



*Christy Gissendaner*

# *BOOTS AND BOXERS*

By Christy Gissendaner

An Erotiqué Download  
Contemporary Romance

*Boots and Boxers*

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There were probably better things than finding a half-naked cowboy standing outside your hotel room, but when Lorelei Manley opened her door and saw Derek Howell standing there wearing nothing but boxers and a smile she couldn't think of a single one.

She planted her hand against the doorjamb and lifted an eyebrow. "May I help you?"

He didn't even have the grace to look embarrassed. Instead he gave a cocky smile and tilted the brim of his Stetson. "I locked myself out of my room."

"*Your* room?" Lorelei found that hard to believe. More than likely, her fun loving co-worker had got himself thrown out of some random girl's room after a night of debauchery. She ignored the spurt of jealousy for the unseen girl who was lucky enough to be in Derek's bed.

Sometimes being levelheaded had its downfalls.

Derek hooked his thumb in the unbelievably low band of his boxers and leaned against the door. "Can I come in?"

She kept her hand firmly in place. "Why?"

He gave an aggrieved sigh. "Shit, Lorelei! Do you want me to freeze my balls off?"

"You should've thought of that before you got yourself kicked out of a room wearing only your boots and boxers."

Derek's blue eyes held her steady gaze without flinching. "I've already told you. I locked myself out of *my* room. Contrary to popular belief, I can keep my pants zipped for one night."

She glanced meaningfully at his lack of outer clothing. "Yeah, sure looks that way."

His grin only widened. "Loosen up, Princess. We're on vacation."

She began drumming her fingers on the wall. "No, we're not. We're at a convention. Big difference, Derek. And stop calling me Princess."

"You know you love it."

She closed her eyes and mentally counted to ten. What was it about her employer's son that got under her skin? Besides the fact that he was sexy as hell. That was pretty much a given. He was smart, much smarter than a goof-off had any right to be. But that wasn't quite it either. She would like to say it was his casual regard for sex, but in truth, she envied his freedom. In short, Derek represented everything she wasn't and she didn't like being reminded of how dull her life had become.

She opened her eyes and focused on his face again. "Why don't you go ask the front desk for a key?"

Derek glanced at his near nakedness and then back at her. "In this get-up? Are you nuts? My father would disown me if I made the headlines again."

She tightened the belt of her robe and took a step back. It seemed she would have to help him, whether she liked it or not. Derek's father, Travis, was one man she'd rather not rile. She liked her comfy job and nice salary too much. "Come in then."

She flattened herself against the wall so he could pass, but even so, his bare arm brushed the front of her robe. She felt the heat of his body, smelled the spicy scent of his skin, and experienced a rush of moisture between her legs. Even when annoying, Derek was irresistible to her.

She'd know him less than a year, but in that time she'd come to know a lot about him. He'd surfed through Harvard Business, yet refused to accept the high paying jobs he'd been offered up north. He'd chosen to return to Texas and work for his father instead. The Howells were a close family, but if she'd been Derek she would've jumped at the opportunities he'd been offered. Of course, she was one of those people who constantly strived to be the best they could. Derek, on the other hand, seemed content where he was.

"Nice room." Derek turned in a slow circle, then stretched out on her bed and tucked a pillow behind his head.

She rolled her eyes at his audacity. "Make yourself comfortable, why don't you?"

"Thanks. I will." He reached for the remote and flipped the television from the nature program she'd been watching. "Got any snacks?"

The tenuous grip she had on her control finally snapped. She came forward, snatched the remote from his hand, and battled the urge to conk him over the head with it. "You're not staying the night here!"

He rolled to a sitting position and planted his feet on the floor beside her. "Relax, Princess. I'm just trying to be sociable."

"Sociable doesn't include showing up at my room half-naked..."

He interrupted her with a wink. "Noticed that did you?"

She continued on as if he hadn't spoken. "And expecting me to help you out of another one of your screw ups."

"I didn't screw up. I went to get some ice and forgot my key. I swear."

She stared down at him, wondering whether she should believe him. He might be telling the truth, but she wasn't fool enough to trust appearances. Especially in the face of a handsome man.

She pinched the bridge of her nose and exhaled. "Why me, Derek? There are three other people on this trip with us. Couldn't you have gone to them for help?"

