

Sherri Hayes

# Need

Finding Anna Book 2

The Writer's Coffee Shop   
Publishing House

# Also by Sherri Hayes

Hidden Thread

Slave

Behind Closed Doors

Advance Reader's Copy

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# Chapter 1

## Brianna

I stood, looking at myself in the mirror, the events of last night running through my head. It wouldn't stop. I couldn't believe what he'd told me. For nearly a year, I had lived my life as a slave, as someone else's property. Now I . . . wasn't?

“I didn't buy you to own you. Not like you think I did.”

“If... if you didn't want to... own me, then why did you... why would you buy me?”

“There are people out there who enjoy what Ian does. Alex, for example, but if you weren't that type of person . . . well, I couldn't just not do something. I had the means to help you. I couldn't just walk away, and leave you there, if that wasn't what you wanted.”

His next words rang in my ears as if he were standing right beside me saying them again. “I was selfish, though. When I brought you into my home, I knew that I wanted to keep you. Not as my slave, Brianna.”

He'd gone on to tell me that he wanted me as his submissive. I'd heard that word before, with some of Ian's friends, but I didn't know how it was different from being a slave. He'd said he was different from Ian, but the same. I had so many questions, and yet no idea where to begin.

What did it all mean? Was I no longer his?

I fingered the metal collar still in place around my neck. As he'd held me, I still felt like I was his. There, in his arms, no one could hurt me. I felt safe. Maybe that was stupid, but it was true. The moment I sat down in his lap, his arms came around me, and I instantly felt better. All the uncertainty no longer mattered because he was there.

Nothing could come and take that feeling away. Not even me. He caressed me ever so softly over my arms and back. Every now and then, I'd felt his lips graze my hair or my temple, but he said nothing and neither did I.

From the moment he began explaining to me why he'd bought me from Ian, I knew that I should be asking him questions and demanding answers, but again, I couldn't. I had thought I would spend the rest of my life owned by someone, to be used and abused as they saw fit. And now . . . I was . . . not.

I clung to his shirt with my right hand while my left lay close to my side. Nothing had felt right in my life for the last eleven months. Not until this.

We'd sat there for a long time, neither speaking, with the television playing in the background. Eventually, Ma . . . Ste . . . Mast . . . he moved to turn it off.

He arose fluidly from his chair with me in his arms, and carried me to my bedroom. It had only made me hold on tighter.

He sat me gently on the bed and began to move away. I wouldn't let go.

He pried my small fingers from his shirt. "I'm just going to get you a change of clothes, Brianna. I'll be right back." I wanted to beg him to stay, but I let him walk away.

Just as he'd promised, he was only gone for a minute. He returned with some clothes, but I didn't pay much attention to what they were. Gently, he began undressing me.

His movements were unhurried. Never once did he try to do anything. He never had. I'd been in his home for more than a month, and yet he'd never had sex with me.

He scooped me up again in his warm arms and laid me down in my bed. My eyes found his as he hovered over me. They were filled with concern.

He brushed the hair away from my face. "I'll just be in my room. If you need me or want to talk, come wake me."

I didn't respond to his request. He watched me for several more minutes before standing once again to his full height and turning to leave. Again, I wanted to ask him to stay, but I didn't. Instead, I watched him leave.

I'd lain in bed for hours just thinking until I'd finally drifted off into a fitful sleep. I woke several times during the night. Once, I thought I'd seen him standing in the doorway, but I couldn't be sure.

Light was streaming in through my bedroom windows, leaking into the bathroom through the open doorway as I continued to look in the mirror. It was after eight; I'd glanced at the clock before getting up. He would have already left for work by now. I had no idea what I was waiting for. The mirror held no answers.

Instead of going out into the main room as I usually did, I climbed back into bed. On my side, I pulled my knees up to my chest, hugging myself.

I was alone all the time when he went to work, but for some reason today it brought with it an overwhelming sense of . . . well, not exactly fear, but uncertainty. What was I supposed to do with myself? Did I get up and do what I always did? Was that what he wanted?

However, did that matter anymore? I mean, I wasn't his slave. He'd said so himself.

I could be Anna again.

Anna.

I felt the moisture well up in my eyes and spill over. Who was Anna? Did she even exist anymore?

Suddenly, I felt comforting arms wrap around me. I thought I might have drifted off to sleep again until I heard his voice in my ear, his breath against my hair. He was here. Really, truly here.

I snuggled back against him, and he held me tighter. My tears ran freely down my cheeks, and he silently brushed them away until I drifted off to sleep again.

