

Love Potion # 19



Caitlyn Willows

LOVE POTION #9

...Theo's frown deepened. They were on each other's bank accounts and car registrations. While they might not call what they did dating, they went out to dinner, movies, and amusement parks together. They even vacationed together. For all intents and purposes, they *were* a couple. Except for one small, tiny, minor detail...the sex.

Theo lifted the beer can to his lips, wincing with his sip. He upended the stuff into the sink—no one should be forced to drink swill like that. He'd obviously gotten a bad can. Hands braced on the edge of the counter, he stared at Lori. She did have the brightest smile. He loved to hear her laugh, and hated it when she cried. What would sex with her be like? They'd never so much as kissed. *Oh, but to kiss her!*

Another shiver wiggled through him, straight to his crotch. Now he couldn't move from the sink. This was the last thing the Moms needed to focus on. Did his jacket hide his erection? Theo didn't dare check; he simply continued watching Lori, seeing her through different eyes. Were her lips as soft as they looked? Her mouth as hot? Theo pressed his lips together to keep from licking them.

He'd heard her with dates before, heard her soft cries when she came. No doubt she'd heard him too, less quiet. Now, he imagined her in his arms, clutched to him body and soul as she climaxed. Theo swallowed hard. Now he really couldn't move.

Would it be so bad, having sex with her? After all they'd been through, couldn't they make this work too? Why hadn't they tried?

But...what if I lose her? Just the thought scared him. But up until now, he'd never considered they had been missing out on something wonderful.

He willed her to look his way. Within a heartbeat she did, locking her gaze with his, her lips slightly parted. And it was all Theo could do to keep from charging out there to claim her...

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AMBER QUILL PRESS, LLC

<http://www.amberquill.com>

LOVE POTION #9
AN AMBER QUILL PRESS BOOK

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Copyright © 2005 by Catherine Snodgrass
ISBN 1-59279-411-4
Cover Art © 2005 Trace Edward Zaber

Layout and Formatting provided by: ElementalAlchemy.com

PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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Lori Ditmer slowed her ten-year-old Volvo to a crawl. She hated winter when she had to come home from work to a dark house. Shadows peeked from every corner. Leafless trees spread their skeleton limbs to the blackened sky. It was the beginning of one of those nights when anything could leap out at you. And that's what Lori was afraid of.

She closed in on the driveway leading to the single-story duplex she co-owned with her best friend for life, Theo Grady. All was dark here too, except for headlights coming her way. Lori paused before turning in. If the vehicle was anyone other than Theo, she was getting the hell out of here. As things stood, she had no intention of leaving her car, much less crossing the threshold of that house *until* he got home. Not now. Not tonight. It might look safe—there wasn't a sign of another car anywhere—but Lori knew how determined certain people were. Just because you couldn't see them outright didn't mean they weren't there.

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Lori heaved a sign of relief when she saw Theo's dark blue pickup pass under the lone streetlight. He was home. They could face this threat together, just as they'd planned. He'd have her back; she'd have his. No one else could appreciate the depths the enemy would go to but them.

He spun the window down as he pulled up beside her. "Any sign yet?"

She shook her head. "They're in there. I just know it."

His chocolate brown eyes looked past her to the darkened house beyond. "Me, too. It's been too quiet these last few days. There's no way they'd miss an opportunity like this."

Long fingers gripped the steering wheel with the same desperation Lori felt. "We could always hide out at a hotel."

His lips lifted in a half-smile with his humorless laugh. "If I thought for an instant that would stop them, I would."

Lori glanced at the house. He was right. They'd find someone to hunt them down. They'd proven long ago they had spies everywhere. "Let's get this over with. If we split up—"

"No. We stick together. It's our best defense. If we humor them, we might survive."

Theo was right. Their united stance had never failed before. But today was different. The stakes were higher.

She waited until he backed up and turned into the driveway before following. They cut their engines, turned off their lights, and stepped out of their vehicles with precision timing, as if they choreographed it. Lori allowed herself a wry smile. They'd been down this road before. Of course they were in perfect tune with each other.

They stood side by side at the head of the driveway, silently debating their next course of action. They were dressed for the night—dark blue jackets over matching T-shirts and sweatpants...even their running shoes were dark. Winding sidewalks led from either side of the

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driveway to their respective front doors.

“Which way?” he asked.

“I doubt it matters. They’d have all the entrances covered.”

“We need better security.”

Lori snorted. “As if that would stop them.”

“Yeah...I know.” He pressed his hand against the center of her back. “Let’s go. The sooner we get this confrontation over with, the sooner we can get some peace and quiet.”

Lori echoed that sentiment. It’d been a long, grueling day, made doubly tense knowing the confrontation awaiting them.

