



Love Potion Number Sixty-Nine

Erin Katz

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Chapter One

The Sex God ripped off Lucy's dress with an even hand, depositing the now shredded material to the floor. Miraculously, her naked body was revealed to him. Thick tanned hands explored the curves and dents of her body, sending ripples of desire through her blood. Raising her hips, she begged him silently to indulge her burning pussy. Splaying a palm on her belly, he leaned down and covered her mouth with a kiss.

Her eyes closed and she enjoyed the feeling as he moved his mouth to the side of her neck and his hand down towards her sex. Her pussy ached and throbbed, begging for his touch. Slowly, he dipped...

"Lucy, snap out of it," her lab assistant, Amy Winters, called.

"Huh?" Lucy Kaplan blinked several times. Spirited out of her daydream, she was back in her lab at St. Catherine of Siena Cancer Hospital in Knoxville, Tennessee. Away from her dream man—whose features had never been defined but was built for good sex and nothing more—to reality.

"What the hell were you thinking about?" Amy was a doctoral candidate at the University of Tennessee who was working with Lucy for the last two semesters. With Lucy's research on finding a cure for lymph node cancers, the hotly contested position also came with a full scholarship thanks to a grant from a cancer foundation. At first, Lucy had her doubts about Amy, thinking someone with such a pretty face couldn't have a head for science. She'd been proven wrong and had come to like her.

"No—nothing," Lucy stammered. She pushed up her glasses, which had fallen to the edge of her nose for the hundredth time that day.

"Well, did it work?"

"Did what work?"

"The additive." Amy rolled her eyes and crossed her arms beneath her breasts. As Lucy realized how attractive she was, she wondered briefly why she wanted to waste her early twenties in a laboratory. "Did it destroy the cancer cell?"

"Oh." Nothing like reality to lose the effects of a nice daydream. Lucy placed her eyes over the lenses of the microscope. The cancer cell, which had been treated with a red dye for color, had been eliminated, leaving a healthy cell. Unlike the typical chemotherapy treatments that also destroyed healthy cells, this one was targeted towards the cancer cell, specifically a lymph node cancer. "Yes, it worked."

She stepped back, joy flooding her. The glitch she'd been trying to fix for years had finally been solved. She'd found a way to destroy lymph cancer cells and allow new ones to grow back stronger and healthier. The research had begun while she was working on her Ph.D. Because she'd completed the five-year program in three years, she'd brought her research with her from the University of Tennessee.

As cliché as it might have been, Lucy began clapping her hands and jumping up and down. "We did it! We did it."

"No," Amy corrected her. "You did it."

"I don't care. It's done. We've found the cure."

Amy rolled her eyes. "Now we just have to find a way to get it through the rest of the trials and the Food and Drug Administration."

“Well, they approved rat poisoning as a blood thinner. I’m sure they’ll be willing to believe that ground up cat hair can cure lymphoma.”

It had been an odd discovery. One she’d stumbled upon by accident. Since Lucy had virtually no life outside the lab besides her six cats, she’d always wanted to find a useful way to use all the fur the damn things shed in a day.

So, she collected several days’ worth of shedding from the top of her couch together and ground it up. As an experiment, she’d added hydrogen peroxide and rubbing alcohol, which created a bit of a foam. Since it appeared to be something of a cleaning solution, she poured it on her constantly dirty kitchen countertop. It seemed to dissolve the stain almost immediately. Once wiped away, the counter looked brand new and had a shine that could be picked up by the sunlight. Her new cleaning solution seemed to be the answer to getting her apartment deposit back if she ever decided to move.

Always looking for ways to use her finds for her job as a research biochemist at St. Catherine’s, she took her freshly concocted solvent to the lab with her. Since her grandmother had died of Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma ten years earlier, she’d made it her life’s mission to find a cure for lymph node cancers. Thus, her research began during her early days in the doctoral program at the University of Tennessee.

“There you go again,” Amy said with a groan.

“What?”

“Getting all dreamy-eyed and acting like you’re in a different world.”

“Oh, sorry.” Because she spent most of her time in the lab and the rest of the time with her cats, the two worlds had merged together in a way.

“Lucy, aren’t you going to call Joe?”

Lucy groaned. Dr. Joe Henderson was the surgical oncologist in charge of research at the hospital. He’d mocked Lucy’s latest venture of using cat hair to treat cancer cells. Then again, Joe doubted many of Lucy’s ideas, though several of them had helped create new and innovative ways for the personnel at the hospital to treat cancers. Considering many of their patients were older and couldn’t handle typical invasive treatments, St. Catherine’s was a good place for Lucy to stretch her natural scientific muscles.

