

What Happens in Chicago

Chapter One

I didn't know which was worse, the sight of all these overblown jerks with more money than sense leering at half naked women or the fact that I was one of them. I grunted in disgust at myself and turned to face the bar, praying that my whale of a client would either get bored or get laid soon so I could go the hell home.

"Hey, Mike!"

I winced when a thick, meaty hand landed on my shoulder. Waiting long enough so the jerk who'd smacked me understood I didn't care for being touched, or being called "Mike," I turned with a fake smile. Tom, or was it Frank, had on a sincere one. This dude was one of our longest-running, big-cash clients, had a monstrously huge house in Winnetka, a lovely wife, and three frat-bros in training sons. I could barely tolerate him, but whenever Tom—Frank?—called, I dropped everything and rushed to his side. Why not? I'd cleared a million bucks handling the man's investments in my first two years alone. And Frank—Tom?—seemed to really groove on my youth, enthusiasm, and willingness to please.

The man's hot and bored wife liked all those things about me, too—at least three times, last I'd counted. I allowed the flash memory of my most recent encounter with the horny housewife to cool my frustration with her husband, the man standing next to me with bleary eyes, beer breath, and a vacuous-looking topless chick hanging off one arm.

He must cause that reaction a lot.

"Hey...Tom," I said, praying I'd recalled the name correctly. I'd imbibed just enough booze not to care but still knew to get it wrong would be a monumental mistake considering the ego in question.

"I think I'm gonna head upstairs," Tom said, treating me to an unnecessary number of lurid winks. As if I didn't quite grasp that was code for, "I'm about to pay this woman to suck my dick or something equally vile."

"Sure. Great. I'll just..." I looked around the crowded room, kitted out like a classy, old-school men's club with its dark wood paneling, thick Turkish carpets, bookshelves, and leather chairs. When I glanced back at Tom, he'd already gone. I set my empty glass on the bar. Figures. Why would that guy give a single shit what I did while some girl got his fat, ugly rocks off?

As I watched, the illusion of the classy men's club was broken when a couple of fresh girls mounted the small stage and the music started blaring. I watched, noting that one of them needed to refresh her facelift if she wanted to keep working here, hating myself for even thinking that. I was a total cynic, and at the tender age of thirty-four.

What a drag.

When a girl approached me looking fine with her full, pouty lips, thick-lashed eyes, light brown skin, and tits that would make a man weep, I waved her away with what I hoped passed for a kind smile. I've never resorted to paying for sex, and I wasn't about to start now. Despite this inner declaration, I spent some time admiring the girl's excellent rear view as she homed in on her next target.

My firm kept this nameless, best-kept-secret of a club afloat with our clients. I'd spent hours here, drinking, smoking cigars in the well-appointed and vented room, laughing, closing deals, watching excellent strip shows, fending off the urge to fuck someone, and closing yet more deals. I was no monk. Quite the opposite, actually. But I got a hell of a lot more satisfaction getting to know the wives and girlfriends of my many, super-wealthy clients, all of whom had accompanied me here and paid a tidy sum to get laid by someone not their wife or girlfriend.

I considered myself a sort of great orgasm equalizer, and I don't deny I got a sick, karmic satisfaction from it. Not to mention being well accommodated by a lot of women who had no reason or motivation to cling. Their husbands or boyfriends kept them all well-maintained with huge homes, plenty of clothes and jewelry, cars, vacations, the works, so they understood our encounters for what they were. It worked for all concerned since clinginess was my number one avoidance.

With a smile of self-satisfaction, I checked my phone and saw several texts from my harem of unhappiness, two of whom wanted to make dates in the coming week and one who liked to text me pictures of her pussy, usually accompanied by various accoutrement.

It was a good life. Mostly.

I nodded at the bartender. She walked over to me.

"Heya, Michael. How're things?"

"Oh, you know, making money and buying more real estate. How're the kids?"

The older, attractive woman smiled as she topped up my bourbon. "Drivin' me nuts, as usual. But this year I get second spawn out of the nest. One more to go."

