wasn't for her brother's premonition she might be in trouble, he wouldn't be here at all. Most days he was content to teach and work with Cal's dad on special projects that came up, and not have to deal with her stubborn *my way or the high way* attitude. But standing here now, breathing in the heavy humid air, a restless energy hummed through him and he remembered how much he loved being out in the field.

And if he was being honest with himself, the trip gave him the opportunity to figure out whether or not his lingering hunger for Cal stemmed from their one reckless moment being interrupted, or because of something more.

When he and Daniel headed for the lodge, most of the onlookers pretended they hadn't witnessed her pitch him to the ground. Nash imagined the tale would make the rounds tonight among those too anxious to sleep knowing they headed into the rainforest in the morning.

Knowing she needed time to cool off before they talked again, Nash followed Daniel into the dining area set up in the lodge's great room. The lodge could hold up to fifty people, but given its location there was no electricity and only a handful of kitchen appliances used generators. The early evening sun made the kerosene lamps necessary, but lent to the casual atmosphere of those team members who already occupied the surrounding tables.

By the time they both filled their plates and sat down, Nash lost what little appetite he possessed. He pushed the food around on his plate until a door closed overhead. He lifted his head and watched Cal walk along the second story hall that overlooked the great room below.

She'd exchanged her towel for a pair of shorts that showed off her sculpted legs and a fitted shirt.

His erection pressed against his zipper.

Okay, so maybe the change in wardrobe did little to minimize his arousal.

At the bottom of the steps, Cal turned and their gazes collided. Nash sucked in a breath. The great room suddenly felt more like a closet and much too hot.

A voice called her name, and she glanced away before she joined a guy who waved her over to his table. Obviously a student-intern, the blond-haired guy Cal grinned at couldn't be more than twenty-one. Even still, annoyance flickered through Nash at the genuine smile Cal flashed at the kid. He had no right to be jealous. Aside from one hot and unfortunately interrupted night in his office at Avalon's head quarters in Athens last Christmas, there was nothing between them but a boatload of sarcastic comments.

He'd worked for the Avalon foundation since he was twenty-five. Cal had been twenty-two and carried a chip on her shoulder the size of Texas. She still did. Back then, he'd been too busy trying to impress Cal's father to let himself be distracted by those big blue eyes of her and the untamable blond hair she forever pushed out of her face.

But lately...

The sound of Cal's laughter rang out in the great room. Nash glanced towards the small group who joined her table as she leaned her head close to the student's. His gut clenched.

"I'll catch up with you later, Daniel." Nash dumped his untouched food in the trash and crossed to her table. He nodded politely, noticing Cal's assistant, Monique, among the group. The feline redhead licked her lips before she smiled at him.

Nash ignored the overtly sexual gesture and focused on Cal. "Can I talk to you for a second?"

Cal hesitated and he waited, half expecting her to say no. The student opposite her shot Nash a warning glance when she stood up. Nash paid no attention to the kid and preceded Cal out the hall. In front of her he couldn't stare at her ass, and he knew he would if given half a chance.

Figuring she might very well yell at him at some point, he led her towards the excavated ruins next to the lodge discovered more than fifty years ago. Nash leaned against the warm stones tucked into the lengthening shadows.

Cal crossed her arms, but said nothing.

For a moment Nash wished he'd been sent to look out for Cal's younger sister. His life would be much easier—less fun—but easier.

"I don't need a babysitter, Nash."

"Hey, I don't want to be here anymore than you want me here." Not exactly true, but he sensed she might flip if she knew he'd also come to see her. It didn't take a genius to figure out she purposely avoided him at every function since Christmas. In the past he'd been content to keep things the way they were, but things had changed...at least for him.

"My parents sent you?"

Nash resisted the urge to shiver against the nails-down-chalk-board tone. A touch shrill for her, but he didn't blame her. It would rub him the wrong way to know anyone might interfere with one of his expeditions too. "Yes."

She sighed, and then followed it up with a stream of curses that made him smile. He thought about letting her bitch for a while. Watching her rant amused him, but seeing as how there was plenty to talk about, he got to the point. "Jack had a premonition."

Cal averted her gaze and paced away from him, silent for a moment. "It can't be that bad or they would have made me go home."

"Jack couldn't pinpoint anything in particular, just that you needed someone watching your back."

Cal settled against the wall beside him, kicking a stone at her feet. "So that's why my parents sent you down here? They could have just called."

Nash wondered if she intentionally meant to stand so close to him. "Well they sent me instead." He turned so he faced her. Inches separated them.

She didn't lift her gaze from the ground. "And if I refuse to have you here?"

"What exactly is your problem with me anyway?" He certainly never invited the sarcastic barbs she lobbed at him on a regular basis for the last eight years. "I'm not here to take over."

"No, but you'll be in the way."

Nash leaned closer. "Afraid I'm gonna steal your glory?"

Her head snapped up, indignation shimmering in the deep blue depths. "No."

With a casual lift of his shoulders he said, "Then there is no reason we can't be professional about this."

"I'm still calling the shots."

"I wouldn't dream of trying to take over."

She eyed him doubtfully. "Just keep your distance." Her voice wavered.

Nash moved in, all but pressed her body into the wall at her back. "You didn't have a problem with my distance six months ago."

Cal flattened her palm against his chest. "Don't."

Nash backed off. This time. “Am I making you uncomfortable, Dr. Reed?”

For the second time that day he remained where he was, his attention firmly fixed on her behind as she whipped around and strode away. Again.

* * * * *

Someone had been in her room.

Nothing appeared out of place, even her notes remained in a neat pile on the table next to the small bed. Yet Cal couldn't shake the feeling someone had been in her room. Once she'd been old enough to understand her finely tuned gut instincts, she made a point to never ignore them.

Crossing to the window, she glanced outside into the fading light. Nash still leaned against the ruins, drenched in shadows. Whoever had been in her room must have seen her return to the lodge and left. Were they looking for something specific or just snooping?

Cal lifted the mattress and removed the copied contents of the 15th century journal the Avalon Foundation acquired a month ago. The brief sketch of the medallion and short journal entry beneath it was all she'd needed to get a general feel for the location of the solid gold piece. It took her nearly a week after she arrived in Cusco, Peru to pinpoint the best place to enter the dense jungle on the southeastern side of the Andes. Her particular gift for finding things, inherited from her father, proved to be as finicky as her hormones some days.

But the medallion was close, the humming vibe in her middle told her that much.

Nash's news about Jack's premonition had set her on edge. Her brother's own gift was remarkably dead-on most of the time, leaving her little choice but to be cautious from here on out. She wasn't about to call off the entire expedition, not when it had taken her months to convince her father she could lead her own team. And she couldn't start to second-guess the thirty people that made up her team as she hunted for the Widow's Medallion, certainly not before they even left the lodge.

Someone knocked on the door.

Cal left her notes on the bed and took her time answering. Dealing with Nash took more patience, determination and restraint than she remembered. She hadn't expected his arrival and did not look forward to spending the next couple of weeks with him on her heels.

She resisted the urge to roll her eyes when she discovered Eric on the other side, his eager grin downright puppyish. Not oblivious to the crush Eric had on her, Cal smiled back easily. He worked hard and never failed to make her laugh. As long as he understood nothing personal was

ever going to come from them working together, they would continue to get along fine.

“Feel like a walk?”

Cal shook his head, a yawn rising to the surface to make her refusal that much more credible. “I’m beat. Plus we’re all getting an early start. I don’t want you worn out by midday when we’re slugging our way through the jungle.”

“Your faith in me is staggering.” He bent his head. “Give me a minute. I need to recover from the subtle blow to my manhood.”

“Somehow I think you’ll recover.”

Eric clutched his heart, his lips curving in a goofy grin. “Well, night then.”

“Night.”

Cal shut the door and managed to get halfway across the room before another knock came. With another denial to Eric’s request on her lips, she opened the door.

Nash filled the space, looking far too comfortable as he leaned against the jamb. A trace of annoyance crossed his face. “Expecting someone else?”

He didn’t wait for an invitation and slid past her. She sandwiched her lips into a firm line and stopped herself from slamming the door. Barely.

Nash flopped down on the bed the way he might his own, and picked up the journal. “Want to fill me in?”

She shoved his feet off her bed. “Don’t try and tell me you came down here without knowing anything.”

He shrugged. “I read some, but this is your project and I’d like to know what you think.” He flipped through the pages. “I’m guessing you picked up a vibe from the book.”

Nash was one of the few people who knew about the unique talents her family possessed. While she took after her dad, her older brother inherited their mother’s gift—or curse—of premonition. Her younger sister on the other hand could read people’s auras.

Perhaps that was one of the reasons Nash continued to unnerve her. Ever since she and Nash had known each other the subject never came up between them, and she couldn’t help but wonder if he thought she was a bit of a freak.

Reaching forward, Cal flipped through the journal pages. “From this one.” She waited for him to skim the passage written by a Spanish Missionary hundreds of years before.

Nash tipped his head back after a moment. “Is it a coincidence El Dorado is also mentioned in this notation?”

“If you’re asking if I’ve picked up a vibe for the lost City of Gold. No.”

His shoulders slumped even though she knew he doubted the legends of the fabled city. Her father had the same reaction. Nash actually reminded her a lot of her dad, with one exception; her father, at his very core, was a treasure hunter, always about the thrill of finding the artifact. Nash on the other hand enjoyed figuring out the answers afterwards, who, where, when, why.

For years, she’d watched Nash get swept up into her father’s whirlwind expeditions. In the beginning she’d been jealous her father routinely chose Nash to go on a number of expeditions over her and then she simply got used to it.

“I’m assuming you haven’t mentioned El Dorado to everyone else?”

“And have every fortune hunter on our ass within twenty-four hours? No.”

“How far in do you think the medallion is?”

“Not sure. Best guess is ten to twenty miles. Give or take.”

“Total number of the team?”

“Thirty. Make that thirty-two now.”

Nash nodded thoughtfully, his attention shifting from the journal to her.

A flicker of something—desire?—flashed in his eyes.

“If you’re satisfied...” She nodded to the journal. “I’d like to go to bed now.” So she could stop thinking how good he looked stretched out in front of her.

“Why are you trying to avoid me?”

“Because I don’t like you hanging around doesn’t mean I’m avoiding you.” The lie dropped rather easily off her tongue.

Nash sat up and something in his posture pushed her senses into high alert.

“Funny, because I’ve had the distinct impression you’ve been avoiding me since Christmas.”

Cal didn’t say anything. One: She didn’t want to talk about that night. And Two: She hadn’t realized he paid enough attention to notice she’d been steering clear of him. She wasn’t quite sure what to do with that last bit of information.

“You do remember that night?”

Being half naked on his desk was hard to forget. “Well, I did have a bit of champagne that night.”

His shot her a deliciously crooked grin. “Yeah, a glass and a half gets me smashed too.”

Okay, so it had been just enough to make her give into the urge to touch him, let him touch her. The same urge she'd been battling for too many years.

"Is there a point to this conversation?" Her too-sweet tone didn't match the arms she crossed in front of her. And it sure as hell did nothing to stop the heat thickening her stomach under Nash's long, heated gaze.

He stood and moved towards her. The small room gave her no place to go.

Nash cornered her. "For six months, I've wondered what might have happened if we hadn't been interrupted that night."

"Did sex cross your mind at all?" Lots and lots of it.

His lazy smile deepened. "Sex for damn sure. But..."

The room felt way too hot and he was definitely too close. "But...what?"

He slid an arm around her, drawing her against his chest. His heart thundered under the palm she planted on his chest to push him away. For endless seconds his eyes clung to hers before he dipped his head. Hot and slow, his mouth devoured hers. For half a second she listened to the part of her brain that told her this was asking for trouble, then she told it shut the hell up, and let herself be sucked in.

His arms felt so familiar, so right. A soft moan lodged in her throat as he cupped her bottom and lifted her up against him. His arousal nudged her belly. Warmth burrowed deeper in her stomach and spread like lava sliding down a mountainside.