Their footsteps melded into one sound as they made their way to her front door. There was no sense being stealthy. Those inside would have been on the watch anyway. Lori cocked her head to one side. Was that skittering she heard inside? Whispered voices? Smothered giggles?

Theo flashed her a look from the corner of his eye as he reached for the screen door—he’d heard it too. His world weary sigh confirmed that. The squeak of the hinges betrayed their location. No doubt now...they were seconds from entering the trap laid.

Lori seated the key in the lock. “I so don’t want to do this.”

“Me either. Just get the door open and I’ll hit the light. That might give us some edge.”

She gave him a single nod and twisted the key. He snaked his fingers into the crack of an opening, flicked on the overhead lights, and shoved open the door.

“Surprise!” Family and friends leaped from their hiding places.

Lori and Theo weren’t amused.

“Happy Birthday!” a chorus of voices ran out.

Theo bent close to Lori’s ear. “Just as we suspected. We’re victims of a drive-by party.”

She flashed him a pained look as their mothers converged on them. And here it started...the pressure. Lori could recite the words verbatim.

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“You’re thirty years old. When are you going to—”

“Happy Birthday, sweetheart.” Her mother wrapped her in a tight hug.

“Were you surprised?” Betty Grady stood on tiptoe to hug her son.

Theo gave Lori a wink as he wrapped his arms around the tiny woman. Lori could never believe three strapping sons had come from someone so little.

“You bet,” he said. “How long have you had this planned?”

How could you not like a man who let his mom have her fun? Lori never ceased to be shocked that some woman hadn’t snatched him up a long time ago.

“For months!” Betty steered him toward the couch.

There was a flash of panic when Lori thought the Moms meant to separate them. Then her mom pointed her in the same direction, threading her through the throng of guests. There were pats on the back, hugs as they went, and then she and Theo were pushed unceremoniously side by side onto her sofa. A huge cake weighted down the coffee table. The words “Happy Birthday, Lori and Theo!” were emblazoned in deep purple on the white frosting—just like the twenty-nine other birthdays she and Theo had shared. There was just one exception...there were no presents cluttering the area.

Lori felt some of her tension lessen. At least they’d finally listened about something. The last thing either of them needed was more stuff crowding the stuff they already had.

Theo’s dad clapped his hands. “I’ll start the grill.”

Her father darted for the kitchen. “I’ve got the chicken strips all marinated.”

Only their dads would dare an outside barbecue in the dead of winter. At least the weather was clear, even if it was a little cold.

“Wait!” The Moms threw up their hands. Silence descended. People froze, then craned their necks for a closer look.

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“Uh-oh,” Theo muttered.

Yep, Lori felt it too. Presents. Sure enough the Moms whipped out two small boxes from under the coffee table. One was wrapped in pink foil; the other in blue.

Lori’s spirits sagged with her shoulders.

“Mom...” Theo protested even as he reached for the little box.

His mother waved the words away. “It’s just a little something for fun. Nothing serious at all.”

“We promise,” her mom added.

There wasn’t any choice. Arguing would exhaust them and refusing would hurt feelings. Like the dutiful youngest children they’d always been—to a point—Lori and Theo stripped the paper down to a black satin box. The words “Madame Rue’s” were stamped in gold on the lid.

“Isn’t that the weird little place on 34th and Vine?” Theo asked.

“Open it,” the Moms ordered.

“Geez, Mom, take the gun away from my head.” Lori wiggled the lid off. A tiny vial of golden liquid was nestled in cotton. The number 9 was etched into the glass.

“What’s this?” Theo plucked his vial from the container and held it up to the light.

“It’s just for fun,” Betty replied, shifting her gaze away.

If that wasn’t a sign of duplicity, Lori didn’t know what was. Even her mother wouldn’t look her in the eye. Something was up.

“It’s an...elixir,” she tried next.

Theo’s oldest brother, Wayne, snorted. “Give it up, Mom. Tell them the truth.”

She flashed him a dirty look, then sighed. “All right. It’s a love potion.”

Theo pinched the vial between his thumb and forefinger. “Number 9, I suppose.”

Lori’s mother nudged his knee. “Chill out. It’s just a joke. You two

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are always complaining that we nag you too much.”

And they did. The two mothers just couldn’t understand that a romance between their children wasn’t going to happen. Lori and Theo had been friends all their lives. Best friends. They did everything together and always had. They thought alike, they could finish each other’s sentences, they bought this duplex together, they even worked together. But romance wasn’t going to happen. Oh, they’d talked about it, especially during the dry spells. But it never went any further than that.

“We thought you’d get a kick out of it,” her mother said. “A nice laugh.”

“And I suppose you’d like us to drink this right down like good children?” Lori asked.

“Yes,” they replied together.

Squinting his eyes, Theo studied the contents. “How do we know what’s in this? Where did you get it? Is it a narcotic? What are the side effects?”