I held up my glass. "Congrats. That's great. You must be very proud."

She nodded. "Thanks, doll face. Yes, I suppose I am. Or maybe I'm just relieved. You know, you always ask about them. Don't think I don't notice." She gave me a little wave then headed back down the bar.

I sipped and people-watched a while, ignoring the stage show behind me. I'd become immune to them anyway, given how many assholes I had dragged here, hoping to make money while pretending to enjoy staring at a bunch of naked tits and ass.

I stopped with the glass of aromatic, expensive Kentucky corn liquor halfway to my lips, a little concerned about that thought. I loved women. I adored them, everything about them as long as they didn't sleep over or demand breakfast in bed. I actually did enjoy looking at tits and ass. Why in God's name would I even think such a crazy thing?

I was losing it. I needed to get out of this place. It was bringing on way too many bad thoughts about the sweeter-smelling sex.

Still clutching my drink, I pushed away from the bar, determined to get back to my better-mood self. I mentally shuffled through the list of potential, pleasant, female-shaped nightcaps as I turned the corner around the bar. Distracted, I glanced over my shoulder when I thought I heard someone say my name at the exact moment I plowed straight into her.

"Jesus, mother humping...shit!" Her voice was not shrill and lacked the "look at me I'm so drunk" lilt I despised. In fact, it was a low-pitched alto, raspy, and sexy as all get out.

As I stared into the deep décolletage of her silky cream dress, I was puzzled by an odd, orange-brown stain that seemed to spread down from her left breast area. "Hey, asshole!"

Someone smacked me upside the head so hard I saw stars for a second until I realized that I was still holding the now empty glass of bourbon way too near said left breast.

"God damn it. Thanks." She took the proffered towel from the bartender and blotted at the stain. "This dress is Armani, you drooling idiot."

She blotted some more while I stood stock still with my glass holding hand held out.

The woman wearing the bourbon-befouled designer sheath was, in a word, exquisite. No, that wasn't a strong enough word for her. She was ethereal, flawless...perfect. Coal black hair hung in a shining wave past her shoulders. Her lips were flaming red, full, yet not overly so in a collagen-infused way. Her eyes were the deepest possible shade of blue. Her shapely legs ended in a pair of cream silk pumps. Her slim shoulders and arms were highlighted by the no-doubt ruined dress.

Jesus help me, she even smelled amazing, above the almost overpowering aroma of spilled booze.

By the time my gaze made its way back up to her face, her lips were pressed together in a thin line and her eyes were blazing with something this side of furious but with the smallest inkling of intrigue. One of the many things I prided myself on was my uncanny ability to read female body language. I understood secret longings, and what facial expressions really

meant. Or at least, I thought I did.

“I’m terribly sorry,” I said, regaining about a quarter of my composure, enough to set the glass on the bar without taking my eyes off her magnificence in case she disappeared. She was a bit on the skinny side, but she wasn’t out of proportion, thankfully, since I really hated that lollipop thing some women ended up with when they lost too much weight but insisted on having their boobs enlarged.

“Here, let me.” With a smile, I took the towel that was dangling from her hand. The woman’s mouth hung almost all the way open as she stared at me. She even let me touch the cloth to her torso and move it up slowly until I had my hand right on her boob, albeit with the towel and silk between us. I wasn’t new to this reaction, and since she hadn’t gotten a full look at me until I put my glass down and faced her, it was understandable that she’d be shocked.

I’m not vain. But I am honest. I’d been living in my skin for thirty plus years and had been attracting attention for my looks since I was a baby, according to my mother. My father had made fun of me, calling me “pretty boy” and “too handsome for my own good,” enough that I truly didn’t think it was any kind of a big deal. My brother and I were both attractive. We stood

over six feet with hair shading from black to light brown, but we each had our own twist on our shared genetics. Mine happened to be on the model-worthy side while James, my taller and older sibling was built more like a football player and was burly-looking with his brewer’s beard.