He groaned and flexed against her, his erection a spark to the hot ache simmering between her legs.

Slowly, Nash drew back, releasing her before taking a step back. "Have a good night, Cal." A cocky grin touched his lips. "Don't oversleep, wouldn't want to have to lead the team myself."

Cal stared as he walked out, just missing him with the pillow she snapped up and fired at the door at the last second. She snatched the other one off the bed, half hoping he'd be arrogant enough to pop his face back in. His laughter faded as his footsteps carried him down the hall.

No such luck.

Flopping back on the bed, Cal stared at the ceiling. Before her thoughts could center on where he'd be sleeping tonight, she smothered her face with the pillow.

She was seriously fucked.

Chapter Two

His palm slapped the door above her head, shutting it. "Don't go."

Cal didn't move. Her breath slid out as Nash crowded her back. He leaned in close and his mouth grazed her ear, his breath hot on her cheek. She let her eyes drift shut at the feel of his hard body pressed against hers. His hands moved to her waist, drawing her to his chest.

"We shouldn't," she began.

A sound somewhere between a groan and a growl rumbled up from Nash's throat. He whipped her around and pinned her between him and the door.

Dark, whiskey colored eyes swept over her face, pausing on her lips. "Why shouldn't we?"

"Because it could..."

Nash skimmed his lips along her jaw.

She curled her fingers into his shirt. "...complicate things," she finished on a whisper.

"To hell with complications." His mouth swooped down, caught and conquered.

Cal leaned into him, wanting to feel every inch of the athletic frame she'd spent so long yearning for. His tongue slipped past her lips and caressed hers in wide, hot strokes that made her stomach clench.

A hot palm splayed across her exposed lower back, the other moved up to her shoulder. His slid one finger under the strap of her dress and tugged. Nash pulled back long enough to hold her gaze, before he pushed the other strap down. The black strapless bra hid her breasts from him, but under his seductive gaze they grew warm and heavy, craving his touch.

Nash explored the side of her neck with slow, shivery kisses. "I've wanted to touch you for so long. Don't make me wait another second, Cal."

Cal swallowed past the tightness in her throat and gave a nod that could only be described as shaky.

It was all the encouragement he needed. He tipped her chin up and kissed her long and hard, as though he couldn't decide if he wanted to punish her for making him wait this long, or because he wanted to punish himself for taking so long to get around to it.

Her strapless bra hit the floor, replaced by a warm hand and teasing fingers. A moan trembled past her lips. Nash grinned and trapped a nipple between his thumb and finger. Lightning hot threads stretched within her.

A moment later his mouth replaced his hand. The tip of his teeth gently nipped before he swirled his tongue across the aching peaks and

sucked.

She buried her hands in his hair, squeezing her eyes shut at the delicious tension that whipped through her belly. Combined with the ache blossoming between her legs, there was little logic to be found to stop her from having what she wanted.

Nash.

Turning her around, he brought his mouth back to hers as he maneuvered them across his office. Her knees hit the back of the couch and they fell back together. Cal wrapped her arms around him, pulling him closer, the feel of his body an addictive weight she could easily get used to.

He hiked her dress up, trailed his hand along the outside of her thigh then moved to the inside. Her body instinctively arched against him, seeking more of the sensual contact.

Nash traced the edge of her panties. "Very nice."

One finger slipped past the thin barrier and stroked down. A strangled moan slipped past her lips.

"Not bad." He sank a thick finger deep inside her.

Locking her thighs around him, Cal moaned again, louder this time.

"Better." Nash skated a finger across her clit, and pumped into her again.

Her insides liquefied, her internal temperature rising at the exquisite invasion. She parted her legs, wanting so much more she could barely think beyond how good his hands felt on her.

"Still want me to stop?"

Cal bolted up in bed. The pounding continued and it took a minute to realize someone was at the door. She glanced at the blank display on her battery-powered alarm clock.

Shit.

Jumping out of bed, she crossed to the door and yanked it open. As expected, Nash stood in the doorway.

His lips parted in the trademark grin that haunted her dreams. "Morning, sleepy head. You planning on leading this team, or did you change your mind and want me to take over?"

He wasn't so annoying in her dreams. Cal started to shut the door.

He planted a hand against it, preventing her from slamming it in his face. The gesture reminded her of the last images from sleep still hovering close to the surface. Her body warmed all over again.

His dark eyes raked down the front of her before he glanced suspiciously past her into the room. "If I didn't know better, I'd say you didn't spend the night alone."

Cal glared at him, but she didn't know who she was more annoyed

with, him for acting like he had a right to know who she spent her time with, or herself for letting her thoughts be a little too transparent. “What business is it of yours who I spend the night with?”

A muscle ticked in his jaw. She knew that look and might have taken a step back if she wasn’t used to it by now. Or if she wasn’t a bit too preoccupied studying the full mouth that consumed hers only moments ago in her dream. Memories from a night she seemed helpless to forget.

In less time than it took her to blink, Nash’s tough guy expression dissolved, replaced by a blatant hunger she also recognized.

This time she did take a step back.

Nash cocked his head, the corner of his mouth hitched up. “Dreaming of me, huh?”

“You wish,” she snapped, then quickly realized her mistake. His comment had been merely a shot in the dark, and her defensive tone no doubted proved his guess wasn’t too far off the mark.

She tried closing the door again. Nash didn’t budge.

“I’d like to get dressed now.”

His gaze dipped to the low neckline of the tank top she’d slept in. “You look pretty good to me.”

“Nash,” she began.

He took a step into the room, his intentions clearly stamped on his face.

Cal held up a hand. He brushed it aside, but she held her ground. “We’re late and we—”

“Can’t?” he supplied, as he bent his head.

She wanted to stop him, knew she should tell him to get out, but something about him standing this close...

His arm came around her waist. “Cal?” His deep voice sank into her skin.

She made the mistake of glancing up at him. Not a mistake exactly. She knew she wanted to kiss him. Unfortunately, she also knew nothing would ever come from starting something between them. They were too different. She’d drive him crazy within a week. A month tops. Neither of the past three relationships she’d stupidly attempted had survived past a month.

Nash’s lips caressed her jaw. “Do you want to kiss me, Cal?”

She closed her eyes, turned her mouth towards his. “Are you looking for permission?”

He trapped her bottom lip between his. “I just need to know you want it as much as I do.”

She bunched his shirt between her fingers. He turned his attention lower, teasing his way down her neck to her collarbone.

“I’d say it’s rather obvious.”

Nash trailed up the other side as his hands cupped her bottom and rocked her against him. “Oh, would you. Obvious to you or to me?” He lowered his mouth back to hers.

“Dr. Reed?”

Cal leaned past Nash and spotted Eric hovering in the doorway they’d foolishly left open.

Perfect. Just the kind of headache she needed. As if her and Nash’s little display yesterday hadn’t given them all something to talk about. “I’ll be right down.”

Eric didn’t move. “I was hoping to talk to you for a minute.”

“Give me a second, Eric, and I’ll be right down. We can talk then.”

For moment Eric didn’t move. Nash tensed, and she gripped his arm, half expecting him to tell Eric to get lost.

Nodding, the intern turned and disappeared down the hall.

Cal closed her eyes and thought about leaning her head on Nash’s chest, if only for a minute. Instead, she backed out of his embrace, and shook her head. “I won’t have the team gossiping about us. We can’t do this. Not here, not... Strictly professional from now on.”

The same dark frown clouded his face, but he nodded grudgingly. “I’ll see you downstairs.” The door clicked shut behind him.

Cal allowed herself just a moment to remember how good it felt in his arms, how good his mouth felt...

She banished the thought from her mind before it could fully take root. There would be time enough for that kind of thinking later. Dressing quickly, Cal gathered the rest of her things and crammed them into her pack. She tucked the journal into a side pocket she could access easily. Just touching the book set the vibe humming inside her. It wouldn’t be long until she got her hands on the medallion.

Cal paused at the door. Apprehension slithered down her spine. Easing the door shut, she headed down the hall, but in the back of her mind she wondered if whoever had been in her room last night had tampered with her alarm clock.

And did they plan to tamper with anything else?

* * * * *

Thick humid air clung to him like a second skin.

Nash smiled. His muscles were pleasantly tired from trekking through the jungle for most of the day. God, he’d missed this. Not even the fact that Cal barely spared him a glance since this morning could put a dent in his good mood. He had been mildly annoyed after her “strictly professional” order earlier, but after thinking about how easily she responded to him, both last night and again this morning...

“Earth to Nash.”

The feminine voice made him want to cringe. “Monique,” he said politely, acknowledging Cal’s assistant with a nod. Only a few times did he and Monique cross paths, which always suited him just fine. Something about the slick redhead left him uneasy.

“Thinking about getting back to class already?”

Nash scanned the team ahead of them. He caught sight of Cal near the front. “Not quite.”

She inched closer. “I’m glad you joined the expedition.”

Something in her tone reminded him of a cat stalking a canary.

“A man of your abilities is a real treat to have around, you know.”

He shifted his attention to the petite woman beside him. “I’m just here to help Dr. Reed.”

Monique took another step towards him. “Well, I’m sure I speak for her when I say how much we appreciate that.” She raised a hand.

Nash caught her wrist before she could touch his chest.

“Could I talk to you?” Cal’s sharp voice sliced through him. “Now.”

Monique ducked her head and rejoined the team plunging through the dense foliage a short distance away.

Nash groaned inwardly and glanced at Cal. Her blank expression did nothing to reassure him she wasn’t pissed.

“I thought you might want to take the lead.”

Nash looked over his shoulder at no one in particular, then back at her. “I’m sorry. Are you talking to me? I thought I heard you ask if I wanted to take over.”

Cal rolled her eyes. “If you can stop flirting with my team, then yeah, I’d like you up front.”

“I wasn’t flirting with Monique.”

Frowning, Cal stared at the surrounding jungle.

“What’s wrong?”

She shook her head. “Nothing.”

Nash didn’t believe her. “Still feeling the mojo?”

Cal raised a brow, a hint of a smile teasing her lips. “Mojo?”

He shrugged. “Whatever you call your built in radar. You still *feel* the medallion?”

“Yeah.” She stared out at the jungle again, distracted.

Nash opened his mouth to ask her what was on her mind, but she strode away from his first.

* * * * *

Nash stepped from his tent and stretched, noticing few remained around the closest fire, most having already retired for the night. He knew he asked for trouble by heading to Cal’s tent, but his insides were too wired to sleep. Although, there was a good chance talking to Cal would only make him more tense. She could be damn stubborn if she

wanted to be, and if she meant to keep things professional between them, it might take a lot of convincing to get her to back down.

In front of him, Cal climbed out of her tent and headed for the small group seated around the fire. “Kevin, get that damn tarantula out of my tent, would you?”

She nodded at Nash in passing and kept right on going.

Nash stared at her back before jogging to catch up with her. “Hold up a second.”

She shot him an impatient look. “What?”

Words deserted him. He had nothing specific to talk to her about, and he couldn’t seem to grasp a suitable subject that wouldn’t sound lame.

“Eric,” he said finally. Maybe not the wisest topic of conversation, but he could have done worse. He could have brought up Monique hitting on him repeatedly all day.

Her brows scrunched together. “What about him?”

“He’s got a thing for you.” Nash hoped to hell he didn’t sound as jealous to Cal as he did in his own head. The intern in no way threatened him. He didn’t even know what possessed him to mention Eric at all really.

Cal laughed and started walking. “Not a whole lot gets past you, huh.”

Nash quickly fell into step with her as they moved to the edge of the campsite, away from those still up. “He’s not giving you a hard time is he?”

“Why? Thinking you might set him straight if he was?”

“Is he?” Nash gripped her elbow, bringing her up short.

“No.” Cal glanced pointedly to where he held on to her. “But if he was, I’d take care of it.”

He released her. “Of course you would.” The words came out with a distinct annoyed quality clinging to them.

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Just that everyone knows Calypso Reed doesn’t need anyone’s help.”

She propped a hand on her hip. “Exactly what is your problem?”