The next time I woke up the sun was higher in the sky, and I knew it had to be close to noon. I was alone in my bed again, but when I rolled over I saw

him sitting in a chair just off to the side. He had a laptop resting on his legs, but looked up in response to my movement.

His eyes roamed my face as if searching for something. "Hi," I squeaked. My throat was dry, probably from crying.

"Hello," he replied in a steady, even voice. As if he knew what I was thinking, he picked up a glass of water that was on the nightstand beside my bed and handed it to me. I hadn't even noticed it. "Drink."

I brought the glass up to my lips and felt the liquid coat my dry throat. Only after the contents were completely gone did I lower the cup and look up at him again. His eyes were still on me. Watching.

"Thank you," I whispered.

"You're welcome," he responded. "Are you feeling better?"

I nodded.

"Are you hungry?" he asked.

I hadn't even thought of food until he mentioned it, but my stomach grumbled in response. He smiled. "I guess that answers my question."

He arose from his chair and set his laptop aside. His hand reached out to me. "Join me?"

It was a question. He was asking me again. I was free to refuse.

My hand reached out and found his. He helped me up, and we walked in silence into the kitchen.

"Would you like breakfast or lunch?"

"Um," I mumbled, looking down out of habit. His finger came up under my chin, making me look at him. He didn't say anything, just quirked an eyebrow. "Breakfast?" I said as more of a question than an answer.

He nodded and motioned for me to take a seat at the island. I slid onto the stool without comment. It had been a while since we'd eaten at the island. We

usually ate breakfast together at the table. The change made me slightly nervous.

I watched as he made ham and cheese omelets for us, just as he had over a month ago. The differences between then and now struck me. Then, I had been worried about what was expected of me by my new Master. Now, I was just as concerned over what to expect, but for very different reasons.

After splitting the large omelet onto two plates, he set one in front of me, and placed the other to my left before coming around to sit down. He was silent as he ate, only glancing up at me once when he noticed I hadn't started eating immediately.

I was almost finished when he said, "Tell me what you're thinking, Brianna."

My fork stopped midway to my mouth. This was it.

I laid my fork down and placed my hands in my lap. "I'm wondering . . . what happens now?" I said without confidence.

"What do you want to happen now?" he asked.

I clenched my hands into fists in frustration. "I don't know," I said somewhere between a sigh and a sob.

His right hand covered both of mine before he spoke again. "This decision is yours, Brianna. I can't make it for you."

"I know, Mas—" Was I supposed to call him Master? Did he want me to?

He sighed. "Maybe we should start with names."

"Names?" I asked, bringing my head up to look at him hesitantly.

"Yes," he said more confidently. "You may call me Stephan, or Sir, if you prefer."

I knew my eyes were wide with shock. He was giving me permission to call him by his given name.

"Also, I was curious as to which name you prefer?"



“You know my name,” I whispered.

He nodded. “This is true.” He paused as if thinking through something. Then, seeming to finish his thought, he began talking again as if he hadn’t stopped. “When I purchased you from Ian, he told me your name was Brianna Reeves. He called you Brianna, and you’ve never said any different or given me any reason to think you preferred to be addressed in any other way.”

Now I was more confused. If he knew my name was Brianna, what was he getting at?

I didn’t have to wait long. “I had a meeting with Brad this past week to see how things were going with your workout routine. He called you Anna,” he said, searching my face for a reaction. He got one. I sucked in a breath at hearing the name my family and friends had called me before this nightmare began.

Brad did call me that, but for some reason it was different. Hearing him . . . Stephan . . . say my name again brought back the memory of the phone call with my father that Saturday afternoon when he told me that a car would be picking me up. I felt my heart rate pick up along with my breathing, but I was okay. I was okay.

“I was called Anna. Before,” I whispered, knowing he’d hear me.

He waited until I looked at him again before asking in that calming voice of his, “Do you wish to be called Anna?”

I didn’t know how to answer him because I truly didn’t know. I wasn’t sure I was that girl anymore, or if I ever could be again. “I don’t . . . know?” Again, it came out sounding like a question.

He nodded again. “All right. We’ll stick to Brianna for now.”

Without another word, he slid from his seat and went to the sink with his plate. After rinsing it off and putting it in the dishwasher, he turned back to me. “You should finish your breakfast. I need to get some work done, but I’d like to talk again in a few hours.”

“Okay,” I answered without emotion.

His face dropped a little, but he quickly recovered. "I'm going to get my laptop from your room, and then I'll be upstairs in the library if you need me."

He paused to watch me for a minute and then walked out of the room, leaving me to finish my omelet.

## Stephan

At least she was still talking. That was good.