“Take your grabby hand off my tit,” my new obsession said in a conversational tone.

I did, straightening up with my most dazzling grin. She was frowning at me now, which made a tiny line form between her huge, sapphire-like eyes. My fingertip tingled with the urge to touch it, to smooth it away, to kiss it. Instead, I stuck out my elbow so I could do my best casual, leaning-on-the-bar pose, letting her know how blasé I was about her even as my heart raced and my head pounded with the strangest compulsion to sweep her into my arms and take her upstairs.

When my elbow found nothing but air, and I sensed myself toppling, I kept smiling, unable to take my eyes off the sheer perfection in front of me. When I caught her gaze from my new position on the floor at her feet, her lips ticked upward a little, then a lot. She giggled, then tittered, then laughed full out so loudly half a dozen people turned around to watch as she held out a hand and tugged me up. Something about her made me want to smile forever, despite the keen embarrassment of my flop.

“My name’s Michael. Please tell me you’re not here with anyone.” I didn’t let go of her hand until she pulled away, looked around, then back at me in a way that almost knocked me on my ass again.

“I’m Sloane, and I am, but I’d love to ditch him. Buy me a drink? Or I guess I could suck on this a while.” She held the silky, bourbon-soaked fabric away from her chest just enough that I got a glimpse of a small, pink and very hard nipple.

Trying like hell not to gulp or expose the fact that my dick was up and at 'em in a way I'd worried it might not be only a few minutes earlier, I held out a bar chair and gestured for her to take a seat. She slid into it, exposing her leg half-way up her slender, tanned thigh.

Holy Jesus, give me strength.

“Allow me. I would hate to see you sucking on Armani fabric, although...” I rested my hand on the back of her seat and leaned into her ear, closing my eyes against the combined scents of expensive perfume and the natural musk of her skin. “I might want to do that later.”

“Don't fucking flirt with me. You are way too handsome for your own damn good. I want a martini, a Vesper. And spare me the shaking BS. I want it stirred, like a proper drink.”

I raised a hand and tore my gaze away from her boobs. For fuck's sake, they weren't even that impressive—not huge, not tiny, not fake, simply...perfect.

“Stop hovering. I know you're looking down my dress, perv. Sit. That's a good boy.” She patted the empty seat next to her and worked on the stain again, ignoring me until our drinks arrived. She held hers up and turned to face me, leaving me breathless all over again.

“Cheers, handsome,” she said.

I clinked glasses with her, sipped, and set it down. It would be my third, which was my hard limit for bourbon. Besides, I wanted something else entirely, and she was sitting right next to me, her fire-red lips caressing the thin glass around a martini.

Sloane

Well, this night is looking up.

I smiled into my martini as I pretended to ignore Mr. Perfect sitting next to me, his stare boring holes into the side of my face closest to him. The expensive mix of gin and vodka was a cool, syrupy elixir sliding down my throat. When it hit my chest, I sensed every inch of my skin flaming hot. Or maybe it was his proximity.

Him. Michael. The sexiest guy I'd encountered in a while. Hell, in my entire life.

I favored him with a side glance and was treated to a thrill of lust so powerful I could barely restrain the shudder that threatened to tip over my glass. Dear God and Sonny Jesus, the man was sex personified, truly as handsome as any model with strong, chiseled features, coal black hair, and piercing blue-gray eyes. I had always been a stone-cold sucker for a man in a suit, but this particular man wore his like a second skin. A skin I wanted to strip right off him to get at the heat underneath.

Still shivering, I refocused on my glass, which had somehow gotten empty when I wasn't paying attention. Blinking fast, I pressed a hand to my stomach to restrain the gurgling empty sounds.

This is how it works, Sloane, remember? You have to be hungry every now and then to lose weight.

I glanced over at him again. He was leaning on one elbow, his rocks glass in the other hand, his eyes still fixed on me.

“So,” I said, turning so he could get the full effect of my ruined dress again. “You’re gonna owe me for this.” I gestured down my front, noting with satisfaction how his eyes darkened as he followed my hand’s trajectory first down, then up.