Good question. Nash stared down at her. *Screw it.*

Nash hauled her to him, silencing any protest she might have made with his mouth. He almost groaned at the sinful feel of her mouth beneath his, and when she parted her lips, he accepted the invitation, and deepened the kiss.

Her hands fisted in his shirt as she kissed him back with the same intensity that nearly caught him in a chokehold last night.

Abruptly, he pulled away. “If you want to finish that, you know

where to find me.” Hoping he wouldn’t be kicking himself in the ass within the hour, he left her behind him. She didn’t follow him and by the time he reached his tent, his mood had turned foul.

Nash jerked the zipper down on his tent and slipped inside. Immediately he knew he wasn’t alone and snapped on the battery-powered lantern at his feet.

A telltale sprout of red hair peeked out from the top of his sleeping bag.

Well fuck.

* * * * *

Cal stared at Nash’s back as he all but stormed away. Clutching the journal to her chest, she turned back to the face the dark jungle surrounding them before she didn’t something really stupid and went after him.

A shiver curled up her spine and she glanced around, searching the darkest shadows for what made the hair on the back of her neck stand at attention. Instinctively, she took a step closer to the camp behind her. It wasn’t wise to venture far from the fire, but she’d needed space. Between the medallion, Nash, and the niggling in her gut she couldn’t shake, she felt overwhelmed.

Nash.

Why couldn’t she manage to push him out of her mind? She couldn’t afford to have her attention divided. She needed to concentrate on the expedition. The team was counting on her to lead them to it. And instead, she’d spent the majority of time since yesterday trying to sort out exactly what Nash’s presence did to her.

Maybe...

No. That would be a truly stupid, *beyond stupid*, idea.

She glanced in the direction of his tent. Maybe it wasn’t. Maybe the only way to shake the itch for him was to scratch it. One night. Then maybe she might be able to sleep without fear of his image interrupting her rest. By tomorrow they could be past this charged sexual tension that vibrated in the air between them, and could get down to business and find the medallion.

The more she thought about it, the more it made sense. So much so that she reached his tent before she could convince herself that sleeping with him could wind up making her crave him more instead of less.

At this point, with erotic images of her and Nash locked in naked, tangled positions, nothing would stop her from telling him exactly how much she wanted him.

Unzipping his tent, Cal got halfway inside, and came to a dead stop.

Chapter Three

Unable to meet Nash's eyes, Cal took a seat next to him. "Morning." She felt Nash stare at her, and when he didn't say anything, she lifted her gaze to his. "What?"

His eyes narrowed suspiciously. "You're talking to me?"

Her jaw dropped. "You know, you're right. I *am* talking to you. Quick, feel my forehead. Do I have a fever?"

He rolled his eyes at her sarcasm.

She shrugged. "If you'd rather, I can go have breakfast with Eric." She only managed to get halfway to her feet before Nash snagged her wrist.

Warm brown eyes pleaded with her. "Don't go."

Mistake. The word ricocheted through her mind. She shouldn't have sat down, but she hadn't wanted things to be awkward between them after last night.

Nash slowly released his hold on her wrist and she sat down, but her skin stayed warm from the contact. It also made Cal question everything she thought she finally worked out in her head during the last few sleepless hours. But right now insisting they keep things professional between them until they at least found the medallion seemed the farthest thing from her mind.

He studied her carefully, crossing his arms in a gesture that made her wary as much as it made her want to feel those arms wrapped around her. "I figured after you stormed away last night, I'd have to corner you to get you to listen to me."

Cal snorted. "I did not storm away." Not exactly.

"Yes, you did."

"I just walk fast." Spotting Monique curled up in Nash's sleeping bag had caught her off guard. Plus she hadn't felt like sticking around after first raking Monique over the coals—in front of Nash no less—for her lack of professionalism, and then again before Monique slipped inside her own tent. No doubt Monique would be raw with her when she finally showed her face this morning.

Nothing like working with a pissed off assistant.

And people wondered why they shouldn't get involved with co-workers. It complicated the hell out of everything. Looking at Nash, his hair still mussed from sleep, his jaw unshaven, she reminded herself she'd chosen to heed her own advice.

She wanted to blame Nash for all of it, for making her think there was something between them worth exploring. Maybe there was, maybe

there wasn't. Either way, her first solo expedition wasn't the place. She'd planned to tell him exactly that when she first sat down. Now as she watched him stare at her with those bottomless whiskey colored eyes that dropped to study her mouth, she couldn't seem to get the words out.

"Still pissed?"

"I wasn't pissed." After her initial shock of discovering Monique in his bed and Nash's immediate defense of things not being as bad as it looked, she'd simply turned and walked out. Not until they both rushed to catch up to her to *explain* the situation did she realize how much the idea of finding them like that bugged the hell out of her.

She wanted to be indifferent about the whole thing since there was nothing between her and Nash but a handful of kisses and one half finished evening months ago. Her own frustration over how much she cared who he slept with prompted her to take a strip off the two of them before she got her emotions under control. Cal wasn't sure precisely what she said in the heat of the moment, but having had time to process it all since then, she did believe both of them that it was huge misunderstanding, much to Monique's disappointment.

Nash arched a doubtful brow.

"I was mildly annoyed," she admitted. Maybe a touch more than mildly, but the woman had been naked in Nash's sleeping bag. Six hours ago that was where she had planned to be.

Grinning, Nash leaned forward. "Your nose turned red."

"What?"

"Your nose. Lit up like Rudolph's."

She gave him a blank look. Her nose did not turn red. Her nose only turned red when she was really ticked. If she'd been really ticked off, the whole camp would have known about it.

"As in the Reindeer," Nash added, the trace of humor in his voice not lost on her.

Cal sighed. "I know who Rudolph is, but my nose did not turn red."

"Have you seen your face when you're mad?"

"My nose... Never mind. I just wanted to talk to you about—"

"Good morning." Daniel sat down beside her. He glanced skyward at the thick clouds that trapped the humidity between them and the ground. "Think the rain will hold off a few more hours?"

Distracted, she mumbled, "One can only hope."

"I think we're getting close." Daniel sipped from his thermos cup.

Nash winked at her. "What do you think, Cal? We getting close?"

"Not when we're sitting around here." She stood up. "Time to get everyone moving."

Nash opened his mouth, but Cal cut him off. The last thing she needed was him saying something in front of Daniel, who would then

pass any interesting tidbits on to her Dad. It would turn into the Spanish Inquisition from there.

“Wait a second, Cal.” Nash stood up.

She didn’t wait for him and shot over her shoulder, “I have some things to take care of. We’ll talk later.” She rushed on, not giving him a chance to catch up.

Damn it, he was turning her into a coward.

As she crossed the temporary camp already being packed up, she felt his eyes bore into her back. She wanted to wish he hadn’t shown up. But then she’d have to take back those few stolen moments when his mouth made her remember all too clearly how much she wanted him.

A headache sprouted and began to throb between her temples. Cal absently massaged the back of her skull, annoyed at the less than stellar start to her day. So much for improving on things from last night.

Not paying attention to where she walked, she slammed into Kevin.

The critter-savior and translator steadied her, then hastily stepped back. “In a rush?”

“Yes. No.” Cal sighed. “Who the hell knows?”

Kevin’s bouncy laugh normally drew a smile from her and this morning was no exception.

He nodded towards Nash. “So what’s the story with you two anyway?”

“We’re just..”

“Colleagues,” Kevin supplied. He shook his head, his grin widening. “Monique and I are colleagues. You and Nash are something else.”

“Yeah, well, when you figure out what that something is let me know, would you?” Cal grinned and returned to her brisk pace to get back and finish packing the rest of her stuff up. She needed to focus on what she’d come here to find.

The Widow’s Medallion.

At the thought, her insides tightened in the familiar hum. But beneath the telling vibe that had stayed with her ever since her arrival in Cusco, she continued to feel an increasing edginess that had nothing to do with Nash or the medallion.

* * * * *

“You guys smooth things out since our unexpected arrival?”

“I’ll let you know.” Nash glanced from Daniel towards Cal, missing the tree branch Daniel had shoved out of his way. It smacked Nash in the face.

He swatted it aside. “Damn it.”

Daniel chuckled. “You’re falling apart, aren’t you?”

Nash scowled at him.

“Hey, it happens to the best of us at one time or another.”

“Is that supposed to make me feel better?” Nash stretched as the group spread out in the small clearing. The trees thinned here giving them a chance to rest since they set out three hours earlier. Off to the right, the ground sloped away. Nash caught a glimpse of water through the vegetation that covered the steep bank.

Daniel’s short bark of laughter might have irritated him if he hadn’t caught Cal staring at him.

Daniel shot him a sidelong look. “What the hell are you waiting for? That’s as good an invitation as you’re gonna get from that one.”

“Right.” He didn’t make a move. Something in her eyes this morning made him wary. He’d expected her to be annoyed with him. In some ways her calm attitude when she sat down next to him was worse than had she walked up and decked him.

“Well, if you don’t, he’s going to.” Daniel motioned to where Eric strode towards Cal. Moving just slow enough not to raise too many eyebrows, Nash reached Cal first. He didn’t give her time to acknowledge Eric, and snagged her wrist, pulling her away from the others, closer to the embankment. “How about we finish that talk?”

She didn’t fight him, but she blue eyes were hesitant. “Now is not a good time.”

“About last night,” he began.

Cal cocked her head. “Didn’t we cover this already?”

Nash frowned. “No. You escorted Monique back to her tent and then vanished.”

She crossed her arms. “You were expecting me to come back after finding another women in your tent?”

“I was hoping.”

Her eyes shrank to mere slits. “Men.”

Obviously not the brightest thing to say. Put him in a room full of archeologists and he had no trouble talking about any field or classroom related subject. Give him five minutes with Cal and he was damn near destined to say something to piss her off.

She spun away from him, close enough to the edge of the slope to make him nervous. “Watch your step.”

He dragged her a few inches away before she dug in her heels. “Stop worrying about me. I can look after myself.”

“I didn’t invite her to my tent, Cal.”

She sighed. “I know.”

Then why did he hear some invisible “but” in there somewhere? Nash took a slow, measured step towards her. “There’s only one woman I want in my bed.”

Her gaze heated then slid away. "I... It's just that..."

"Just what?"

A hint of impatience brought her face back to his. "Let's just focus on finding the medallion."

"And forget about us," he snapped.

Her spine straightened. "What us?"

"Don't play games with me, Cal." He took another step towards her. This one deliberately meant to put her on edge.

"I'm not playing games." Her voice lacked its usual bite. "So you've kissed me a few times and felt me up once. I'd hardly say that constitutes as an 'us'."

A faint glimmer of some emotion he could only identify as uncertainty haunted her eyes before she looked away. Calypso Reed made it a habit to stare down just about everyone she met. The fact that she could only hold his gaze for a few seconds at a time, gave him a spark of hope.

"Cal?" He reached for her hand.

"Don't." Although razor sharp, her voice still trembled. She jerked away from him. "I can't think straight when you touch me."

"If you'd stop being so damn stubborn—"

Nash didn't get to finish that thought.

Cal lost her footing, and her surprised cry shoved his heart into his throat. Half turning, she reached out to catch herself. She snagged the front of his shirt at the same moment she slipped down the muddy bank.

Unfortunately, she took him with her.

* * * * *

Adrenaline slammed through her system as Cal raked her hands down the damp earth. Branches and vines slipped through her fingers or snapped as she fought to slow herself down. Her behind skidded and bounced, jarring every bone in her body as she fought for stability.

The ground disappeared beneath her, and one last time she reached out and snagged something.

Nash.

Gripping tight to his ankles, she jolted as they came to a swinging stop.

Pulse racing, Cal chanced a glanced down. They dangled thirty feet above a lake. She vaguely registered the pounding of a nearby waterfall over her thundering heart, but focused solely on clinging to Nash. Dragging in a breath, she tipped her head back to see him gripping a vine no less than two feet from the edge of the muddy bank.

"You okay?"

Was he kidding? "No."