“No, we need to do a few more trials.” She wanted to be absolutely sure that everything worked before she met with her boss to show him the results. Despite Lucy’s revolutionary findings being published in numerous journals across the world, her methods had bordered on that of researchers in Europe, since she didn’t seem concerned with federal regulations regarding certain compounds. Specifically, cat urine and fur had been a little hard for the “experts” to grasp as being a cure for anything.

Amy sighed loudly. “Can we get back to this tomorrow? It’s already dark out.”

“Yeah, go on home. I’ll just finish up here.”

“Okay.” Amy squeezed Lucy’s upper arm. “You want to meet me and my boyfriend for a drink? He says he has a friend who’s looking to be set up.”

“No, thanks.” She knew that any man who “wanted to be set up,” probably had some sort of physical or emotional problem.

With a nod and a smile, Amy left the lab.

If it was one thing Lucy hated, it was being set up. As she caught her reflection in the mirror, she saw that several strands of her frizzy red hair had escaped the scrunchy she’d pulled the mass of it back into, and the pimples on her chin were red and swollen.

Why would anyone want to find a date for me?

That in itself also made her wonder about the man Amy wanted to set her up with.

Because she'd lost thirty pounds a year earlier, none of her clothes fit right and she hadn't taken the time to go shopping for new ones, despite her mother's insistence to take her credit card and go on a crazy spree.

Lucy sucked in a breath and shrugged off her lab coat. A knock on the door startled her.

"Oh shit," she moaned, disappointed that she wouldn't be able to make a quick escape. "Who is it?"

"Hey, it's me." Joe opened the door and stuck his head inside.

"Oh, hey, Joe." She'd been there long enough that she no longer had to call him "doctor."

"How's it going today?" He made the rounds once a day to check on everybody's research. Lucy couldn't believe he'd waited so late.

"Great. We're getting close." He knew of her find regarding the cat hair.

"Good to hear. We have a new doctor joining us tomorrow."

"Physician or scientist?" Considering "doctor" could apply to those with a Ph.D. as well as a physician working at the hospital, there was always a need to differentiate. After all, Lucy was considered a "doctor."

"Physician. He's coming to us from St. Jude."

"Oh. Why?" Though both were research hospitals looking to treat cancer, usually personnel from St. Catherine's went to St. Jude's. Apparently, helping children was more prestigious than helping adults.

"Not sure about the details." Joe shrugged. "Anyway, he's very interested in some of that leukemia research you did about a year ago."

"I'm not focusing on that anymore." She'd given up when Joe had told her that there was no way he would allow the combination of cat urine and lavender oil to be released to the public as a treatment. Even though one of the St. Catherine's patients for whom they couldn't find a bone marrow match was now in remission from the treatment, Joe had been leery about releasing the details of Lucy's strange research.

"I know, but he's still interested. Seems his little boy died of leukemia about a year ago."

The fact that this dude was leaving St. Jude's was even stranger. "Oh." Had they been able to meet back then, she might have been able to save the tot's life. "So, why is he coming here?"

Joe shrugged again and picked up a vial from the counter, eyeing the contents carefully. "He and his wife split up and apparently he wants a new start. He went to UT as an undergrad and the rest of his family lives around here."

"I guess that's understandable."

"Yeah, well, I thought you might want to reopen your leukemia research."

"I'm really happy with the lymphoma studies right now. We're getting really close." She didn't want to see another family suffer the way hers had with her grandmother's illness and subsequent death. None of them were the same since her death. Then again, leukemia could be just as destructive.

"I know." Joe returned the vial to the stainless steel counter. "And I appreciate your dedication, but with our budget, we have to keep our focus."

Lucy nodded. She could always do the lymphoma research in the small amount of

free time she allotted to herself. Since the cats had one another, they didn't always notice when their mistress wasn't home as long as she left enough food for them.

"Well, Lucy, Dr. Braden should be popping in around nine tomorrow morning. I'd like you to show him around if you don't mind."

"That's fine."

"Good, thanks."

Joe turned to leave and something popped in her head. "Did you say 'Dr. Braden'?"

"Yeah." He narrowed his eyes a bit.

"Dr. Dashall Braden?"

"Yeah."

"Okay, thanks."

Joe shook his head and left.