“For crying out loud.” Wayne slugged him in the shoulder. “Can you stop analyzing stuff for one night?”

Theo shot him a glance from the corner of his eye. “Never.”

“It’s colored sugar water,” Betty said. “For entertainment purposes only. Just drink it.”

It seemed they were putting a lot of pressure on them for entertainment purposes.

Her mother squatted down to their level. “If you drink it, we promise we won’t pester you tonight.”

Lori leaned forward. “If we drink this, you promise to never pester us again.”

Theo chuckled. “Now that’s a deal I can live with.” Hand posed on the stopper, he shifted his gaze between the two women. “Well?”

They didn’t like it. Lori could tell by their tight lips. It felt like

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minutes ticked by while everyone waited for their decision—the final battle of wills. Finally, the Moms nodded and uttered a single word, “Agreed.”

“This stuff better not make me sick,” Lori said, pulling the stopper as Theo did.

They took a sniff. It smelled like water. Lifting the vials, they clicked them together with a simultaneous, “Cheers,” then downed the liquid in one gulp.

“Tastes like water,” they said together. “Jinx, you owe me a coke.” They followed that up with a playful slug to each other’s arm.

“Now can we get to the food?” Theo asked. “It’s been a long day and we’re starving.”

Whatever tension that had existed in the room vanished. Victory looked like it was theirs tonight. Finally...freedom from the constant nagging. Lori had a feeling the truce wouldn’t last long. Nothing could stop their mothers.

Theo cupped her knee, giving it a little shake. “Want a beer?”

“Sure.”

After a squeeze, he pushed away and walked over to his portion of the duplex flanked by his older brothers. The trio certainly had their father’s build—tall, broad-shouldered—which made the logistics of their conception even more amusing.

Lori stared at Theo. Odd how the light brought out the red in his dark brown hair. He did have the nicest looking butt of any man she’d ever known. She liked a man with a great butt. *You could grab those cheeks in your palms and haul him to you real tight. Or dig your heels in the clefts at the side and ride...*

“So...how was your day?”

Lori shook her head clear and blinked up as her brothers plopped down on each side of her. She couldn’t think straight, much less put two words together, not with the image she just conjured up in her

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head. Now these two made her feel...cornered. Mom might have backed off with nagging, but Tommy and Danny? No way. They were happy, married with children, and wouldn't rest until Lori was as well.

"Just another day in high school gym class, followed by basketball practice. Excuse me, I think I'll help Dad with the grilling." Cold air. That's what she needed. That ought to shock her back to normal.

* * *

Theo's hand itched like crazy. He never should have let the Moms talk them into drinking that stuff. Sure, it tasted like water, but how could he be sure? He'd heard some weird things about Madame Rue's—mostly from hearing the Goth kids talk in the locker room. Now his hand itched, burned even. Okay, burned was a little over the top, but it was plenty warm.

"How's the varsity basketball team shaping up this year?"

The question came from Scott, his middle brother. Theo frowned. He sounded far away, not right next to him.

"Got some great players. Of course, we have a few attitudes, but we always have that to deal with after the Christmas holiday. No one wants to be back at school." His voice sounded distant, too, like it wasn't him speaking. "But I think we have a good shot at the championship this year."

"That good, huh?" Wayne helped himself to the beer in the refrigerator, passing out a six-pack—enough for all the Grady and Ditmer siblings.

"Their first game is a week away...next Friday at seven, if you're interested." And they generally were. His family and Lori's rarely missed a game.

He snapped off a can, popped the tab, took a long draw...and nearly choked. "What the hell's in this stuff?"

His brothers looked at him like he was crazy. Shrugging, they tried their beers.

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“Uh...nothing?” Scott said.

Damn it all! “It’s that crap Mom made me and Lori drink. It’s screwed up my taste buds.”

They laughed at him.

“It was freakin’ water, for cryin’ out loud,” Wayne said. “Don’t be such a baby.”

Like ten years difference made him the expert. “Don’t be such an old man,” Theo countered, sounding very much like what he’d been accused of. “How could you let the Moms pull a stunt like that...and in front of everyone?”

“Relax.” Scott clapped him on the shoulder. “It was just a joke.”

“You can say that. No one screwed with your beer.” His mouth tasted funny and his tongue itched.

“You’re around high school kids all day. You probably caught a bug from one of them.” Wayne grabbed the remains of the six-pack. “Come on. We’re missing the party.”

Getting sick, my ass. Clutching his can, Theo followed. There was no sense wasting beer. Lori could take his.

The noise level increased as he neared the small service hall connecting their side of the duplex. The only time the door between the two places was ever closed was when they entertained members of the opposite sex. It was open a lot more than it was closed.