She felt herself slipping and fought to readjust her grip.

“Stop wiggling.”

Cal glared up at him. Did he not see the position she was in?

“Nash? Cal?” Daniel’s voice carried though the above trees.

“We need rope. Now,” Nash yelled.

The muscles in her arms burned.

“Hold on. They’re coming.” She heard the strain in Nash’s voice.

The burning in her arms turned into cramping. “I don’t think I can hold on much longer.” She gritted her teeth, refusing to look down again to confirm there weren’t sharp rocks waiting beneath them.

“Can you climb up me?”

Had he knocked his head against a tree branch on the way down?

“Do I look like Lara Croft to you?”

“Who?”

Desperate to avoid the drop to the water below, she inched her grip higher, but felt the fabric sliding. “You’re not wearing a belt are you?”

“Forgot to pack one,” he gritted out.

A fiery ache sank its teeth into her arms. “Nash.”

“Hold—”

The vine snapped.

Cal dropped straight down. Dark water swallowed her, sucking her deeper. Her pulse roared in her ears like a runaway train and she kicked frantically towards the surface.

She came up sputtering. Treading water, she scanned the surrounding water. “Nash?” She circled around. “Nash!”

A second later his head crashed through the surface. Relief slid through her.

“Cal?”

Cal tipped her head back and spotted Daniel perched at the edge of the bank overhead, a rope tied around his waist. “You two okay?”

Again, not really. “If you mean alive, then yes.”

“Well, get the hell out of the water. We’ll hike down to you both.”

Cal didn’t wait to hear Nash’s response before she forced her tired muscles into action long enough to swim to shore. Spent, she collapsed on the ground.

Nash sank down beside her. “You—”

She slapped her hand over his mouth, cutting him off. “If you ask me if I’m okay again, I’ll have to hurt you.”

A sexy half grin touched his lips as she dropped her hand, then flopped on her back, her tired muscles too exhausted to do anything but be limp for a couple of minutes.

His relieved gaze took her in from top to bottom. “All in one piece anyway.”

“So it seems.” Cal didn’t want to think about how scared she been for that one moment she’d been alone in the lake without him in sight.

He glanced back at the muddy ridge they’d fallen from. “Quite the drop.”

She flung an arm over her eyes. “I’m trying to suppress it.”

Nash inched closer. “Same way you’re trying to suppress how you feel about me?”

Groaning inwardly, Cal moved to sit up, much to her body’s protest.

Nash rolled over, pinning her beneath him. “Don’t move.”

Cal set her hands on his shoulders, but didn’t apply any pressure. “Get off me, Nash.”

“Why are you so determined to push me away?”

“When I push, you’ll know it.” She did shove at him this time as she squirmed to free herself.

“Jesus, Cal. Would you just stop for a minute.”

“We’ve been over this.”

“No. You’ve been over this.”

Why couldn’t she make him understand? “I didn’t come down her to start anything with you or anyone else.”

“Well I did.”

Cal stilled, taken aback by the tenderness in his gaze. “Nash,” she began without knowing what to say.

He stared at her mouth and his expression quickly turned hot. “I’m going out of my mind. If I don’t...” He bent his head.

Slow and hot, his mouth slid over hers. One by one her cells electrified under the simmering contact. He molded his palm to her cheek and angled her head back, deepening the kiss.

Nash leaned into her and his erection nudged her thigh. Heat zipped straight to her core. On a moan that slid up from some deep, carnal place within her, Cal brought her arms up and caged them around his neck. So many thoughts rushed through her mind she couldn’t make sense out of any of them but one.

She was falling for him.

Had been since Christmas. Maybe before then. He was everything that drove her crazy, and at the same time, everything she longed for on some level she hadn’t even wanted to acknowledge.

His lips moved from her mouth to her jaw and then down her throat. He edged a hand under her shirt, his palm hot against her wet skin. The tips of his fingers grazed her breast and all the invisible threads inside her pulled tight.

Nash unbuttoned her shirt.

“We—”

He covered her mouth with his hand. "If you're about to say we need to stop, I'll have to hurt you."

She smiled. "But the others..."

Feather-light, he dropped a kiss on her stomach. "Won't be here anytime soon. They have to trek all the way along the ridge until they can find a way down here." He smoothed a hand down the center of her chest then cupped her breast. "Might as well amuse ourselves until they get here." His thumb circled her nipple then rubbed the erect tip through her bra.

Cal closed her eyes at the shivery sensations that lashed through her.

His mouth returned to hers, more intense this time, more demanding. She parted her legs, cradling him between her thighs. Nash pushed against her, his cock full and hard.

The front clasp on her bra allowed him to easily undo it. He bent his head and sealed his lips over her nipple. Gentle swipes of his tongue came first, then he sucked it deep into his mouth with slow wet tugs. His hand caressed her other breast, rolling the aching tip between his thumb and forefinger.

He switched to the other, and with one hot pull on her nipple, he turned his attention south, trailing past her waist. No inch of skin went unexplored before Nash cupped her intimately.

Her sex clenched. Aching for him now, Cal couldn't resist grinding into his hand before she reached between them and gripped his arousal through his pants. His deep moan echoed in her ears as he rocked against her palm.

Bolder now, she undid his pants and delved inside to stroke the smooth length. She rounded the head before taking hold and shuttling her hand from base to tip.

Nash sucked in a breath, and with a fierce look of need on his face, he caught her hands and pinned them above her head.

"If you keep that up, this is going to be over too quickly."

"How so?" Cal teased. Her laughter quickly faded when he unbuttoned her pants and slipped inside to trace the edge of her panties, following the simple cotton trim down to where she burned for him the most. All the heat in her body stampeded straight to her core the second he stroked down her cleft and parted the damp flesh to find her clit.

With bone-melting precision, Nash circled and stroked the slick knot until the pleasure was almost too much to stand.

He pumped a finger inside her.

"Nash," she cried out, sinking her fingers into his shoulders.

"Not enough?" he whispered. He withdrew and pushed in again, harder this time. Over and over, he glided his fingers in and out, slow

enough to make her beg for more, then faster until she thought she'd go out of her mind with the intense pleasure of it.

He pulled back.

"You can't stop now," she panted out. Her entire body dangled on the edge of release.

Nash flashed her a decadent grin and moved down her body, replacing his hand with his mouth. His tongue swept across her clit like hot silk. She rolled her hips upwards. He swirled back and forth, the carnal rhythm drifting from thorough to pillaging.

Cal tunneled her fingers into his hair, and when he buried two fingers deep inside her as his tongue stroked her clit, she imploded. Sweet spikes of release raked over every never ending.

Her whole body started to hum.

Cal's eyes snapped open.

Above her, Nash paused. "What's wrong?"

Ignoring him, Cal tried to see behind her.

Nash lifted his head and scanned the surrounding jungle. "Holy shit." He stumbled to his feet.

The tingling in her stomach now pounded through her blood.

The Widow's Medallion was close.

Reaching a hand down without looking at her, he helped her up. Cal hastily righted her clothes as she followed Nash, searching for what she felt and what Nash had obviously seen.

"Here." Nash tugged away a tangle of vines and Cal caught sight of the stone carving. The stone wall was overgrown with vegetation, but Nash ripped them away.

He traced a finger over the carving. A wide grin curved his lips. "Viracocha."

The Inca Creator God.

Cal threw her arms around Nash as the euphoria took hold. She leaned up and kissed him hard and fast, then gestured to the wall and smiled at him. "So how about a boost?"

Chapter Four

The stream of light from her flashlight blinked on and off. Cal slapped the handle. "I can't see a damn thing." Someone behind her shifted their light to illuminate the tight passageway in front of her.

Nash bumped against her back. He gripped her hips, his mouth hovering near her ear. "Problems?"

"No." At least not any that she wanted to discuss with him at the moment. Before the others trailing behind them could read anything into the firm grip Nash had on her, Cal eased away from him. Under the pretence of studying the temple's stone walls for any markings that might give some clue about the location of the medallion, Cal tried not to be so aware of the small space and the rather large man crowding her.

"This way." Cal gestured down the stone hallway to their right.

Nash sighed. "We've been digging around here for hours, it's dark outside by now, lets call it a night and start fresh in the morning.

"If you're tired, go to bed. I'm going this way." Frustration edged into her voice. She started to apologize for snapping, then pressed her lips together. She was the one calling the shots on this expedition, and she wasn't ready to quit yet. On top of hardly sleeping, she couldn't stop thinking about Nash at least once every ten minutes, and after spending the last three days at the ruins of an Inca village, they still hadn't found the medallion.

Nash faced the few members of the team who had ventured into the temple with them. Others were already at work on other areas of the Inca site. Her father had been ecstatic when she called him on the satellite phone and filled him in. The last forty-eight hours had been spent working herself to exhaustion as they explored ruins that hadn't seen another living soul walk through them in a few hundred years.

Eric straightened. "I'll be glad to accompany you further, Dr. Reed."

Cal cringed inwardly hearing the trace of hopefulness in his voice. The longer the expedition lasted, the more difficult it became to ignore his crush on her.

"That won't be necessary." Nash took the extra flashlight Daniel offered and switched it with the unreliable one Cal carried. "The rest of you can go relax for the evening."

She half expected Eric to protest. In the last two days she hadn't failed to notice the increasing tension between him and Nash. They acted like two stallions butting heads over a mare. She had better things to do than stand there and watch them act like either one of them had any kind of claim on her.

Cal headed down the dimly lit corridor, hoping it might finally lead them to the medallion.

Within a few seconds, she felt Nash on her heels. She glanced over her shoulder to make sure Eric hadn't chosen this moment to be stubborn. She sensed it was inevitable and that he would soon step over the line if she didn't set him straight. In the morning she'd talk to him.

"You should talk to him." Nash's quiet voice echoed off the walls.

She rolled her eyes. "I think you're handling him just fine." The sarcasm in her voice was deliberate, but she wasn't fully prepared when Nash grabbed her arm and brought her to a stop.

"Please don't tell me you're about to pull some jealousy crap, because I'm tired, bitchy, and we haven't found the medallion yet, *thus*, not in the mood to hear it."

Nash arched a brow, but instead of annoyance, one of concern crossed his face. "You're pushing too hard."

Oh, no. Cal jabbed a finger at his chest. "If anyone is doing the pushing it's you. You're working over my shoulder, watching every move I make, even if it's from across the site, and I can't damn well concentrate long enough to—"

Nash crushed her to his chest, his mouth coming down on hers, fast and hard. She pushed weakly at his chest, annoyance at his barbarian tactics seemingly unimportant compared to the persuasive mastery as he slowed the kiss and explored.

It wasn't fair that he could make her forget everything but him. Weak women let their bodies be ruled by their desire. Cal never considered herself a weak woman, yet the way she clung to him now was indication enough she was definitely a lost cause.

Gripping his shirt, Cal let him make her forget about the exhaustion weighing her down with every passing hour.

His arms tightened around her, his hold on her unbreakable even if she wanted to squirm away. His tongue slid past her lips, and with a groan the kiss changed from lingering, to punishing.

Cal pulled back and dragged in a breath.

"Why are still avoiding me?"

She rested her head on his chest. "I thought we covered that in my, 'I can't concentrate with you around,' speal?"

Nash tipped her head back, forcing her to look him in the eye. "Maybe you could concentrate a whole lot better if you were less tense." A suggestive gleam brightened his eyes.

"And you think sex would make me less tense?"

"It couldn't hurt."

Cal grinned. "I'm gonna go catch up with Eric then." She didn't move more than an inch, before he pushed her against the wall.

“Stop torturing me, Cal.” He leaned forward and brushed his mouth over hers. “Now start walking before I take you up against the damn wall.”

Pushing up on her tiptoes, Cal pressed her mouth to his jaw. “And that would be bad because...” She meant for the comment to be teasing, but judging by the exquisite ache that throbbed between her thighs, she was half serious.

Nash shook his head. “Don’t tempt me.”

“Would it take very much?” Considering the lack of sleep and that they still hadn’t found the medallion, the idea of finishing what they started at the lake was sounding better and better.

