

“Okay, first off.” Poppy stopped walking and threw her index finger into the air. “I sell my photos online. That’s it. I don’t do phone sex, I don’t masturbate on camera, I don’t have sex on camera. I am not a prostitute. I tell funny jokes, and I share bits and pieces of a made-up life. There are men out there who like great boob shots, and that’s mostly what I do. Yes, I do take special requests, but it’s like wearing a cowgirl costume. And doing all of that doesn’t mean I give up my rights as a human being. That I am any less than any other woman.” Those light blue eyes shone stormy and defiant.

“I never said you are less.”

The pointed index finger dropped. “But you expect it. You thought I’d let you in last night.”

*Busted.* “Maybe...but I didn’t push my way in. And I took you on a date.”

She rolled her eyes and changed direction, heading back toward my house. I followed along, uncertain how this became an analysis of my actions.

“You know, what I choose to do doesn’t mean men can treat me differently. Even if I were a prostitute—and I’m not—it doesn’t mean men can treat me poorly. It’s a job. I deserve respect.”

She huffed as she walked, and I had to quicken my pace to keep up. “I agree.”

Her pace slowed. “And I guess I wasn’t prepared for Reed to know about it. It felt like you were pimping me out or something.”

“I would never.” Hell, the idea of anyone looking at her didn’t sit well with me. I’d wanted to buy exclusivity. When I offered to pay her for property management, that was so she could drop the account, not for her, but for me. Because I didn’t like her doing it. Reed jumped in on this all on his own. “But why do it? Why do something you’re not proud of?”

“Who says I’m not proud?” Her pace quickened, and the tide lapped her ankles.