It wasn’t that he and Lori couldn’t get dates. It was that those dates didn’t understand the relationship they had. They didn’t understand it was a package deal—if you were with him, you were with Lori and vice versa. The women Theo had dated resented his friendship with Lori, and the men she’d dated felt threatened by him. Consequently, they didn’t date so much. Theo didn’t care. He’d rather do without than have to listen to someone slam Lori.

Theo watched her from the window of her kitchen. She huddled next to the grill between the Dads. Each man pressed close to her to

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help her stay warm. She'd even tossed the hood of her jacket over her head. Still, wisps of her dark brown hair drifted free. The jacket and sweatpants couldn't hide her trim figure. Lori took care of herself. Of course, she had to keep fit in order to keep up with the kids in her gym class.

She sure looked cute standing there, her head just reaching their dads' shoulders. Theo remembered her heartbreaks over the years. She'd rest her head on Theo's chest and cry. He'd hold her tight, wishing he could tear the guy from limb to limb. Nobody hurt his Lori. Odd that he and she had avoided truly hooking up all these years.

Theo cocked his head to one side. Her laugh reached him all the way in here. A tickle wiggled through him, like fingers dancing down his spine. Real odd they hadn't hooked up. She was everything he'd ever wanted in a woman—beautiful, fit, intelligent, neat without being obsessive, comfortable rolling around in the dirt with the guys, knock 'em dead lady-like when she wanted or needed to be. She could cook like nobody's business, was nurturing when he was sick, great with kids and animals, kind and loving to every single one in both their families. She liked the same foods as he did, the same movies, books and TV shows, loved sports. She was perfect. Everything he'd ever looked for was standing right outside. So...why?

They'd talked about it once or twice in the past. Each time they decided against it for fear of ruining their friendship. Standing here with the party noise buzzing in his ears, watching the animation on her face as she talked with the Dads, that idea now sounded stupid. They'd known each other since they were in the womb. They'd faced bullies, summer camp, and puberty together. Every step they'd taken in their lives had been with each other. They went to the same college, picked the same profession, wouldn't take a job unless the other person worked there too. They'd bought this duplex together.

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and car registrations. While they might not call what they did dating, they went out to dinner, movies, and amusement parks together. They even vacationed together. For all intents and purposes, they *were* a couple. Except for one small, tiny, minor detail...the sex.

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Another shiver wiggled through him, straight to his crotch. Now he couldn't move from the sink. This was the last thing the Moms needed to focus on. Did his jacket hide his erection? Theo didn't dare check; he simply continued watching Lori, seeing her through different eyes. Were her lips as soft as they looked? Her mouth as hot? Theo pressed his lips together to keep from licking them.

He'd heard her with dates before, heard her soft cries when she came. No doubt she'd heard him too, less quiet. Now, he imagined her in his arms, clutched to him body and soul as she climaxed. Theo swallowed hard. Now he really couldn't move.

Would it be so bad, having sex with her? After all they'd been through, couldn't they make this work too? Why hadn't they tried?

But...what if I lose her? Just the thought scared him. But up until now, he'd never considered they had been missing out on something wonderful.

He willed her to look his way. Within a heartbeat she did, locking her gaze with his, her lips slightly parted. And it was all Theo could do to keep from charging out there to claim her.

* * *

Lori felt the world slip away from her. Theo's eyes called to her on a level she couldn't explain and would have sworn didn't exist until

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this moment. Emotion clogged her throat. She wanted to toss herself into his arms as if reunited with a long-lost love. Her heartbeat tripled just thinking of the heat of flesh against flesh. She'd always felt safe and comfortable with Theo. His was an unconditional love, as was hers for him. How would it be to have sex with someone who already loved you no matter what? No worries. No cares. Just pure bliss?

Would it be hurried and rushed? Or slow and sweet? He'd seen her at her best and her worst. Shoot, he'd seen her naked. Okay, they'd been five at the time.

That made Lori smile. He might not have seen her naked since then, but they had seen each other in their underwear. Neither of them had anything to prove to the other. They could relax and enjoy without pressure, knowing nothing they did would ever offend the other.

The image of them twined together drifted through her head. She recalled the deep groans she'd overheard when he was with a woman and wondered how it would make her feel to know she'd caused such a response. She would hold him close, wrap her arms and legs around him, and feel him deep, deep inside. The emotion it wrought overwhelmed her. As dramatic as it sounded, Lori wanted to weep with longing for him. She needed to feel complete and knew that would only happen in Theo's arms. She took a step in his direction.

"If you're going inside, you want to take this with you?"

Lori jerked her attention to her dad. He held out a platter of cooked chicken strips. "Uhm...oh...sure."

Theo met her at the door. He slipped the platter from her outstretched hand and set it on the breakfast bar between the kitchen and living room.