He braced his hands on the wall beside her head. “As much I want to be buried deep inside you and hear you scream my name when I make you come, I’d rather it not be in a spot where anyone could come along and interrupt us.”

“The more you talk, the more you’re selling me on the idea.”

He nuzzled her neck. “Let’s go. I’m going see that you eat something, unwind a little and then...”

“Then,” Cal prompted.

“I’m going to drag you back to my tent, take off your clothes, and not stop touching you until I make sure I know every inch of your body by heart.”

Driven by a hunger that wouldn’t wait until later, Cal trailed her hand down between their bodies. Nash groaned, the deep rasp echoed in her ear. Bolder, she closed her hand more fully around him. He bumped against her palm.

“Still want to go back to your tent?” Cal teased, a seductive hum thumping through her.

Nash nipped her throat. “If you keep that up, I can’t be held accountable for what might happen.”

Needing to feel him touch her, Cal guided Nash’s hand from her waist to and pressed it between her thighs.

His palm rubbed against her. “Damn woman, you’re killing me here.”

“Hell of a way to go, don’t you think?” A broken moan slid past her lips under his persistent explorations.

“Hey guys.” A light shone on their faces. Blinking, Cal both turned her face away and pushed Nash back a step.

“I’m interrupting, aren’t I?” Daniel asked.

Since the answer seemed rather obvious to Cal, she bent and retrieved the flashlight she’d let roll to the floor after Nash kissed her. “Something going on?”

“Kevin and Monique are having words.”

Cal frowned. That certainly wasn't like them. Normally they got along rather well. Nash fell into step beside her as they made their way out of the passageway, into the temple's main chamber and outside. She followed the sound of raised voices and had to nudge people aside who'd gathered to watch the show.

"I caught you in my tent," Monique accused.

"I was checking for snakes," Kevin snapped back. "How many times do I have to tell you that?"

Cal stepped in between them. "What the hell is going on here?" She scanned the small crowd. "Go back to your dinner, or whatever it was you were all doing." She pinned Monique and Kevin with a harsh glance. "You two want to start from the beginning?"

"He was in my tent." Monique pointed an accusing finger at Kevin.

"Remind Monique where we are and that it's better safe than sorry."

Monique propped her hands on her hips. "I don't have a problem with you checking for snakes. I do have a problem with you going through my belongings." She switched her attention to Cal. "He went through my clothing and notes."

"I sure as hell did not."

"And I suppose someone else was creeping around and going through my stuff."

Ice slithered through her Cal's gut.

Kevin took a step towards Cal. "We've been working together for years, Cal. I wouldn't go sneaking around and nosing into other people's stuff." He flicked his gaze to Monique. "I don't know who went through your things, but it wasn't me."

Monique crossed her arms. She didn't call him a liar, but the look on her face clearly said she wasn't convinced.

"It wasn't me," Kevin repeated firmly.

Cal nodded. "I believe you." Kevin had been part of her father's expeditions for the better part of the last ten years. He wasn't the type to go digging through people's personal belongings.

"So if it wasn't Kevin, then who was it?" Monique demanded.

The journal.

Cap spun on her heels, hoping she was wrong.

"Hey, where are you going?" Nash called out.

Cal paused and glanced over her shoulder at Monique and Kevin. "Let's keep this quiet for now. We don't need everyone pointing fingers at each other." When Monique looked ready to object, Cal added, "I'll find out who went through your stuff, Monique."

At Monique's reluctant nod, Cal turned away from them. From the corner of her eye she spotted Nash moving towards her.

“Cal?”

“I’ll catch up with you later.” She barely got the words out before she jogged through camp to her tent. By the time she worked the zipper down and slipped inside, her heart pounded in her chest. She knew even before she checked her sleeping bag what she would find.

The journal was gone.

* * * * *

Nash scanned the faces of those gathered around the campfire. Tawny, one of the interns, had a knack for storytelling, and judging by everyone’s faces, she had their full attention as she told the story of the Widow’s Medallion. Even knowing the story had likely been exaggerated and romanticized over the last few centuries, Nash was still spellbound by the tale of a woman driven by the death of her husband, her soul mate, to take up his sword and defend their holdings from a neighboring knight’s army.

The husband had been ambushed on his return from a failed peace negotiation, but managed to make it home where he died in his wife’s arms. Ravaged by grief, the wife took the medallion her husband wore, took up his sword and waited for the approaching army. When they finally breached the castle walls, she managed to kill nearly two-dozen men in a blind fury that stunned both her enemies and her own people, or so the legend went. Many said that once her own people had contained the bulk of their attackers, she deliberately left herself open to attack. But not even being run through by two enemy swords stopped her from reaching her husband’s side before she finally died.

Nash spotted Cal on the opposite side of the fire. She nodded towards the ruins. He followed her.

“We need to talk,” was all she said until they were well out of earshot of anyone. “The journal is gone.”

“Did you lose it?” At her sharp look, he shrugged and added, “Just checking. So you think it was stolen? By who? The same person who went through Monique’s things?”

“I don’t know. Maybe.” She sighed. “Most likely.” Cal expelled a breath. “Someone had been in my room the last night at the lodge, when I was outside with you.”

She was just telling him this *now*? “Why didn’t you say anything?”

“I was hoping it was nothing.”

“And now?”

“Whoever it was must have been looking for the journal that night in the lodge. Maybe they searched Monique’s tent because she’s my research assistant and since they didn’t find it in my room they thought she had it.”

Nash crossed his arms. “You should have told me.”

“It wouldn’t have changed anything.”

“Do you need it?”

“To find the medallion?” Cal shook her head. “I don’t think so.” She searched the long shadows that surrounded them. “It’s here, somewhere, I feel it.”

“The same way Jack felt like you needed someone watching your back,” Nash reminded her.

“Not all of my brother’s premonitions come true.”

Grabbing her hand, he started to lead her back towards camp. “We’re calling your father.”

She dug in her heels. “No, we are not.”

“Cal—”

She shook her head. “This is my expedition, my call. So a book was taken, that doesn’t mean anything.”

“He’d want to know.”

“And he’d be on the next plane down here.” She jerked her hand loose.

“There are worse things than having your parents check up on you.”

Cal snorted.

Nash released a tense breath. “Fine. But if anything else happens, or goes missing, I’m calling him.” Why did it feel like he would regret agreeing to that much?

“I’d just like to know if they took the journal for a souvenir, or are they hoping to find something in there?”

“You don’t think...” The mention of the lost city of gold was minor, but to a fanatic it would be worth the risk to steal it.

Massaging her temples, she paced away from him. “I think we just need to keep an eye on things.”

Nash nodded.

Cal leaned against the stone wall and let her eyes drift shut.

“You need sleep.”

“Mmmhmm,” she mumbled without opening her eyes. She covered her mouth with a yawn, then raised her arms overhead as she pushed away from the wall.

The short stretch was just enough to expose a tantalizing expanse of her midsection.

Cal caught him staring and grinned. “You’ve got a one track mind, Dr. McClure.”

“I didn’t use to.”

She cocked her head skeptically.

He took a step towards her. "As a matter of fact, I don't think another woman has so much as crossed my mind since the Christmas party."

Sucking her bottom lip between her teeth, Cal backed up. When she hit the wall, she tipped her head back. "Is this where I get a goodnight kiss?"

Memories of her seated half naked on his desk and stretched out beneath him at the lake raged through his blood. The woman in front of him was nearly dead on her feet, and yet all he could think about was taking her up against the wall.

She reached out and tugged him closer. Her lips were soft and pliable under his mouth, her tongue lazy and warm as he deepened the kiss she started. Only his growing feelings for her helped him to see past the lust pulsing through him in thick waves.

Pulling back just a little, he brushed his mouth across hers. "Time for bed." He was pretty damn sure those were the hardest words he'd said in a long time. Worse knowing he wouldn't be headed there with her. He'd never be able to keep his hands off her then.

"Don't stop."

He shook his head. "You're wiped." Knowing that still didn't stop him from inching closer. He couldn't think straight with her so close, couldn't focus on anything but satisfying the need that stormed inside him.

"Right now the only thing I want to feel is you, hard and deep inside me."

The sexy admission stirred the hunger for her pooling in his gut. She cupped him through his pants.

Nash hissed out a breath. "I don't think..." Was there really a point in trying to talk himself out of exactly what he'd been trying to talk her into since the moment he got here?

Cal caught his jaw in her hand, her lips sliding provocatively along the edge. "Don't think. Don't try to do what you think is best. Not now." Her fingers dipped past the waistband of his pants and she worked them down over his hips.

He closed his eyes as she closed her hand around his erection, her fingers stroking the head of his cock. This time when their mouths met there was no trace of sleepiness as she brushed her tongue over his. Nor when she coaxed his hand between her thighs, and moaned softly when he caressed her sex.

On a groan, Nash crushed her between him and the ruin wall at her back. Heat pounded through his bloodstream. He pushed her shirt up, filling his palms with her breasts. Erect nipples pushed against her

bar and he undid the front clasp to free them. He allowed himself a few seconds to stroke and tease before catching one plump tip in his mouth.

Cal whimpered, and arched her back.

Damn, he couldn't get enough of her. And the brief tastes of her only made him crave her more. Impatient now, Nash worked her pants and underwear down, and found her already damp.

He growled deep in his throat, both at the discovery she was more than ready for him and because she pumped her hand up and down his cock.

"Cal," he inhaled sharply and tugged her pants the rest of the way off.

Moonlight washed over her skin. She looked like a half ravished goddess. He just needed to finish the job.

"Touch me, Nash."

He trailed his lips down her throat. "Where?" He pressed his hand against her sex, then lazily circled her clit. "Here?"

She trembled in his arms.

Her teeth scraped his collarbone as he sank two fingers inside her. Right then he wanted to plunge his cock into her. Hard. Instead, he forced himself to push her to the brink first, teasing his fingertips over her clit until she rocked her lower half to a mindless rhythm.

"Do you know how much I think about this? About driving you wild in my arms?" He pumped his fingers into her again, swirled over the tight knot, then back in again and again.

He couldn't wait any longer. His own breathing choppy now, Nash lifted her up, wrapped her thighs around him and slammed into her. He wanted to take it slow but she felt too hot and tight to hold back.

She kissed him, a moan caught on the breath between them. Hers? His? He didn't care.

He withdrew and glided back in. Her inner muscles clenched around him.

"Harder," she begged.

Nash grinned and complied, rocking in and out until he felt the first sign of release drag through his gut. He surged harder into her, pumping faster.

Cal whimpered and shuddered, her core tightening its grip on him, triggering his own orgasm. Like everything else about the last few minutes, he came in a spinning rush, one that caught him off guard by the sheer intensity of it.

For a long moment they stayed locked that way, their breaths coming fast and furious, their hearts kicking against their ribs. Nash cradled her jaw in his palm. He wanted to say something, tell her how

crazy he was about her, but the look of utter contentment on her face left the words trapped in his throat.

God she was beautiful.

Cal battled with a yawn, then shot him a sheepish grin.

“It’s catching up with you, huh?”

She buried her face in his chest. “I think so.”

He was in no rush as he helped her fix her clothes, then straightened his own. “Bedtime, I’d say.”

Thump.

“What was that?” Alert once more, Cal craned her neck to see past him.

Nash followed her gaze, both straining to hear anything that seemed out of place.

“Come on.” He threaded his fingers through hers and tugged her after him. There was no way he was leaving her alone. A missing book was certainly not life threatening, but he wouldn’t ignore his gut and the sliver of unease that had embedded itself there.

Cal stuck close to his side. He half expected her to venture ahead of him, but she seemed equally wary tonight. They rounded one of the smaller structures that had once served as housing, and came to a dead stop.

A person was sprawled unconscious on the ground at their feet.
Monique.

Chapter Five

Cal stared up at the ceiling of her small dome tent and tried not to wince. It felt like a steamroller had flattened her body. Muscles ached and fatigue's deep fingers made her arms and legs feel weighed down by twenty-pound dumbbells.