“I’ll make you whole, never fear.” He sipped, his gaze never leaving mine.

I blinked. I may very well have met my match. The earlier, tongue-tied, open-mouthed awe was gone. He’d launched straight into full frontal seduction.

Cool. I could use the practice.

“Will you, now?” I took the tiny curl of lemon peel from the bottom of my glass and stuck it in my mouth. Biting down on the tart bitter rind gave me a modicum of focus. Although I knew where this was headed. Oh hell yes, I did.

It was headed exactly where I wanted it to go.

I leaned forward. Michael’s eyes flickered to my chest, then back to my face in a way designed for me to fully grasp that he wanted me to know he’d done it. And that he’d do it again. I smiled. His smile widened. I put my hand on his wrist, barely suppressing my shiver at our contact.

Yes. This night was definitely looking up.

“So, Mike,” I said, motioning him forward so I could whisper in his ear. I put my lips just close enough that he could feel them on his lobe. “You’re gonna help me ditch my date, right? He’s over there.” I pushed his face to the left, loving the rasp of his stubble under my fingertip. I was so damn horny I didn’t trust myself even as I mentally begged for him to kiss me. He didn’t though.

“Michael,” he said as he gazed at my supposed date.

Really, kudos to him for drawing this out, for somehow knowing how much I loved this stage of the mating game. The set-up, the reel-in, the teasing was, to me, over half the fun. In my experience with guys like this—the pretty ones, the ones who thought they were as good at the game as I was—the second half was usually a disappointment.

My target spent a few seconds sipping and staring at the guy I'd come here with, some tool whose company my PR firm was hoping to land as a big contract. I'd brought him here on my own tonight, figuring I could at least show him how cool I was, willing to hang at a high-end strip club with the guys.

As if sensing our attention, my date lifted his drink, then turned back to the stage show. He was transfixed, like a rookie. It had shocked me when he said he'd never been here before. Jesus, anyone in finance or high stakes advertising and PR had been here, and if they claimed otherwise they were lying. But this guy...

I sighed and leaned on my elbow, letting my hand rest on Michael's arm again.

"So boring," I said, meaning it.

"Yeah," Michael agreed with me. "I mean, who really watches all that anyway?"

He turned his head, putting our faces in the sort of pleasantly close proximity that boded well. Especially considering how he waited, then withdrew without kissing me.

Nice. Very nice.

I shifted in my seat, uncrossed and re-crossed my legs, relishing the distinct and pleasant sensation of wetness at the top of my bare thighs.

"Never seen you here before," Michael said, keeping a somewhat polite distance. "Water, please," he said to a passing bartender. "Two."

I pushed the martini glass to the side and leaned forward again, wanting another full, sensory experience. Michael smelled like soap, cotton, starch, and bourbon, with the slightest hint of cigar smoke. Unable to stop myself, I touched his jaw to pull him closer.

"I come here a lot," I whispered, almost blind with lust by this point but loving the way he was letting me set the pace.

"Really," he said. "What a coincidence. So do I."

I could practically see the waves of lust rising from his scalp as I studied him a few seconds before I let my lips graze where my fingertips had been.

"But you should know something," he said, seemingly unaffected by my light kiss.

I closed my eyes and tried to get hold of myself, to regain control. Because this was how this was supposed to work. I, a very sexy, very intriguing woman, showed up at this overblown titty bar with a "date" and was right in the fray with the guys. I tucked bucks. I touched ass and nip. I pretended to kiss the chick hired by my date for a semi-public lap dance.

It was all in the build-up. And lately, somewhat alarmingly, it was about the only thing that could get me off. I knew it was one hundred fifty percent the power trip, my power over all the men in the room. All the men who wanted me while I had my lap dance. All the men jealous of the guy who would take me upstairs later.

I only achieved a satisfactory orgasm about half the time with these guys anymore. So yeah, I was getting bored.