"Here's the first batch. Dig in," he told the crowd.

"The birthday boy and girl go first," his mom shouted back.

"In a bit. I'm not so hungry." Theo swept a hot gaze down Lori's face, settling on her mouth.

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Her breath caught, then shuddered to a start. Why were there so many people here? She wanted to mold herself against him, nestle her lips to his.

“Here’s that beer you wanted.” Scott nudged the cold can against her arm.

Lori stared at it, slowly shaking her head. She wasn’t interested anymore. There was only one thing she wanted.

* * *

Theo couldn’t stand behind the counter all night nursing a hard-on. Something had to happen. He needed some form of relief, even if it was by his own hand. Try to get that in a house filled with people, all of whom would razz him if they even suspected he was sneaking off to indulge himself.

It didn’t help that Lori stood so close he could feel her heat curl around him. Her gaze was riveted to his. Her mouth was slightly open, tempting him to press his thumb to her full lower lip, urging him to cup her cheek, to slip his lips over hers. Theo couldn’t think for the buzzing in his head. How much longer were these people going to stay here? It was Friday night, for pity’s sake. Didn’t they have some place else to be?

“All this noise is giving me a headache.”

Was her voice soft so only he could hear, or was that Theo’s imagination jerking him around?

“My end of the place is quieter. Want to go lie down in my room?” He jerked his thumb over his shoulder.

Lori smiled. “Yeah. I’d like that. Thanks.” On tiptoe she planted a kiss on his lips, then walked off.

Theo stared after her. His agony tripled. His lips felt like they were on fire. He ran basketball plays in his head to try to keep his body off the overwhelming urge to rush after her. Pulling out one of the stools at the breakfast bar, he sat behind it. He had no choice now. No matter

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what thoughts he tried to put in his head, one always crept to the forefront—Lori was in his bed...and it was different than all the other times.

He wanted her naked on the sheets so her scent would linger on them. He wanted to crawl in beside her and feel the warmth of her body next to his. He longed for her arms to wrap tight around him, her lips to—

“You need to eat.”

His mom shoved a heaping plate of food before him. Theo stared at it. It was all he could do to breathe normally while hiding a raging erection. How in the world could he eat? He’d choke to death trying to swallow.

“Where’s Lori?” She craned her neck for a look outside.

“She had a headache and went to lie down.” He pushed the plate back a bit. The scent made him nauseous.

“You’re looking a little pale yourself.” She reached for his forehead.

Theo managed to duck her attempt to do a temperature reading. “Hey, Mom...I’m not a little—”

“Maybe you should go lie down for a bit too. The two of you are around kids all day. You could’ve caught the flu.”

“But everyone—”

“Is eating and having a good time and will continue to do so with or without you. Now scoot. We’ll clean up after ourselves.” She tugged him to his feet and pointed him toward his part of the duplex.

Theo didn’t argue. Half mesmerized, he put one foot in front of the other. He was vaguely aware of the adjoining door closing as he crossed the threshold. On some level he couldn’t explain, Lori called to him.

With each step closer, he replayed all the conversations they’d ever had about sex. When he wanted to know how to make a woman come,

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Lori told him what to do. Never in a million years had he ever guessed he'd be using that knowledge to please her. At least he hoped he would.

Theo froze just shy of his goal. This was crazy, wasn't it? A deep sigh of pleasure caught his attention, urging him on.

Theo stopped again inside his bedroom door. Lori was curled on his bed hugging his pillow. Her eyes were closed and a smile curved her lips. She pulled in a deep breath, squeezing the pillow tighter.

He eased the door closed behind him. The click of the latch brought her eyes open. She didn't shriek and hide in embarrassment, just sat up and stared unblinking at him. Theo's blood pumped hard with the beat of his heart as she passed a slow and lazy gaze down him. He could see her hunger...hunger for him.

* * *

Lori couldn't believe her eyes. She'd been thinking of Theo, longing for him, and here he was. From the second she walked into his bedroom, everything about the man seeped into her bones. His very scent pulsed in the atmosphere, singing to her. She'd toed off her shoes and crawled onto the bed, onto the forest green coverings she'd helped him pick out. She'd been in this room more times than she could count. She'd even fallen asleep on his bed a time or two. But this time it felt like the whole room welcomed her home.

She longed to feel the soft ticking of the bedspread caress her flesh, to crawl between the warmth the sheets and blankets offered and drift away. Instead, she wrapped her arms around his pillow, hauling it as close as she could while she inhaled his scent and wished it was him in her arms.

What would it be like to mold her body to his? They'd danced, they'd wrestled, they'd teased each other. They'd been best friends for life, sharing everything and anything. Suddenly, it wasn't enough. She ached for his touch, his lips, his body linked to hers. Without it, Lori felt incomplete. The thought of what she'd been missing wrenched her

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heart. She'd squeezed the pillow harder, on the verge of shoving it between her legs in a sad attempt to alleviate the throbbing in her clit.