The sun would be up in just a few short hours. Although her body needed the down time, she knew she wouldn't be getting much sleep now.

When Monique had come to, she had no idea what happened to her. The last thing she remembered was walking away after her confrontation with Kevin. The large lump on the back of her head was testament enough someone had struck her from behind.

She didn't know why Monique had wandered so far into the ruins in the dark, alone. Considering what she herself had been doing moments before finding her assistant unconscious, Cal thought it best to wait and follow up on that line of questioning in the morning.

Cal was still confident Kevin hadn't been the one digging through Monique's stuff. And he couldn't have stolen the journal.

Right?

She squeezed her eyes shut. She didn't want to think anyone on the team, many of whom she considered friends, could be capable of stealing anything, let alone the journal, her one and only physical tie to finding the medallion. But someone had taken it and someone had knocked out Monique. Someone in camp.

Cal tried closing her eyes, begging sleep to come.

Hearing the zipper slid up on her tent, Cal sat up. She was already shaking her head as Nash stepped inside.

"No." There was no way in hell she'd get any sleep now. Not when her body still tingled from sex so wild and primitive she could barely believe it actually happened.

He ignored her and closed the zipper.

The muted light from her dual flashlight/lantern cast his face in soft shadows as he turned and faced her.

Stooping to avoid brushing his head on a ceiling not designed to comfortably accommodate his six-foot plus frame, he tossed his sleeping bag down.

She gazed from the rolled bag that landed near her feet to Nash. He grabbed the edge of her sleeping bag, and tugged both it and her closer.

"Nash, I don't need a bodyguard and I know that's what you're thinking."

"Until we know what happened to Monique, you're not sleeping alone."

"I could bunk with Monique." She'd rather sleep in a tent full of spiders than subject herself to Monique's teeth grinding, but given the choice between that, and the charge that crackled between her and Nash...

He spread out his sleeping bag. "You're staying right here." Nash stretched out on his side. "With me."

"Don't you think you're overreacting just a little?"

"Nope."

"Nash—"

"Cal, we both know you're too tired to bother packing up and trekking to Monique's tent. Besides Tawny is staying with her tonight."

When she still couldn't muster enough energy to look like she was getting up anyway, he added, "Just turn off the light and lay down."

Even her fingers protested gripping the light before she switched it off and plunged them into darkness.

"Cal?"

It would have been too much to expect that he'd go to sleep right away.

"Yeah?"

"Move closer."

"I don't think—"

A strong arm hooked around her middle, drawing her closer. With her back to his chest, she took a steadying breath. He didn't make another move, but left his arm draped over her hip.

Nash shifted and his body pressed closer. Her drifting eyes popped open feeling his erection tucked against her behind.

"Um, Nash?"

He laughed, and his warm breath whispered across her neck. "Shut up and go to sleep."

"You're making that rather hard." She closed her eyes at the pun. She was even too tired to laugh at herself.

"You're wiped and so am I. My body has a mind of its own. Now go to sleep before I decide to go against my common sense."

"Has anyone ever told you how bossy you can be?"

"Coming from you, I'd have to think that was a compliment."

Cal snorted. "Whatever helps your ego sleep at night."

His hard arousal brushed her bottom. "Keep it up and I'll show you exactly how bossy I can be."

"Don't tell me...you've got handcuffs and a whip at home when you deliver that line."

His lips hovered above her neck. "Last chance," he growled.

Because she was never one to let anyone else get the last word in, Cal rolled to her back, cupped the back of his neck and brought his mouth down to hers. She didn't wait for him to fully respond before she teased her tongue along his lips, then pushed inside to explore.

His hand tightened on her hip and she swore she could feel the heat from his palm right through the sleeping bag.

But before she let herself melt too much, she rolled back over. "Goodnight, Nash."

She half expected more of a protest than his reluctant grunt. She smiled to herself and relaxed against him, her eyes heavier now. Maybe she would get some sleep after all.

* * * * *

He couldn't sleep.

Nash studied the dark interior of the tent, watching as the gray light of dawn gradually made it easier to see.

Cal's blond head was tucked under his chin, her soft body curled into him. He'd finally been about to drift off himself when she'd rolled over and curled into his chest. Had it not been for the sleeping bag, he imagined she would have flung her leg over his too.

Cal shifted, brushing against his cock which hadn't relaxed its "at attention" stance since he had the brilliant idea to bunk in here with her. Although it started out as sticking close to her to make sure whoever stole Cal's journal didn't come back, the real culprit wasn't occupying the bulk of his thoughts just now.

He was still a little annoyed she hadn't told him she suspected someone had gone through her stuff back at the lodge. Not that he would have been able to stop her from heading out in search of the medallion even if he'd known. Once Cal made up her mind, he had a better shot of talking the sun into not rising than getting her to listen.

A warm hand slid up his chest, followed by a sleepy moan.

He tipped her chin up.

Her eyelids fluttered open half a second after he caught her mouth in a slow, savoring kiss. It didn't matter how much she infuriated him, or goaded him. The deep crystal blue eyes sucked him in every time.

He rolled and half-pinned her beneath him, his fingers lazily caressing her cheek as he continued to kiss her. Any second he expected her to give him some lame excuse for why they should stop. At this point, as long as he kept her from talking, he didn't need to worry that she'd find a way to say last night had been a one shot deal and they needed to continue keeping their distance.

Sliding from her mouth to her throat, Nash nipped the sensitive flesh just above her collarbone, dragging a pleading moan from Cal in the process.

Her hands, once splayed across his chest, traveled lower. He was surprised the zippers on their sleeping bags didn't jam when he yanked at them. While her hands continued to inch past his waist, he moved under the edge of her shirt.

Somewhere in the back of his mind, he processed the sound of approaching footsteps. Before he could even begin to hope it meant nothing, they stopped right in front of Cal's tent.

Half moving on his own, half shoved by Cal, he slowly sat up.

Cal peeled herself out of the sleeping bag and got to her feet just as they heard Kevin's voice.

"You awake, Cal?"

She unzipped the tent and preceded Nash out into the early dawn.

Kevin blinked, clearly not expecting to see Nash. He nodded over his shoulder. "We've got another problem."

Chapter 6

"What kind of a problem?" Cal pushed past Nash, planting herself between him and Kevin.

Kevin gestured towards the east side of the camp. "Inca graves on the north east corner of the site were robbed last night. Looks to be a small group, a couple people maybe, not any of ours."

Cal met Nash's puzzled gaze. "Great," she muttered. As if they hadn't had enough problems with the missing journal and someone knocking Monique out. Now someone was poaching on their site.

Cal massaged the ache that buried its throbbing fingers in the back of her skull. Why was it they couldn't seem to catch a break? From day one this expedition hadn't gone as planned. She was beginning to think Jack had been dead on with his premonitions, which had brought Nash down here to watch her back in the first place. Cal never doubted her brother's gift, but had hoped he'd gotten his vibes crossed this time.

"I'll take a few of the others and will see if we can pick up a trail, see if they're still around." He turned back to Cal as Kevin nodded and walked away. "I don't want you exploring until I get back."

"Hold on one damn minute--"

A steely determination that Cal recognized as Nash's trademark, *don't screw with me look*, hardened his face. "You will not go off on your own."

Cal propped her hands on her hips. "Last time I checked I was in charge of this team, not you." It was so typical of him to take over like this. She'd known it had to be coming since his arrival. Nash had never been able to work any expedition with her without trying to strong-arm her at some point. This was her team, her expedition. "You go on and track the thieves, but I'm not about to sit on my ass and wait until you get back."

She whirled around only to be jerked back, his firm grip caging her in place.

"I don't expect you to sit on your ass, but be smart about this. Someone went through your things and gave Monique a concussion. We don't know who. It could be anyone. I don't want you wandering parts of the site we haven't already explored when I'm not here."

"Do I look like I need you standing in for my father or brother?"

Nash pushed out a tense breath, his jaw unlocking only a fraction of an inch to allow that much. She waited for him to snap, to threaten to call her father, or to tie her up until he got back. All of which she wouldn't have put past him.

What she wasn't expecting was the sharpness in his eyes to soften. "Please."

Cal blinked, studying the mouth that formed in a soft plea instead of a dictator's order.

"I would feel better if you would just work on the inner site until I get back. I don't want to see whoever hit Monique go after you next."

"It could have easily been one of the grave robbers that hit her last night."

"Maybe not."

She started to shake her head. Nash caught her jaw and tilted her chin up as his mouth came down in a kiss she hadn't been expecting. Instead of a hungry, dominating kiss, his mouth was soft, sweeping across her lips with a lingering tenderness that pleaded with her to listen to him, *just this once*.

Cal felt her eyes want to drift shut, but it was the subtle cough that made her release the hold she had on Nash's shirt.

Daniel stood a few feet away. "Sorry. Kevin told me about the graves."

Nash straightened, but didn't let go of her hand, keeping her trapped close to him. "I'll be heading out to look around. Up for tagging along?"

"No problem. That way Kevin can stay in camp and keep things settled." Daniel headed off in the direction Kevin had disappeared to.

Cal could feel Nash's eyes burning into her.

"Will you stay close while I'm gone?"

"I think you're overreacting, but fine. I won't go off on my own." And the bizarre thing was, she actually meant it. For now.

The prickling tension spread down the back of her neck as she watched Nash head off to find Daniel and gather what they'd need, assuming they found a trail for the thieves at all. Not having seen the spoiled graves, she could only assume Kevin had every reason to believe no one in camp was responsible. Which made Cal hope one of the thieves really had hit Monique to keep her from finding out what they were up to, leaving that incident and the missing journal unrelated.

* * * * *

"How are things with you two anyway?"

Nash focused on faint trail they had located just beyond their camp this morning, and tried to determine if one of the guides up ahead had lost it. Already they'd been gone from camp for a couple hours, and with nothing new to go on, they'd need to circle back before it got too late in the day.

Nash vaguely processed Daniel's question. How were things with him and Cal? The thought of anything happening to her left him with a cold, sick feeling in his stomach. She drove him nuts with her stubbornness, but as much as he wanted to strangle her, he wanted her. Period. The woman made him so damn hard, he didn't know how his cock hadn't become permanently stuck in a full salute position.

"Cal and I are...good," he settled on. Better than good really, since he'd expected to butt heads with her a lot more than they actually had. And the fact that she hadn't refused to listen to him this morning was good. Wasn't it? Assuming she would do as she said. A few years ago he wouldn't have trusted her when she said she'd stay put. But those clear blue eyes this morning gave him no reason to think she was just saying what he wanted to hear.

"How long do you think these guys have been trailing us?"

"Likely since we left the lodge, or within a few hours of our departure." That was generally how it worked. Since Cal wasn't following a planned route, needing to rely on her ability to find the medallion, Nash doubted anyone had stumbled across them by accident, or just caught up with them last night. Whoever it was, they had to have been sticking close by since the lodge.

Ahead of them, one of the guides Cal hired in Cusco stopped, looking indecisive about the best route to take.

"If we're actually following a trail made by grave robbers, they're probably already long gone. Maybe we should turn around," Daniel suggested, reading Nash's mind.

"Yeah." Hoping Cal had managed to stay out of trouble while he was away, Nash went up to meet with their guide.

* * * * *

"I'm pretty sure you told Nash you wouldn't wander off."

"You weren't even there for the conversation," Cal reminded Monique.

"You told me what you said."

"Well, if we're going to get technical, I told Nash I wouldn't go off by myself. And I won't be by myself. I'll take Eric with me."

"Puppy Love?" Monique rolled her eyes. "At the very least you should take Kevin."

"I can't. Even if I wanted to ask him, I know he'd refuse, not wanting to piss off Nash or some other *man-code* violation crap."

"So you're asking Eric since you know he won't refuse."

"You make it sound like I'm a teacher ready to seduce my not-so-innocent student after school."

"I still think you should wait."

Cal sighed. "I've been waiting. He's been gone for hours and nothing had been accomplished."

"By that you mean the medallion still hasn't turned up."