"Holy shit," Lucy murmured to herself.

She'd gone to high school and undergraduate school with Dash. Along with being downright sexy, he'd been the starting quarterback for the Tennessee Volunteers for four years. He'd turned down the opportunity to go pro so he could go to medical school. While the sports fanatics had whined over the waste of athletic talent, Lucy had always admired him for choosing brains over brawn.

They'd been lab partners in biochemistry their senior year of college. During that time, Lucy had fallen hopelessly in love with him. During their final project—coming up with an organic cleaning solution according to the specifications of their hippie professor—he'd taken credit for her discovery, which was vinegar. Though she'd held a bit of a grudge at first, she couldn't stay mad at him very long. He was just too hot.

Like so many other men, Dash had barely noticed her as anything more than a classmate. Dash didn't notice much of anything, including himself taking credit for the vinegar discovery.

As she patted the extra material around her hips, she understood why. He could have any woman he wanted. Why would he want a frumpy geek?

"Maybe I should take Mom up on her offer." Her mother had urged her to use her credit card to buy some new outfits and she'd pay it off for her when the bill came.

She glanced at her watch. The mall would be closed in two hours. Grabbing her purse, she ran for the door. It was going to take a hell of a lot more than some new outfits to turn Dash Braden's head.

* * * *

Dr. Dash Braden hated the idea of living in a hotel. Even though he had a room at one of those executive suites that were more liked furnished efficiencies than rented rooms, it didn't hold the allure of being home. He never used the small kitchenette, preferring to eat all his meals out.

He opened the door to his room using the key card, and the door beeped indicating it was unlocked. As usual, a dark, cold room greeted him. Even switching on a light and seeing his clothes strewn around didn't make him feel more at home.

"Home sweet home," he muttered, tossing his jacket to the foot of the bed. The one good thing about living in this damn hotel was the fact that his bed linens got changed every day.

Sucking in a breath, he relaxed into a well-worn armchair near the window.

Tomorrow, he would be starting his new job.

Though Knoxville was his home town, it hadn't felt like much of a homecoming. Nothing felt right without James. After six months of drowning his sorrows in a whiskey bottle, he'd turned things around by starting to get back into his work. Seeing the statistics of children dying of cancer each day—as his own boy had—made things worse. Though he wanted to still research ways to cure cancer, he couldn't handle life at a children's research hospital.

One of the researchers, Lucy Kaplan, had quite a reputation for innovative ways of coming up with new drugs. Though none of them had made it through the FDA approval process, he knew she was close. And he wanted to be there when she did.

Threading his fingers behind his head, he tossed his feet onto the table and reclined a bit. Tomorrow would be the start of his new life. With any luck, another father wouldn't have to watch his son succumb to such a horrible death.

Chapter Two

For the first time since she'd begun her job at St. Catherine's, Lucy wore a dress to work. She'd also dug that clear serum out of her bathroom cabinet and used it to try to eliminate the frizz in her hair as she blowdried it. Yet another thing she hadn't attempted in years. Surprisingly, her hair fell in soft red waves instead of its usual wild manner that encouraged her to pull it back into a ponytail. Why scientists had dedicated so much time to trying to overcome such issues of vanity instead of the more serious problems, Lucy could never understand.

The only thing missing was that all her makeup had dried up from years of nonuse. Also, she realized for the first time that the silver frames of her glasses were not only outdated, but way too big for her face. It also seemed that the silver made her fair skin appear grayish, something she hadn't noticed until that moment.

As she pulled the door to her lab open, she saw Amy sitting at the middle table on a stool gazing down at a notebook. It was the first time her assistant had ever beat her to work.

"Whoa," Amy gasped as the door closed behind Lucy. "What are you all jazzed up for?"

"I'm not." Embarrassment heated her entire body. Geez, was she that transparent? What if everyone could detect her giant crush on Dash Braden? Sure, she hadn't seen him in nearly ten years, but her heart was already thundering with anticipation. With any luck, he'd gone bald and gotten fat and she'd actually have a chance with him. Sexy former athletes were never attracted to Lucy.

"I figured you didn't even own a dress." Amy returned her gaze to her work, giving Lucy the chance to scurry to her desk, where she deposited her purse and sweater, and retrieved a clean lab coat.

"Actually, until last night, I didn't." She'd never spent so much on clothes at one time in her entire life. She now owned clothes that didn't sag off of her.

"So, what's the occasion? You goin' to a funeral after work or something?"