Then she heard the door click shut.

And he was there.

She stared at him, watching him study her. Lori swore she could hear his heart beat in time with hers. She let her gaze drift over him, appreciating for the first time all Theo had to offer a woman. The ridge of his cock pushed against his sweatpants, defying everything designed to hold it in place. She wanted it, him. And a part of her felt like she'd die if she didn't have him...right now.

Heat smoldered in his eyes. He danced a leisurely gaze over her. Lori's nipples pressed hard against her bra, making their presence known all the way through her dark T-shirt. He wanted her too!

By unspoken command they each grabbed the hems of their shirts and peeled them over their heads. Lori's breath caught at the sight of his chest. She'd always been aware he was a fine looking man, only realizing now that she'd judged others by him. He had a body blessed by genetics and carved to perfection from his athletic activities. There wasn't anything squishy about Theo, even his nipples were hard...just like hers.

Mesmerized, Lori crawled to the edge of the bed. Theo kicked off his sneakers and met her there. In synchronicity, they reached for each other. Lori spanned the hollow just beneath his pecs with her hand. A deep groan of appreciation escaped from her throat. She felt his hot hands against her back. There was a tug on her bra, then the hooks were released. Straps slid down her arms and Lori shrugged them free. Before Theo could touch her and steal away all coherent thought, she caught his nipple between her teeth.

Theo tossed back a groan. His knees buckled. Lori rubbed her breasts against his crotch, forcing him to stay upright. She flicked her tongue over her captured prize as she curled her fingers around the

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waistband of his pants and boxers. He quivered as she peeled the clothing down. She took her time, dotting kisses down the glorious expanse of his torso to the dark hair at his navel that pointed to her goal. Lori looped her tongue around his belly button. A final tug freed him. His dick fell into the valley of her breasts, smearing drops of pre-cum against her skin.

Lori squeezed her breasts around the hot steel, letting him indulge in gentle thrusts while she encouraged him with the treat of her tongue each time the shiny, deep red head came into reach. But when she tried to wrap her lips around him, Theo raked his hand into her hair and eased her head back.

He offered no explanation, and he didn't have to—he was close to coming. A blow job would do him in. One hand twined in her hair, the other against her bare back, he stepped out of his clothes while he slowly draped her down to the bed. His mouth covered hers unhurriedly, starting with sweet nips around her lips before slipping his tongue inside.

Feeling overwhelmed her, shoving aside clear thought, if any still existed. He could kiss her forever and Lori would never have enough. His lips were soft, his tongue and mouth hot, thorough. She was conscious of her sweatpants easing down her legs and she pulled free of the now cumbersome garment, but her panties remained. Lori's heartbeat tripled. Sharing secrets as friends definitely had its advantages now.

One long finger traced the waistband of her satin panties, teasing at the soft flesh of her belly before diving slowly behind to cup her ass. Lips sealed in the kiss she prayed would never end, he kneaded her butt cheeks until her body screamed for more attention. Fingers clutched against his hard back, Lori writhed against him, silently pleading for the hard cock wedged between them.

Theo swooped his hand between them, easing her panties down as

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he caressed her belly with the backs of his fingers. By now the crotch was soaked with her dampness, weeping for attention. One touch and she'd come for sure. Millimeter by millimeter the satin crawled over her hips, off her buttocks, down to her thighs, to her knees. Loosing a soft cry, Lori lifted her leg. Theo peeled the slip of material down and off, and only then did he end their kiss.

Lips still parted, he let his gaze caress her face seconds before his fingers did the same. And in the depths of his eyes, Lori saw a look so filled with love, she nearly cried. Words were impossible beyond the lump in her throat. All she could do was stare back, praying he could see she felt the same way.

He kissed her again, the barest brush of his lips that helped to unravel what was left of her senses. *How could something so simple be so sensuous?* Lori didn't care. All she wanted was to feel all he had to give.

She arched her neck as he rained kisses down the column of her throat. His hand felt like sun-warmed air as he stroked her arm, then slipped to her waist, and down to draw circles against her hip. He traced his tongue along her collarbone, stopping his exploration in each direction to twirl the tip into the well of her throat.

Theo shifted back, sitting on his heels as he reached into the bedside drawer. Lori took the package from him. She knew what he liked. How many times had she followed his advice? Why shouldn't he be treated too?

Cupping his hard sack with one hand, she ripped open the condom package with her teeth. Theo sucked in sharp breath through his nose. His fingers splayed against his thighs as he let her play. His cock was magnificent—hard, thick, long. His testicles hugged his body, just as hard as the rest of him. Lori kneaded them gently, reveling in the soft moans she pulled from him. She bent forward, ready to loop her tongue around the tip.