He shrugged. "Your room was closest."

Her heart plummeted. So much for thinking she was special. It had been merely a matter of logistics. She walked the few steps necessary to reach for the phone. "I'll call the front desk and get a key sent up for you."

His hand shot out and covered hers. "Not yet. There's something I need to talk to you about first."

His touch warmed her from the inside out. Though she tried to deny it, she couldn't help the way her body responded to him. From the moment she'd met him, she'd constantly been guarding her reaction.

"What is it?"

He moved his hand and she mourned the loss of contact. When he patted the bed, she sat beside him without thinking.

"Dad wants to give me the company."

She shot back to her feet. "What?"

Derek reached out, placed his arm around her waist, and forced her to sit again. "He's getting on in years and he says he wants to enjoy retirement before he's too old. He actually has a point if you think about it."

"Of course. He's worked hard and deserves a break. But why does he want to give you the company? What about your older brother?"

Derek's face briefly registered irritation at her suggestion. "Greg's not interested. He's happy tinkering away in his laboratory. The oil biz isn't for him."

Lorelei hated to admit it, but Derek was right as always.

"There's only one small glitch."

She had a hunch she wasn't going to like what he was about to say. "And that is?"

"You have to run it with me."

At first she thought she imagined what he'd said. *Run the company with him?* She glanced at his face, half expecting to see him smiling, but he looked completely serious. "What did you just say?"

"You and me. Dad wants to put *us* in charge of the company."

Her pulse sped up and she feared the beginnings of a panic attack about to strike. She jumped to her feet again and faced him. "I can't run Howell Industries!"

"Co-run it," Derek politely pointed out.

"Co-run, run. It's all the same when you look at it." She clutched her chest, where her heart pounded furiously. "Oh my God! I think I'm having a heart



attack."

"It's probably just indigestion," he quipped.

She shot him an irritated look. "Funny."

He bit his lip to keep from smiling, yet the corners still tilted upwards. "I thought so." He got to his feet and reached for her hand. "What do you say, Princess? Can you pretend to like me long enough to take over the company with me?"

Pretend? What did he mean pretend? She liked him too damn much as it was. Instead of setting his misconception straight, she continued her line of questioning. "When did your father decide this?"

"Last night."

That meant Travis decided it on the spur of the moment. She'd talked to him two nights ago and he'd made no mention of it. "He can't be serious."

"He is. Trust me, Lorelei. He's eager to hand over the reins." Derek cocked his head to one side. His thumb idly traced a lazy pattern across her palm. "I thought you would be happy."

"I was. I mean, I am, but this is all so sudden." She forced herself to take a deep, calming breath. "I never thought I would be C.E.O. of a company before I was thirty."

"If it helps any, neither did I."

She laughed at the face he made. "Derek, you know you're brilliant so stop acting modest."

"Same goes for you." He chuckled her under the chin, tipping her gaze to meet his. "So, is that a yes?"

She stopped trying to act like the promotion and Derek weren't what she wanted and nodded. "Yes. Most

definitely, yes."

Derek's smile came slowly, but finally arrived as brilliant as the sun reflecting off the Gulf of Mexico. "In that case. How do you want to celebrate, partner?"

She thought of a million ways. Tossing him on the bed and enjoying a night of wild, animalistic sex topped her long list, but so bold a move she wouldn't make. Even though her body practically begged her to do him.

Just once, she wanted to show the world that she wasn't the prude they imagined her. There was more beneath her business suits and calm head than what first appeared.

The more she thought about it, the more sense it made. Why not? Next week, she and Derek would be in charge. Who cared if she slept with him? She would be the boss. No one could label her a ladder-climbing whore. She was already at the top.

Derek still held her hand, so she lifted his palm and placed it inside the top of her robe. He looked surprised, but recovered soon enough by sliding his hand down and cupping a breast. "Lorelei..."

She cut off his protest by placing her finger against his lips. "Shh. Can't we just do this and forget about it in the morning?"

"But..."

She shook her head. "Not a word, Derek."

His gaze dropped to the cleavage revealed by her now half-open robe. Her nipples tightened under his gaze and she arched into his touch. She needed this. Someone who could make her feel desirable. A night of passion to cure her of too many lonely nights.