After her restless night, I'd been concerned that she'd completely retreat into her shell. Although she hadn't woken up screaming as she had those first few nights, she'd rarely stopped moving. Her arms, legs, and head had thrashed about causing the sheets and blankets to bunch and tangle in her limbs. Moans, both loud and soft, were constant visitors until the sun had started to rise in the sky.

I retrieved my laptop from the chair in her room and headed upstairs. She was still in the kitchen when I passed by, eating—or rather picking at—what was left of her food. The urge to go to her was strong, but I knew that I couldn't. I wanted her to have time to gather her thoughts before we talked later, and that was something she needed to do without me hovering.

It was hard to concentrate on work, but somehow, I managed to get through the e-mails that needed my attention. The clock read three thirty by the time I was finished, and Brianna had yet to come upstairs. I'd heard her moving around downstairs, but not enough for me to decipher what she could be doing.

Figuring I needed a little moral support, I called Logan's number. Thankfully, he picked up on the third ring. After the pleasantries were out of the way, he got down to business and asked me how the talk with Brianna went.

"She's got more strength than she gives herself credit for," he said once I'd brought him up to date on both our conversations last night and the one this morning.

"Yes, she does. I wish she would trust me more. There are still so many things that she keeps to herself."

“Have you told her that?”

“What? Well, of course . . .” The more I thought about it, the more I realized that although I had told Brianna she could talk to me, told her that she could trust me, I had always tried to keep my feelings and wants under control. Maybe Logan was right and I needed to tell her specifically what I wanted from her. She hadn't reacted badly when I'd told her I wanted her to stay last night. It might not be so bad.

“Thank you, Logan.”

“What are friends for?” he said, and I could hear his amusement through the phone.

“There is one more thing. If Brianna decides to consider becoming my submissive—”

“She should talk to Lily,” he said, before I could finish my sentence.

“Yes. I can answer her questions, but I think it would help having another submissive to talk with.” I paused, and then added, “I don't know if I could handle it if she agreed, and then rejected me.”

“You need to be prepared, Stephan. She may not want what you want, or like what you do.”

I ran my hand through my hair in frustration. “I know that, Logan,” I said through gritted teeth. “Do you think I don't know that?” Realizing I was raising my voice, I took a deep breath to calm myself down. “I know. Believe me, I know. I just . . .” I couldn't explain it other than to say, “She's different.”

He didn't say anything for a long time. I knew he was weighing his response. Finally, he spoke. “I know this is different for you, Stephan, but you can't allow that to color your judgment or influence her. She has to want this or it won't work. Not for the long term anyway. And I know you well enough to know that is what you want.”

Now it was my turn not to say anything. Logan knew me better than anyone else did. He'd stuck by me during my rebellious teenage years, and kept me out of the kind of trouble that would have ended up with me in Juvenile Hall.

We'd experienced so many firsts together in our adolescence. I trusted him. He trusted me. Time and life experience had done nothing but strengthen that.

By the time I hung up with Logan, it was after four and I could hear Brianna moving around in the kitchen. I smiled to myself. She'd be starting dinner for us.

I decided to give her a little more uninterrupted time and called my assistant, Jamie. She assured me that although Karl Walker, the foundation's CFO, had been looking for me, it didn't appear to be urgent. Missing work was not something I liked to do, but I hadn't wanted to leave her alone today.

After hanging up with Jamie, I closed down my computer and opened the lower left drawer of my desk. There in the back was what I had been looking for: an empty journal.

As I walked back downstairs, the sounds in the kitchen got louder and then suddenly stopped. When I rounded the corner, Brianna was standing frozen in the center of my kitchen.

I walked over to her. "Is everything all right?"

She nodded.

"Brianna, please talk to me. Why are you standing in the middle of the kitchen? Do you need something?"

Again she didn't speak, just shook her head no.

This time, I reached out and brought her head up. Her eyes held uncertainty again. "Tell me."

"I don't . . . know what to do." "About?"

She pressed her lips tightly together, and I was beginning to get frustrated. I tried very hard to remember what Logan had said just before hanging up with me:

"Whatever you do, Stephan, don't lose your temper with her."

I took a deep breath and refocused on her. She shifted her feet several times before she said, "I don't know what you want me to do. How you want me to . . . act."

"How do you want to act?"

That was when the tears started. I knew she was confused. This could not be easy for her. She had just begun to accept that she belonged to me, and now I had once again destroyed her reality. I only hoped she would let me help her build a new and better one.

I brushed the tears from her cheeks with my thumbs and stepped forward to bring us closer together. She took the invitation and laid her head on my chest. I wrapped my arms around her and rubbed my lips against her hair. "You can tell me anything, Brianna. Anything. I don't want you to keep things to yourself. I want you to trust me."