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“Please...” he gasped out. “Don’t...I...can’t...”

“Shhh...I know,” she whispered and dropped a kiss to his glans. The drop of pre-cum at the slit stayed on her lips. Looking up at him, Lori licked it away. Watching her through half-lidded eyes, Theo bit his bottom lip, shuddering when Lori eased the condom over his pulsing erection. Then she stretched out before him, his to do with whatever he pleased.

Theo knelt between her open legs. His hands started a leisurely journey up her sides, stopping at the under-curve of her breasts. He traced his thumbs against it, then weighed each in his hands as if trying to make a choice as he settled on top of her. Lori draped her feet over his calves, nailing him in place. His dick was now wedged between them, a molten rod of steel that touched her from belly button to pubis. Lori shifted up until he fell into the cleft of her body. With a low groan, Theo made his selection and suckled her left nipple deep into his mouth.

Lori captured his head, holding him there until her other breast screamed for attention. Then she pulled him back to offer it up. He didn’t hesitate, but when she tried to rock against his cock, one big hand stilled her hips. Lori sorely regretted confiding in him that she liked a man who took his time and fired her up thoroughly. She was already ignited and desperately needed extinguishing.

Theo shifted to the side. Any protest Lori was about to make was swallowed when his fingers slipped to her slick pussy.

“Oh, God, please...”

“Shh, sweetheart,” he said around a mouthful of tit. “Haven’t I always taken care of you?”

Oh, God...he had! Theo was the one person she could always count on, no matter what.

He kneaded a circular path around the “U” of her vagina, swelling places already filled to bursting while avoiding the one little spot that

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needed touching. Lori wanted to cry foul, wanted to beg for orgasm. All she could do was lay there and absorb the magic.

She was barely conscious of him moving into place once more. Of him lifting her knees and spreading her thighs wide. The tip of his cock tested her vaginal entrance, easy thrusts in and out, a teaser of what he was going to do. Lori's fingers flexed against his shoulders. His cock nearly in her, his lips sucking and drawing on her breasts, she was going to go insane from the wait.

The head of his cock pierced her. Her breathing came in short pants now as he took possession of her, actually rasping against her clit as he spread her wide. In so deep she could feel him nudge the entrance to her womb, Theo stilled, letting her feel all of him. Braced on his forearms, he dusted his fingers over her cheeks. Every part of them was merged...every part. Her clit nosed the base of his cock as if it had a life of its own.

He pulled a long stroke out, then in, massaging her just where she needed. Lori arched against him. Another stroke, harder, deeper. She rocked with him as he slowly increased the momentum. Each pivot of his hips brought her closer to orgasm. Out of her mind with pleasure, Lori clutched his back. She felt the ripples of climax deep inside, like those of a pond moving ever outward until...

Lori arched into the orgasm, letting it, letting him have all of her. She twitched helplessly in his embrace as he pounded himself into her until he, too, reared back like the bow of an arrow and came. Even through the condom she could feel the pulse of his release. They collapsed, panting for breath, wrapped in each other's arms.

Kisses and caresses of after-love built them up once more. Theo pulled free long enough to seat another condom. Lori reached for him, but with a mischievous gleam in his eye, he dodged her embrace and aimed straight for her crotch. Cupping her buttocks in his big hands, shoulders wedged between her thighs, he mapped her valleys and cave

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at the apex.

Lori wadded the covers in her fists as he worked her to the edge, then teased her higher with the flick of his tongue. When he'd brought her writhing to the pinnacle, he seized the little gem between his teeth and sucked. Pleasure exploded through her. Theo waited until she sagged in relief, then rolled her to her stomach. Pulling her to hands and knees, he thrust his cock deep into her heat, to her G-spot and beyond. Lori didn't think she was capable of coming again. His hot fingers against her sensitive clit proved that theory wrong. He kneaded it back to attention while each plunge of his body into hers fired the heat once more.

They came together...again...then fell exhausted into bed and each other's arms.

* * *

Theo and Lori woke with a start. Wide eyed, they stared at each other. It took less than a second to recall what they'd done last night.

Was he sorry about it? No. But was she?

Theo cupped her neck and kissed her forehead. "Talk to me, sweetie."

Lori wrapped her fingers around his. "Oh, Theo, last night was..."

He held his breath while he waited for her to continue.

"...amazing," she finally said.

"But?" Yes, he heard a but in there.

Lori's clicked her gaze up to his. "But was that us or that damn love potion talking?"

He wanted to tell her it was just water. In his heart, he had his doubts too. While he might not regret what had happened, he did question it. If it weren't for the potion, they never would have done this. The problem now was—how did they move on from here? Had they just ruined everything?

"What have we done, Theo?"