With a nod, Cal snagged a flashlight of the makeshift desk. "And I'm not technically going anywhere I haven't gone already. I just want to take another look in the passageway Nash and I were in yesterday."

"I still think—"

"I know. I won't be gone long. Promise," Cal added at Monique's skeptical expression.

She didn't wait for her assistant to launch into another scenario that involved Nash being very pissed off about the whole thing. Which is why she planned to be quick. Something about the passageway niggled in the back of her mind. She'd spent the last two hours trying to ignore the telltale tickle in her stomach, determined to wait until he came back to check it out again.

She couldn't wait any longer. Eric stood waiting for her on the far east side of the camp. They walked in silence towards the temple, conversation dissolving after she passed on his invitation to dinner when they got back to civilization. Eric shrugged it off rather quickly. The easy slope of his shoulders made her suspect he took her refusal as just a temporary set back, and not the *snowball's chance in hell* scenario she knew it was.

Cal rolled her eyes when Eric insisted on preceding her into the passageway. Halfway down the corridor she felt a familiar pulse kick up inside her.

How had she missed that feeling before? She stood in the very spot with Nash...

Maybe if Nash hadn't been kissing her and kept his hands to himself, she might have picked up on the vibe before now. His presence always had been distracting.

"Here," Cal nodded to where a series of the stones seemed to be set in farther than the others in the rock face. She kneeled down, following the outline with her finger. Pushing hard, she felt the stones that shouldn't have budged at all, give a little. She set her flashlight aside. "Help me."

Eric squatted beside her, and between the two of them, and long minutes later, the stones were pushed in until they revealed a smaller opening. She aimed the light into the dark chamber she suspected lay on the other side of the opening, then set the flashlight inside the smaller tunnel.

Eric grabbed her arm. "You can't go in there by yourself. Nash and Kevin will kill me if I let you go in there by yourself."

"Nash and Kevin aren't here," she reminded him. "And seeing as how *I'm* your boss and not them, it's my call. But I do need another flashlight for in there."

He eyed her nervously then sighed. "I'll be right back with another one. Wait for me."

"Sure thing." *As if.*

She sat alone for another thirty seconds to make sure he didn't pop his head back around the corner, then got on her hands and knees and inched through the narrow opening. Nash never would have believed for a second that she would wait.

Having Eric gone would give her a couple of minutes to concentrate on the hum that pulsed fiercely in her chest now. She was so close. Her stomach tightened with every echo of the nearby medallion.

Her hands met dry earth on the other side, and she pushed to her feet. The light from her flashlight sliced through the darkness as she panned it back and forth across the chamber. It was impossible to tell how big it was without more light. The tip of the beam swept over a long square altar. The top of it housed a handful of objects, none of which penetrated her brain the second her eyes passed over the round disk.

Heart pounding, she crossed the short distance and slowly removed the medallion from the top of the table, scenes from Indiana Jones movies scrolling through her mind as they always did when she found a lost treasure. The floor didn't open, arrows didn't rain down from above, and no giant boulders rolled at her from a hidden wall. The gold felt cool in her palm as she traced the intricate design with her fingers.

A smile spread across her face.

She'd found it.

Giddy with the discovery, Cal draped the medallion over her head, the thin leather strap still strong. She crawled through the opening, every nerve ending edged with the thrill of success, of finding Nash to show him. So caught up in her eagerness to show everyone, she didn't expect the two hands that gripped her upper-arms and hauled her to her feet.

A surprised cry broke from her lips as she was set on her feet. Cal stumbled back and tipping the light up, stared into Nash's very annoyed face.

"I should have tied you up," he snapped.

Ignoring the anger that rumbled in his throat, Cal grinned up at him.

His gaze dropped from her face to the medallion she aimed the light at. "You found it?" In a heartbeat, his tone changed from annoyed to disbelief. He reached a hand out, but seemed to wait for her approval before he touched it.

Cal nodded, feeling a spark jolt through her skin as his palm swallowed the medallion before he lifted it closer.

The lines of concentration turned to a frown. "We need to get outside to see it better."

"So you're not mad at me then?"

His answering silence warned her she might not be off the hook as much as she hoped. Still too thrilled at her find to let Nash put a damper on her success, she followed him back outside. Instead of steering her towards the main tent where she could use the satellite phone to call her dad, he dragged her in the opposite direction.

"Where are we going?"

"To my tent."

Fighting to keep up with his long strides was all she could do not to call more attention to them, and the fact he half dragged her across camp.

He unzipped the door to his tent and practically shoved her inside.

Cal pivoted around with every intention of marching straight past him and back to the main tent.

"Let me see it." Nash held out his hand. Cal started to point the very minimal light inside the navy colored tent when he tugged the medallion over her head anyway. Instead of examining it closely like she expected, Nash carefully set it on a folded shirt on top of his bag.

Her confusion was quickly forgotten as his mouth slanted across hers. Fierce and determined, he let her know exactly what he thought of her going off without him, all without saying a word. His arms tightened around her waist, crushing her to him, as the tempo of the kiss changed from punishing to feverish.

His arousal brushed against her sex as his hands slid under her shirt to explore. Not as slow as before, his touch burned through every layer of skin to stir the blood coursing through her veins. Part of her wanted to stop him, fighting to remember the medallion that lay only a few feet away. The other part told her to shut up and let him make the claim his bold caresses were intent on making.

Nash undid her bra and pushed it aside to cup her breasts. He scuffed the pads of his thumbs across her nipples. The carnal friction over the hard tips pulled a low moan from her throat. A second later he ripped the shirt over her head and bent to tug one of the tight peaks between his greedy lips. Her sex clenched, the small fiery threads in her womb tightening with every heated pull of his mouth.

Cal gave up trying to contain a whimper of pleasure when he traced the edge of her shorts, was lost the moment one finger dipped past her panties and stroked through her folds. He found her clit, grazing over it, around it, slow and soft.

"You should have waited for me," he growled, stripping off the rest of her clothes and her boots, leaving her naked.

"Is this your form of punishment? Because I just might have to disobey more often." The last word almost locked in her throat as his fingers eased inside her. He withdrew and slipped them in again with one clenching pump after another.

"I can't wait," Nash groaned, then lowered her to his sleeping bag. His hands left her just long enough to hastily remove his own clothes before he joined her. His mouth once more sought out her breasts as his hand continued to explore her, strumming her clit with feverish passes of his thumb. Her flesh ignited under the touch, so much she cried out when he pulled back.

Then he hovered above her, and glided deep, his cock filling her, stretching her until her muscles squeezed around him, tugging him deeper when he would have pulled away.

His strained breath whispered across her cheek as their gazes locked. Nash withdrew and thrust in again, his hips rocking into her as she arched up, letting his shaft rub the hot spot deep within her.

Nash's hands slid under her ass, raising her up, burying himself deeper. Every hard glide electrified her insides until she was panting, her need for release tapping in time with the rapid pulse of her heart.

Cal caught his mouth, bringing it back to hers. Insatiable, was the only thought that crossed her mind as his mouth conquered, his tongue tangling with hers as he continued to sink into her, each thrust less controlled than the last, more needy, more desperate.

Every slow pump and fast, hard thrust twined her higher, until her orgasm crashed over her with the force of a hurricane riptide, pulling her along and dragging her under.

Nash cried out, his own release following on the heels of the pleasure that whispered through her even as he held her close. Fatigue and bone deep satisfaction swam through her system.

But underneath it all, the hope that Jack's premonitions ended with the grave robbers didn't sooth the trace of unease she still couldn't shake.

Chapter Seven

Cal crossed the camp and headed for the main tent still in disbelief that she'd slept through the entire night. Not even finding the medallion had over ridden her hunger for Nash, or the exhaustion that finally caught up with her. She normally never had a problem sleeping during an expedition, and the few hours over the last few days that she had managed to get in hadn't been enough to keep her going any longer.

Nash had looked so peaceful sleeping she hadn't wanted to wake him as she dressed and quietly slipped from his tent to call her father and let him know the news. No one stirred around camp. Even Kevin, their resident early riser, wasn't about yet. As soon as she got off the phone, she planned to drag them all out of bed to let them know she'd found the medallion. A part of her felt guilty for not telling them all sooner. If anyone had issues with her not sharing her news yesterday then she'd send them to Nash since it was his fault for keeping her pleasantly distracted.

She hadn't expected to find the medallion in the middle of the ruins of an Inca village to begin with. The site was rich enough in artifacts the archeologists on the team would have plenty to keep them busy here for weeks. She wouldn't be needed now that she had what she'd come for. And her father should more willingly let her lead future teams.

As expected, Cal found the main tent empty and retrieved the satellite phone. She set it on the collapsible desk in front of her before setting the medallion she'd temporarily wrapped up in Nash's shirt down next to it.

Something moved behind her. Cal whipped around, relieved to see it was only Daniel.

Then she noticed the gun in his hand.

The gun pointed directly at her chest.

Her heart pushed up into her throat, the bitter taste of panic filling her mouth as she instinctively inched backwards, her eyes locked on the gun.

"Don't," Daniel warned. He nodded to the medallion. "I thought I saw you come out of the temple with it yesterday."

Cal fought past her shock and uncertainty, instead focusing on the anger. Sensible, reliable Daniel was the one who'd gone through her room, stole the journal and hurt Monique? It was almost too surreal to process. If not for the fact he stood in front of her, armed, she wouldn't have believed it. "You want the medallion?"

Daniel shook his head. He reached behind him and threw the journal he'd stolen from her tent. It hit the ground at her feet.

"Pick it up," he ordered, his voice cold and sharp.

Daniel was her father's oldest friend. How could he do this? He'd known her since she was a child.

Cal's insides froze up as she bent to pick up the journal. "So if it's not the medallion you're after—"

"El Dorado." A dark smile twisted his lips.

"Doesn't exist."

The lines around his eyes drew tight. "Don't lie to me, Cal. We both know it's real, and you're going to help me find it."

"How could I possibly help you find a mythical city?" She did her best to stall, scanning the small space for anything that could help her as Daniel focused his attention on the journal in her hand. How much time did she have before Kevin came this way? How much time before Daniel did something crazy?

"I know about your gift, Cal. I know you can find it for me."

"I don't know what you're talking about." At the moment denial seemed her only option.

"*Don't* lie to me. I know it's true. You think I could spend that much time around your family and not notice something like that? El Dorado is mentioned in the journal and in same passage as the medallion. They're linked."

"You believe in a city of gold because of a very vague reference that could be nothing more than some kind of a centuries-old joke?"

Daniel took a menacing step forward. "It's real."

"Then where is it?"

His eyes narrowed.

She continued, "Why mention it in the journal and not give any indication of its location if the city actually existed?" Where was Nash? Any other time he was dodging her heels. She didn't know whether to be grateful or not he wasn't around.

"But it did. The clue to its whereabouts was hidden with the medallion."

"You're reading between the lines, Daniel. Please, just put down the gun and let's just reason this out—"

He jabbed the gun at her. "You'll take me exactly where you found the medallion."

She shook her head. "No."

Daniel released the safety. "Now."

Cal hesitated, wished she could be certain he wouldn't pull the trigger. But she wasn't. The man in front of her wasn't the same Daniel who had always asked how she was doing, offered to help her with

assignments, or talked her down when her temper was ready to snap. Which meant he might need little provocation to shoot her. The last thing she wanted was to be shot miles away from any hospital. Bleeding out in the jungle was not how she wanted to go.

Daniel motioned towards the door. "Let's go."

She didn't move, cold fear locking her limbs in place. What would happen if she went with him? Was he planning to drag her into the jungle with him?

Daniel reached out and grabbed her arm, shoving her forward.

Cal took advantage of the momentum and let herself trip, bumping the table next to him. She barely hit the ground, and Daniel yanked her back to her feet, jamming the gun in her side. "Don't play games with me, Cal."

She gave him a jerky nod and preceded him out of the tent, both worried and thankful he failed to notice that she'd dropped the medallion when she fell, and it now lay on the ground behind them.