She nodded against my chest.

I noticed there was water boiling on the stove, so I reached over and turned the burner off. She started to step away and apologize, but I pulled her back against me. "No. Dinner will wait. I think we need to talk first."

Brianna nodded and stayed close to my side as I led us to the living room. I walked to my chair and sat down, holding my hand out in offering to her. She placed her fingers in my grasp and lowered herself onto my lap.

Once she was settled and my arms were around her, I said, "Now, tell me what is bothering you."

She took several minutes to answer, but finally said, "I don't know how I'm supposed to act . . . what I'm supposed to do now."

I took a deep breath and said, "Let's start with the first one, shall we?" Her face was full of anxiety, but she nodded.

"This is my house, so I expect you to treat me and my things with respect. You are free to come and go. If you aren't going to be home when I am, then I expect you to either call me or leave a note. My bedroom is still off limits to

you unless I give you permission to go in there. I would still like for you to continue working with Brad. I think it will help you not only physically, but mentally as well. It doesn't matter what you decide to do, but it is your decision. You may stop if you wish.”

I let that set in for a minute before I continued. “As I told you last night, I’d still like to see you go back to school. Again, it will be a benefit to you no matter what path you end up choosing.” Pausing, I made sure she was looking at me before calmly saying, “Everything else is up to you.”

She just watched me, not saying anything for two hundred and four seconds. Then she said, “So, if I decide I don’t . . . want to stay?”

I felt a deep pain in my chest unlike any I’d ever known. It took me a few seconds to find my voice. “I won’t stop you.”

Brianna didn’t respond. Her eyes roamed my face and then fell to her lap. Once again, she pressed her lips together.

I decided to take Logan’s advice and tell her exactly what I wanted. “I would like for you to stay. How do you feel about that?”

She shifted on my lap a little. “Scared.”

“Why do you feel scared?”

“You want me to be your . . . submissive,” she whispered.

“Yes,” I answered.

“I don’t,” she said, and then stopped herself. “What would I have to do?”

The fact that she didn’t say no outright gave me some hope. I smiled, tucked her hair behind her ear with one hand, and reached over to retrieve the new journal with the other. Her fingers touched it reverently when I placed it in her lap. “This is a journal. It’s yours. I’d like for you to put your thoughts and feelings down in it every day.”

She opened it, flipping through the blank pages. “I used to have a journal when I was with my mom,” she said absently. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

I waited until she closed the book and cradled it to her chest. Brianna seemed very pleased with her new journal. “We need to communicate. I need to know what you are thinking and feeling, Brianna. I want to help you so that you’re not afraid anymore, but you have to help me. You have to talk to me. Will you do that?”

“Yes.”

I cupped her face with both of my hands. “You don’t have to make any decisions right now, Brianna. I won’t force you into this. It has to be your choice.”

She closed her eyes briefly. When they opened again, they were glistening, and a single tear fell down her cheek. My mouth opened and pressed against her skin, capturing the moisture. The salty taste lingered on my tongue.

Brianna’s lips parted as she sucked in a deep breath. My senses registered her reaction, and I felt the pull I had felt so many times before. Tilting her face up with the pads of my thumbs, I moved my lips down to within a breath of her own. “I want to kiss you, Brianna.”

She didn’t answer me so I remained where I was. She tilted her head, bringing her mouth closer to mine almost unconsciously.

“Do you want me to kiss you?” I whispered.

“Yes,” she said, her breath ghosting across my lips.

A second after the word left her mouth my lips were covering hers. My fingers wrapped around her scalp, moving her head to give me the best access. Her lips parted and I took advantage.

The taste of her against my tongue drove me on. Ever so slowly, I explored every inch of her mouth. The mouth of the woman I hoped to one day make completely and solely mine.

Brianna’s hands came up to rest lightly on my chest. My hands increased their grip on her hair as I pulled back enough to say, “Touch me,” before going back to my delicious exploration.

Slowly her hands moved up my torso to my neck. Feeling her touch my bare skin sent a shiver down my spine, and I pulled her closer. I wanted to devour her.

My body shifted and I put my left hand on her waist, pressing her closer. She was too desirable for her own good.

I forced myself to push her away. My forehead rested against hers as our harsh breath mingled together. Her expressive blue eyes fluttered open. For a moment, they weren't afraid. Then, I saw it again as she registered the want I knew was reflected in my own eyes.

With great reluctance, I leaned back and cleared my face of my desire. "I have one more request," I said once I'd regained my voice.

"What?" she asked, still not fully in control of herself. "I want you to talk to Lily."