Until tonight. Until Michael-not-Mike, with his clumsiness and his killer face, lips, eyes, and hands, one of which was on my bare upper arm.

“What exactly should I know?”

His fingers traced lines up and down my arm, leaving a trail of telltale goose bumps in their wake. I bit my lip to keep from yanking him to me so I could kiss him. No. That would be giving up way too much. Besides, he’d probably be another one—another suit full of poser—who’d get off and leave me panting and unsatisfied.

“I don’t play games.” He leaned away from me, taking his fingertips with him.

“Oh?” I tilted my head, flipped my hair over one shoulder, blinked, and smiled. The usual shit that typically turned all the posers into quivering piles of horny goo.

Michael raised an eyebrow at me, then turned to face the bar again. A tickle of anger joined the lusty swirl of fog threatening to blind and deafen me.

Didn’t play games, huh? We’ll see about that.

I stood and smoothed the ruined dress over my hips, trying to hide how badly my legs were shaking. “Well, thanks for the drink, Mike.”

Keeping his body facing the bar, he looked over his shoulder at me. “You’re welcome. Sloane.”

God damn it.

I dropped back onto the bar stool, as if he’d commanded me to do it. He watched me, his body turned away. I settled into the inevitable small talk with reluctance. “So, what brings you here tonight?” Without a word, he rose, took my elbow, and tugged me to my feet. “You, I think. Shall we?”

He began to guide me toward the hidden stairs to the second floor. I was speechless, furious at his assumption yet beyond eager to get to stage two, something I rarely wanted anymore. He kept

his hand in the small of my back all the way up the wide, carpeted stairs, pausing at the top to signal to someone.

It wasn't like I'd never been up here before. I had been. More times than I cared to admit. But now...this time...it seemed loaded with something more, something real, something that terrified me and turned me on in equal, near overwhelming measure.

He guided me down the hall in silence. I heard the noises I always associated with this upstairs hall—groans and gasps, the occasional smack of skin on skin, the odd yelp or shriek of pain that would then morph into sounds of pleasure. But I was in a daze, not at all my usual, invigorated, let's-do-this-thing-and-get-it-over-with self. As I said, I liked the buildup, the flirtation, the almost-there as much as, if not more than, the actual sex act. If I were honest with myself, I was aces at orgasm faking, then taking care of myself later in the shower or wherever. But at that moment, all I knew was Michael's hot

palm, burning through the thin fabric of my dress at my back, right above my ass. And all I wanted was for him to move that hand lower, to grab me, pull me to him, and do any damn thing he wanted.

Whew. I must be hormonal or something. This is not at all like me.

A door opened. Michael held out a hand, indicating I should go in first. I stared at it, then at his arm, still encased in a tailored suit jacket, then to his face. "I don't know..."

"Really? I think you do."

I did. God help me I did, even though part of me wanted to plant the toe of my designer shoe into his crotch, laugh at him while he rolled on the floor in agony, and bolt. But that part of me was being subsumed by other, more insistent ones.

I went into the room. It was kitted out like all the rest of them up here, as if we were in some kind of overpriced, east coast hotel—huge, heavy four-poster bed with a luxurious pile of pillows and a silky-looking duvet. Carefully mismatched chairs sat next to a hearth where a gas fire flame danced. The small table between them was set with a bottle of red wine and two glasses. The carpet was threadbare enough to be chic. The walls hung with a bizarre mix of paintings and generic Chicago-skyline prints.

I frowned at the wine, already decanted and ready. Anger took over, giving me a shot at taking a full breath around a chest full of heavy anticipation. "I'm not some random..."

Michael slid the fingers of one hand into my hair. The other hand pulled me close. "No. There is nothing random about you. Nothing at all."

He kissed me then, a typical first kiss. Not perfect by any stretch but damn close. His lips were firm, his tongue merely probing, licking my lips until I opened them to him. That seemed to light a fire in both of us. He pressed me back until I was pinned against the wall, his lips never leaving mine.

I was no rookie when it came to kissing. But I could honestly say that no one in my universe had ever kissed me like this guy was doing.