Derek used his free hand and released the belt to her robe. The sides fell apart, exposing her body to his gaze.

She was naked underneath and for the first time in her life she felt no shyness. With previous lovers, she inevitably found herself wondering if her body was pleasing. With Derek, there was no such reticence. The heated look and quickly indrawn breath confirmed it.

Her robe fell to the floor as both of Derek's hands covered her breasts. His fingers circled her nipples, teasingly brushing the hard peaks, before pinching them lightly.

She sucked in a breath at the rush of heat flooding her limbs. "God, yes!"

Derek *tsked* lightly. "No words. Remember?"

She pushed off his Stetson and grabbed the back of his neck. "Just shut up and kiss me already."

He did as she demanded with lips warm and soft, quite unlike she'd imagined. Not that she'd spent much time imagining his kiss. Lord, who was she kidding? She'd spent hours imagining what it would be like to kiss him, but the reality far surpassed her imagination.

He licked the seam of her lips and she opened to him. His tongue boldly thrust inside and rubbed along hers. She sighed into his mouth and her cares floated away. Damn, he could kiss!

Why had she ever tried to fight her attraction to him? She would've risked her job for a kiss like his. She wanted to growl with frustration when she thought of all the months she'd wasted locked in her office when she could've been acting out in the supply closet with him, like some of the other fraternizing employees had been

known to do.

Derek backed her up until her back hit the wall. Their movements dislodged a painting from the wall and it crashed to the floor with a bang. They broke their heated kiss and glanced at the glass now covering the floor.

Derek was the first to speak. "Fuck it."

She laughed and pulled him back for another kiss. "Add it to our room expenses."

In between their laughter and kisses, Lorelei managed to wedge her hands between them and cupped him through the cotton material of his boxers. Derek was hard and judging from the length in her hands, the night would be memorable. She nipped his neck and trailed her lips down his shoulder as her hands caressed him.

He groaned and rested his forehead on the wall. "Keep that up and there won't be much left to play with."

"Oh, I doubt that." She tugged lightly on his cock and brought her lips back to his. "I bet you could play all night."

He wrapped his arms around her waist and tried to pull her toward the bed.

She resisted and shook her head. "Not there."

Derek seemed intrigued, if the curious gleam in his eyes was anything to go by. "Then where?"

She looked around the hotel room, her eyes cataloguing and discarding most of the furniture in the room. Tonight she wanted adventurous. She wanted something she'd never had before. The table and chair were out. It had all been done. So was the shower. She almost gave up, but then a thought struck her. A thought

as daring as sneaking out of her house as a teenager had once been, but twice as exciting. She smiled wickedly. "How about the hallway?"

Derek blinked. "The hallway? What if we're caught?"

A laugh bubbled up from her throat at the idea she'd shocked him, but she held her mirth in check. "Isn't that the point? The thrill of being seen?"

Derek ushered her toward the door. "I'm game if you are." He stuck his head out the door, looked both ways, then pulled her forward. "Okay, coast is clear."

She crept into the hallway and giggled nervously. This was such an un-Lorelie-like thing to do. What if they really were caught? She would probably die of embarrassment later, but right now she was enjoying herself.

Derek shut the door and gathered her in his arms. He kissed her and soon her head began spinning all over again. The slow thrust and parry of his tongue brought sex to the forefront of her mind.

Once she thought she heard footsteps, but her mind must've been playing tricks on her. She cut her eyes to the side, grateful they were still alone. Even though she wanted to stand there and kiss him forever, they would have to be quick. She shoved his boxers to the ground and pulled back to examine his cock. The shaft was long and thick, the head perfectly formed. She'd never thought so before, but his cock looked beautiful in a way she would never be able to describe.

Standing there in his boots, with his boxers wrapped around his ankles, she knew she'd never seen a sexier

sight. And he was all hers. For the night at least.

Derek's eyes darkened with passion as his gaze raked over her face. "How do you want to do this? As I see it, we have two options. Either I lift you and do you against the wall or we lay down."

Either option was fine by her, but some devil prodded her to speak in a sultry voice completely unlike her normal crisp, businesslike tone. "You forgot the third option. You can do me from behind while I brace myself against the wall."