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The sadness in her voice hurt his heart. He didn't want to go back to what they'd been. He wanted what they'd had last night. But it wasn't real.

"Maybe we should go see this Madame Rue," he said. "See if she can't give us something to make us...forget."

Lori pulled away. A frown wrinkled her forehead, tears puddled in her eyes. "Forget?"

He grabbed her shoulder and caressed circles into it. "Oh, honey, don't cry. I don't want to forget it either."

She draped her hand over his. "It was the best...ever." One tear slid down her cheek. "But it wasn't real, Theo."

He wiped the tear away as he nodded. "Let's go see her. Maybe she'll...I don't know...suggest something."

Lori pulled in a deep breath. "Okay."

Less than an hour later they were standing outside the small shop. Tiny apothecary jars lined shelves in the window. Crystals dangled on silver threads above them.

Hand against the small of her back, Theo opened the door. A bell on the other side of it jingled, announcing their presence. A plethora of scents greeted them. It smelled more like a bakery than a shop for potions. In fact, there was a small counter with trays of cookies, muffins, and cakes off to the side. Urns of coffee and a wide selection of teas were behind that.

A round, little woman with smiling blue eyes came out from in back, wiping her hands on an apron. "Sorry, I was making strudel in the back. My niece is normally here to help me, but took the day off. What can I do to help you?"

Lori took a hesitant step forward. "We were looking for Madame Rue. We need her help."

The woman smiled. "That's me."

Theo's eyes widened. She looked more like Mrs. Santa Claus than a

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gypsy. “You?”

She laughed. “Yep. Rue...short for Ruby. Were you expecting a gypsy with a gold-capped tooth?”

They both gave a nervous little laugh. Theo scratched his chin. “Yes, ma’am, I think we were.”

Her smile widened, if that were possible. “Happens all the time. So...what can I do for you?”

Lori cleared her throat. “Our mothers...”

“Love Potion #9?”

They nodded.

Madame Rue waved her hand. “Just colored water. Nothing harmful.”

“But...” Theo didn’t know how to tell this sweet, little woman that he and his best friend had gone at it like rabbits in heat all night long.

“We’ve...done some...things,” Lori hesitantly told her.

Madame Rue tapped her temple. “It’s psychological, my sweetlings. It just freed you to do and be what you wanted and needed. It opened your eyes. It gave you an excuse to love each other as you really have wanted to all along.”

“Really?” they asked in unison.

She nodded. “Really.”

Theo cocked his head. “So, last night was—”

“Your heart’s desire.” Her smile beamed over them. “How about some homemade muffins and coffee? I’ll bet neither of you had breakfast. My treat—to help you celebrate.”

“Sure,” Lori replied. “We’d like that.”

As Madame Rue bustled off to serve them, Theo pulled Lori into his arms. “My heart’s desire.”

“Nothing felt more right.” On tiptoe, she kissed him.

* * *

LOVE POTION #9

Six months later

Theo and Lori lifted their champagne glasses to yet another toast. Who would have guessed their yearly vacation would have turned into a honeymoon? Lori was right—nothing felt more perfect. Did he regret they hadn't done this sooner? No, he'd never, ever regret any part of his life with Lori. If it had taken them longer to realize what others already knew, well that's just the way it was.

Lori's mother clapped her hands. "Now we know the two of you were very specific that you wanted no presents, but we couldn't resist."

"Of course not." Lori's attempt at sarcasm was ruined by her smile.

A smile that quickly faded when his mother handed them a black satin box. It wasn't even wrapped. It didn't need to be. The words "Madame Rue's" were stamped in gold on the lid. Theo dared to open the hinged lid. A small vial of purple liquid was inside. A 2 was etched on the glass.

He glanced at the guilty expressions on the Moms' faces. Other guests snickered. Obviously the ingredients weren't a secret.

Theo plucked the vial from the velvet lining. "What's this?"

"Fertility Potion #2." His mom hiked up her chin as if daring him to say something.

"You both drink from this one," Lori's mom added. "It's about time the two of you—"

He raised his hand for silence then smiled at his wife. "Shall we?"

With a sly smile, Lori tilted a nod his way. "After you."

He divided the liquid between their champagne glasses, watching as the golden bubbles turned to lilac. Together they lifted the flutes.

"To us," they said, smiling with the ping of crystal echoed that sentiment.

CAITLYN WILLOWS

Caitlyn Willows is the pseudonym for award-winning author Catherine Snodgrass, who wanted to flex her writing muscles in the erotica genre. Readers will find the same quality from “Caitlyn” that they have come to expect from “Catherine,” but the stories will be more over-the-top and more steamy. Sometimes the novels are written singularly, and sometimes they are a collaborative effort with award-winning author Paris Dixon. Always they will be action-filled...in more ways than one.

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* * *

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