I sighed and wrapped both my arms around his neck as his hands moved down my back to my ass. When I bent one leg, he lifted it so one of his thighs was pressed between mine. I never wore panties when I was out with a guy. It was sort of a rule. His hand was close, so close to my bare and eager pussy, gripping me as I ground against his wool trouser leg.

His lips broke from mine, leaving me gasping. But he kept me pressed to the wall as he kissed his way down my neck to my shoulder, then back up again. It was glorious, amazing, perfect. I never wanted it to end. Then, for some reason, it did.

He let go of me and stepped away, hands on his hips, his gaze on the floor. I stumbled forward in his absence, cursing under my breath. My other senses seemed to open up, letting me hear car tires screeching on the street below, a police siren, what could easily have been a gunshot, considering the neighborhood. When only moments ago, all I heard was the sound of his voice.

“What is your problem,” I demanded, worried he’d somehow found me lacking in the kissing department. Or maybe he thought I was fat.

“I can’t,” he said, his voice low, his heaving chest giving away the fact he was as breathless as I was. When he looked at me, his eyes were full of something strange, something I’d never seen before. A kind of longing tinged with hope, edged with lust. I moved closer to him, put one arm around his neck, and let my other hand rest against the hard edge of his erection under his dress trousers.

He sucked in a breath.

I smiled.

“I am pretty sure you can. And you should.” I bit his earlobe. “Mike,” I whispered, everything in me screaming two conflicting messages. Go. Go now. Go fast. Go hard before he disappears.

But also, stop, because something about this man, something I sensed deep in my bones, was different and I knew it. Stop now. Get out of here. Guard your heart.

I moved away from him, unsure what to do. When he took the hand ready to unzip his pants and put it to his lips as he said, “Michael,” that tore it.

Yep. This night was gonna be a damn good one after all.

Michael

I surrendered my virginity at sixteen with the help of my brother's ex-girlfriend. Well, soon-to-be ex-girlfriend. It was the typical rushed, embarrassing affair complete with fumbled condoms and, of course, getting caught. By my brother. An ugly scene all the way around, really. It put me off sex...for about three days.

Since then, I developed a preference for older women and, thanks to my looks and flirting skills, had been presented with a wealth of possibilities. I justified my various dalliances with older girls in high school and professors in college by convincing myself I was only adding to my skill set—all to the benefit of woman-kind. Pretty lame, but it worked for me.

I managed to skip the whole girlfriend thing but was never dateless for key events—prom, formals, major holidays, including Valentine's Day. If anything, I'd turned myself into one of those guys with more options than there were days of the week. And yet, I relished my freedom, and had a keen radar for clinginess. The result of all this fucking around was that I was now thirty-four years old and had yet to go out with a woman more than two or three times in a row. And if I were being honest with myself, I was getting tired of it.

Which likely led to the extreme weak moment at the upscale strip bar with the too-hot-for-her-own-good Sloane. But I was going with it. I wanted her, sure. But something else compelled me to act the way I did. To take her upstairs into one of the private rooms, to peel her out of that bourbon-soaked dress like a delectable candy morsel, lay her back on the huge bed, and bestow my many years of experience upon her.

But something wouldn't allow me to keep my usual emotional distance, and it threw me off more than a little bit. Her skin was softer, smoother, sexier than any woman's I'd ever touched. Her lips were fuller, her neck more enticing. The soft sounds she made in her throat as I explored her with my fingers, lips, and tongue made my skin tingle. All the red flags in my happy bachelor's brain were waving like mad as I made my slow way along every inch of her body.

By the time I tossed her legs over my shoulders and felt her fingernails digging into my scalp while I brought her to a lovely, loud orgasm with my lips on her clit and two fingers buried deep inside her, stroking the little bundle of nerves tucked behind her pubic bone, I was a goner.

.....

Whew!

If you think that's hot, wait until you dive into this compelling follow up novel to What Happens in Denver....

[What Happens in Chicago](#)

[Order now.](#)