His hand trailed her body, lingering at her breasts before slipping lower to toy with the curls between her legs. "Or you can be on your knees on the ground. Your choice, Lorelei."

"I take the first option."

His eyes twinkled. "Chicken."

He cut her rebuttal short when he hoisted her up and turned so that her back was braced against the wall. Her legs wrapped around his hips and her hands clutched at his shoulders for support.

Reaching down, he guided the thick head of his cock to the entrance of her body. They both took a deep breath as he slid forward, completely impaling her with one stroke. She felt stretched open, but it was a good feeling. He moved his hips and she savored the slow thrust and parry of him deep inside her.

She slid one hand to his hip and lightly pinched him. "Harder."

He did as she asked, his motions making her bottom slap against the wall. His harsh breathing ruffled the hair at her nape as she clung to him. She moaned softly, the

cries growing louder in volume until he covered her mouth with one hand.

She responded by biting his palm, then laving it with her tongue. A tremor went through his body then. Before she knew it, he plunged deeper, faster, both of them struggling to find a much needed release.

"Now?" he whispered into her ear.

"Now," she agreed and scrambled to find purchase with her legs around his waist as he adjusted the angle of his strokes. This time he went deeper, his hips pushing her into the wall and holding her there as he toyed with her clit. She bit her lip to keep from crying out in pleasure again.

Then he pulled out, denying her the orgasm she desperately needed.

She protested immediately.

"Relax." He set her on her feet and turned her so that her back was to him. He leaned down and bit her neck lightly. "I forgot to tell you that you could pick more than one."

He pushed her thighs apart and slid into her from behind. She pushed her ass back against him and dug her fingernails into the wall. It only took a few thrusts before she climaxed. She was still trembling when Derek gave a harsh growl and came moments later.

She dropped her head against the wall and exhaled shakily. "Oh my."

Now that her ache had eased for the moment, she came to her senses. *I'm standing naked in a hallway!* Anyone could come upon them. She reached for the doorknob and turned it only to see find it locked. She

gasped and turned.

Derek's horrified expression must have mirrored her own.

"Please tell me you grabbed my key on the way out."

He bent down and pulled up his boxers. "Nope."

"That's not funny, Derek."

He kept grinning. "It's sort of funny."

"I'm naked!"

"We can just go down to the front desk and request a key."

His easy acceptance of the situation and the way he mocked her earlier statement made her suddenly suspicious. She narrowed her eyes. "Cute."

She held out her hand. "Now hand over my key."

"Okay. I give up." He pulled it out of his boot and handed it to her without protest. He wondered how long she'd known of his ruse. "How did you know I had it?"

"Lucky guess." She unlocked the door and scrambled inside. Derek followed at a more leisurely pace. She tossed the key on the desk and reached for her robe. They both fell silent, her not knowing what to say, and him, seemingly reluctant to speak first. She licked her lips nervously. "What do we do now?"

He gave her a blank look. "I thought you wanted to forget it?"

Her cheeks flushed red. Had she made herself sound like a slut? "Do you want to forget it?" Though she tried to hide it, she hoped he didn't want to forget.

He crept forward. "Not really." His blue eyes searched her face. "Do you?"

She shook her head. "No. But we're partners now.



Won't it make things awkward at work?"

"The only way I see it being awkward is if we ignore our attraction to each other."

"Are you saying you're attracted to me?"

He stopped walking and just stared. "Do you need a repeat performance of what just happened in the hallway? Hell yeah, I'm attracted to you. Have been for months."

"Oh." She swallowed and forced her tongue to work. "Same here."

"So what do you say, Lorelei? Can we work together and still have this?" He kissed her hard, leaving no doubt of his intentions.

She pulled back and studied the face she'd been dreaming of for months. "I'm willing to try it, but next time..." she paused and reached down to pull a second key from his boot. "Don't try to fool me into thinking you've locked yourself out."

He grinned sheepishly. "I figured it was the only way you would let me in."

His expression gave her hope that it could really work. She wrapped her arms around him and pulled him down for another kiss. "That was your first mistake. All you had to do was kiss me."

"I'll keep that in mind."

She smiled against his lips. "You do that."

*Christy Gissendaner*