* * * * *

Outside his tent, Nash stretched his arms over his head and inhaled the thick humid air of the surrounding forest. The jungle around them already stirred with the sounds of insects and birds. Not even having Cal pull a disappearing act darkened his mood.

His stomach rumbled and he wondered how long until breakfast was on the go. Last night with Cal had certainly worked up his appetite, and for more than just food.

Spotting Monique emerge from her tent, he crossed the distance towards her. "How are you feeling this morning?"

She gently probed the back of her head. "Not too bad today. I'd like to know whatever it was they hit me over the head with though. Must have been damn heavy."

"We're just lucky it wasn't more serious."

"I wish you and Daniel had caught up with them. I've got a clay pot I'd love to take over their heads. So what happened to you and Cal yesterday?"

"Nash." Kevin jogged up to them, holding out the satellite phone. "It's Cal's brother. He wants to talk to you *now*."

Puzzled, Nash took the phone. "Hey Jack, what's going on?"

"Where's Cal?" Jack demanded.

"She's around here somewhere."

"Are you sure she's safe?"

Nash's heart kicked up. "Why wouldn't she be?" He looked at Kevin. "Have you seen Cal?" When the other man shook his head, Nash glanced at Monique who also shook her head.

Nash moved away from the others. "Tell me you didn't have another premonition."

"Find her."

"I will." He closed his eyes and asked, "What was it about?"

The edgy sigh on the other end concerned him. "She was someplace dark and she was scared. Find her Nash. Now."

Knowing the only place she would have gone this morning would have been to the main tent to call her dad, he thrust the satellite phone at Kevin and sprinted across camp.

The tent was empty. He spun around to launch a search for her, praying it wasn't necessary when his caught sight of something on the ground tucked close to the edge of the tent.

His heart knocked against his ribs. He bent and picked up the medallion, closing his fist around the solid gold piece as he stood and scanned the campsite.

Where the hell was she?

"What's going on Nash?" Kevin and Monique hovered outside the tent. "I think Cal is in trouble."

Kevin stared at his hand. "Is that what I think it is?"

Nodding absently, he strode past them as Eric approached.

"Have you seen Cal?"

The younger man arched a brow. "Can't keep tabs on her?"

Nerves frayed, Nash barely stopped himself from grabbing Eric by the throat. "Have you seen Cal?" he repeated.

"I saw her not too long ago heading back into the temple she was in yesterday."

"Was she alone?"

"Daniel was with her."

That couldn't be right. Cal wouldn't have just left the medallion on the ground like that to go off exploring with Daniel.

His gut clenched.

Daniel couldn't be...

No. Daniel would never purposely sabotage an expedition. And he'd never hurt Cal, would he? No, Nash had to be wrong, because if he wasn't Cal was in serious trouble.

* * * * *

"Why are you doing this?" Cal's voice echoed in the dark passageway. The question was about as clichéd as she could get, but conversation kept her from worrying that no one had seen them enter the temple. Daniel wasn't being stupid either and kept a reasonable distance from her, as though he didn't trust her not to do something reckless now that most of her shock had worn off.

"Why would anyone want to find El Dorado, Cal?"

She glanced back over her shoulder. "So it's about the money? I realize the foundation isn't in the habit of paying six figure salaries, but I know you've worked for my father for too long not to be doing more than okay. If you needed money, you could have gone to my father."

"Shut up."

"You know he would have helped you."

Daniel stopped behind her. "Turn around, Cal." He nodded to the hole in the passageway she'd purposely moved straight on past. "I already warned you to not play games with me. Crawl in there." He backed up, keeping his gun trained on her.

With no other reason to stall, she crouched down and crawled into the tight passageway. Since Daniel wasn't a small man, she suspected he would be slower crawling in after her. That realization had her moving just fast enough he wouldn't be able to grab hold of her ankle. Her hands dropped into the dirt on the inside of the chamber and she immediately stood and felt her way along the wall away from the opening. By hiding she'd only buy herself a short amount of time and that would piss him off, but she didn't care.

The chamber was big, but not miles long, leaving her still very vulnerable.

"Cal!"

She inched farther away, barely managing not to cry out when she tripped over something and fell forward.

The light panned over her head.

"Damn it, Cal. I don't want to have to hurt you, but I will start shooting if you don't show yourself."

And call attention to them? She doubted it. She heard him moving around to her left.

"It wasn't supposed to be this way," he continued. "Nash followed the phony trail I started. He's so predictable. I knew he'd want to go after grave robbers so I made it look like someone was poaching on our site. While he was gone you and I would've had hours to explore the ruins together. We would have found the medallion together, talked about how we'd find the lost city next. But then Nash asked me to go along with him to track thieves who didn't even exist. I was supposed to be here with you when you found the medallion, Cal. And I knew you'd find it. Just like I know you can find El Dorado."

Cal fought to keep her breathing under control as her heart drummed against her ribs. She did not want to become part of the temple's hidden chamber on a permanent basis. She needed to focus, needed to stay calm. Staying low, she spotted a tall column when the flashlight arced over her head, and edged towards it. Every sound echoed

within the chamber, forcing her to be careful not to give away her position.

"I'm giving you one chance to come out where I can see you." His voice drifted closer. "And if you don't. I'm going to lock you in here and go find Nash. And I'll shoot him to get you to cooperate if I have to."

She couldn't give him a reason to go after Nash.

"I'm counting to three, Cal. One. Two..."

She squeezed her eyes shut. "I'm here."

The beam of light came within a foot of her face.

"Stand up and show yourself."

Deciding the best she could do at this point was at least pretend to go along with him, she stood up. If he wanted to find El Dorado so bad, he wasn't likely to shoot her until he realized one way or another she wouldn't be leading him to it.

Cal blinked and held a hand up to shield her eyes from the flashlight he aimed at her face.

He stalked towards her. With a cruelty she would never have believed Daniel capable of, he grabbed her by the hair. Pain sliced across her scalp, making her eyes tear up. He jabbed the gun in her side, bruising a rib or two in the process. "You're out of chances. Now show me where you found the medallion."

"Over there."

He cursed, his hold on her hair tightening. "You'll need to be more specific."

"To your right and ahead a few meters."

He jerked her along beside him, his flashlight panning through the darkness to illuminate anything in front of them. The wide beam caught on something before Daniel aimed it at the front of them once more.

Cocking her head, Cal dared a quick glance past Daniel and to the spot where she swore she saw a shadow move. Only darkness stared back at her.

Daniel shoved her at the stone altar. "Don't make a sound or try to run again," he warned before sweeping the light over the cold stone.

She eased to the side, chancing another quick glance to the side. The shape of man slid from the shadows behind Daniel.

Nash.

She shot her gaze back to Daniel.

"It should be here. Something should be here." Frustration sharpened his words. He aimed the light in her face. "What did you do with it?"

"I found nothing except the medallion."

"Liar."

A heartbeat before she expected him to threaten her with the gun, Nash lunged from the shadows and threw himself at Daniel.

The two men crashed into the altar and rolled backwards. The flashlight hit the ground and Cal darted forward to catch it. Her fingertips just grazed it when one of them kicked her in the chest. Knocked backwards, she dragged in a sharp breath, stunned by the pain that branched down her chest.

Pushing through the pain, she scrambled towards the light.

A gunshot echoed in the chamber. Heart in her throat, she swung the beam back to the two men in front of her.

More voices flooded the chamber, but she didn't turn to face the others as more lights sliced through the darkness and landed on the three of them.

"Nash, Cal? You guys okay?"

A strangled yelp came from the men at her feet before one of them stood.

Relief poured through her. Nash.

Another whimper followed and Cal realized Daniel had taken a hit.

"We need the med-kit in here. Now," Nash said.

Kevin skidded to stop in front of them, Monique and Eric on his heels. "What happened?"

Nash quickly closed the distance between them, and Cal didn't need to be hauled into his arms. She closed her eyes as he held her tight.

He drew back slowly. "You okay?"

"Yeah. How did you know we were in here?" She'd hoped it wouldn't be long until someone noticed the medallion, but she figured they would have been more than just a couple minutes behind her and Daniel.

"Eric saw the two of you come this way."

She closed her eyes, thankful Nash had come along when he had. There was no telling what Daniel might have done having found nothing here to give him any clue how to find the mythical city. "I wondered how long it would be before you started looking for me."

"Jack called and told me I needed to find you."

"To bad that call hadn't come in a bit earlier." But boy was Jack getting a good Christmas gift this year.

Nash rubbed her back. "I'm just glad it didn't come any later."

Eric helped Daniel to his feet. Kevin nodded in their direction. "It's just a flesh wound to his arm."

"Get him back to the main tent and we'll figure out what to do with him there." Nash didn't look away from her when he spoke to them.

"He wanted to find El Dorado," Cal said.

"I'm just glad he started his search here. If he had taken you into the jungle first--" His grip on her tightened. "If anything had happened to you..."

"It didn't."

"The next time you pull a disappearing act like you did on me this morning, I'll have your ass."

Cal smiled up at him, then imprisoned his jaw in her hand and brought his mouth down to hers. "Promises, promises," she murmured against his lips.

Epilogue

"I thought I warned you not to slip away on me without saying anything." Two strong arms wrapped around Cal's waist.

She smiled and leaned against Nash. "You were sleeping."

"So?" He brushed his mouth down the side of her neck.

From their hotel room balcony, the sleeping city of Venice was spread out before them. "I don't want to go home yet."

"Lucky for you, your father doesn't need either of us for another couple of weeks."

She turned in his arms. "Oh, and when were you talking to my father?"

"When you had a bath earlier."

Cal arched a brow. "I seem to recall you joining me and you didn't mention anything."

"I got a little too distracted by your wet, naked body."

"Did he say anything else that might have slipped your mind?"

A frown crossed Nash's face.

"What?"

"They found Daniel's body."

"Where?"

"Fifteen miles east of the site."

"He got that far?" Daniel had broken free of Kevin and Eric's hold when they had been escorting him back to the main tent and vanished into the jungle. They'd found two full packs in his tent, indicating he'd been planning on taking Cal into the jungle with him in search of El Dorado. Nothing about his actions appeared overly thought out, driven only by greed as far as anyone could tell. And once she'd found the medallion, he decided it was time to make some kind of a move. His wife had been worried about his odd moods and his refusal to venture out of his home office for anything other than to help her when she was ill. She'd hoped a field assignment would get him back to his old self.

"I'm glad that now we can be certain he won't come looking for you."

"Given his obsession with finding El Dorado I think it's safe to assume he wouldn't leave those rainforests even to find me." After he vanished into the jungle, a search of his office revealed that Daniel had been digging up and following any lead to the lost city he could scrounge up over the years. Both Nash and her father figured that after he read the mention of the city in the journal and knowing she had a gift for finding things, Daniel had assumed she would have been able to lead

him there. Even if she had gotten a vibe on the mythical city, she wouldn't have gone alone into the jungle with him for all the gold in El Dorado.

"So how should we spend our two weeks off?"

Cal recognized he was trying to get her off the subject of Daniel. She cocked her head thoughtfully. "Well I did hear about this old treasure—"

Without warning, Nash scooped her up over his shoulder. He strode back into their hotel room and dumped her on the bed. His heavy body never felt so good as he came down on top of her, pressing her into the mattress.

"If I hear one more word about work," he warned.

Cal grinned up at him. "Not even if I said I found a coin that came from—"

He slapped his hand over her mouth. "I've got all the rare treasure I can handle right here."

Warmth burrowed deep in her heart. "Oh yeah?"

Nash brushed his lips over hers. "Without a doubt."

"You know what they say about priceless artifacts, don't you?" She tugged her shirt over her head and tossed it to the floor. "They should be worshipped."

He arched a playful brow. "Day and night?"

"For all eternity," she added.

"That's a long time."

She leaned up and slid her mouth along his jaw. "Not up for the challenge?"

His fingers tunneled into her hair, and he cupped the nape of her neck. "I don't think I've ever been more ready for anything in my life," he whispered then caught her mouth in a kiss as timeless as the oldest legends of lovers lost...and found.

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