"No." Lucy shrugged. Now, she felt stupid wearing this damn dress. Perhaps she should have stuck with those black pants that seemed to have magical powers of making any woman look great by accentuating the curve of her ass and flattening her stomach.

"Well, the word is that the new doctor is a dreamboat. Guess the dress will help." Amy's smile turned to one of a mocking nature and Lucy felt the extreme urge to slap it off her face.

"So, how's it going this morning?"

"Fine. I got caught up on some of the paperwork. We should be able to start the rat trials for the lymphoma treatment early next week. I really think if we play this right, we'll be able to get it approved."

"Great, but I think Dr. Braden wants us to go back to that leukemia research we put on the back burner a few months ago."

Amy shrugged. "Okay."

Lucy patted the top of her head, feeling the curls that remained soft and controlled with no frizzies.

After a soft knock on the door, Joe peeked his head through the doorway. “Hey, ladies, Dr. Braden is here to meet you.”

Lucy clenched her jaw and held her spine in a straight line. Her nerves tingled in anticipation.

After Joe stepped into the room, Dash stepped in behind him. As she remembered, he was tall, muscular, and had hair the color of the sun. Age had made his form a little stockier and much more masculine. If anything, he still fit millions of women’s image of a man made for sex and nothing more.

“Dash, this is Lucy Kaplan, the chemist who was working on that leukemia research, and her assistant, Amy Winters.”

“Hi,” Dash said. He stepped forward and shook Amy’s hand first, and Amy seemed to linger for a few moments within inches of him before stepping back and allowing him to greet her boss. Lucy met his gaze instantly as he took her hand. His eyes still resembled those of a sweet puppy, a deep brown she could get lost in.

Damn it all, I still have no chance in hell with him.

“It’s nice to meet you,” Lucy said softly.

“Have we met before?” Dash asked, pulling his hand away and narrowing his eyes.

“Act—actually, yes, we have. We went to high school together and had a few classes together in college.”

He offered her a smile. With the dimples indenting his cheeks, it appeared genuine and warm. He looked almost innocent and sweet. “I knew I recognized you from somewhere.”

She looked down at her feet, noticing that the heel of her pantyhose was poking up from the top of her foot in the brand new black heels.

“Well, Dash,” Joe cut in. “I’ll leave you to get to know the ladies. Just let me know if there’s anything I can do to help you.”

“Thanks.” Joe left the lab and Dash turned to Lucy. “I’m looking forward to reading up some more on that leukemia treatment.”

Lucy nodded and turned on her heels towards the filing cabinet. From the top drawer, she pulled out a file. Turning, she found Dash on her heels. His scent filled her nostrils, musky and masculine. She briefly wondered if he used cologne or if it was natural. It all was so familiar, which made her think the latter of the two.

Dash took the folder and plopped up on a stool at the far table in the lab.

Lucy forced herself to stop fidgeting and return to her usual spot to start her work for the day. “Well, Amy, we should probably test the lymphoma treatment again. If it goes well, I’ll go ahead and start it on the rats.”

Amy nodded and began pulling out all the ingredients. As Lucy clasped the vial with the combination that had worked the other day, her hand shook. Feeling heat rise in her cheeks, she glanced over at Dash. The way his jaw tightened visibly made the jitters intensify.

How in the hell can I be expected to get any work done with him hanging around?

If possible, Dash was more handsome than ever. Why did the world have to be so cruel? Work had always been her escape. Now, with Dash Braden hanging around, her body was begging to be fucked.

“Everything’s ready,” Amy announced, and Lucy snapped out of her trance and turned back to the top of the table.

“Good.” She inhaled deeply, forcing herself to concentrate on her work.

She’d done a pretty good job and got back into the rhythm of things when Dash spoke up again. “This is all very interesting,” he said, placing the folder down beside her current experiment. “It’s very revolutionary, which in my experience has made some of the best treatments. Good job coming up with it.”

“Thanks.”

“If you don’t mind, I’d like to talk with you in further detail.”

“O—okay.”

“Are you free for dinner tonight?”

“Yeah.” Was he asking her out on a date? Her throat nearly closed with anticipation.

“Okay, I’ll swing by here around five and we’ll head out then.”

“Great.”

He nodded and left the laboratory.

I have a date with Dash Braden!

* * * *

“What the hell are you so on edge about?” Amy asked as the clock ticked closer to five o’clock.

“Nothing,” Lucy replied with a defensive sigh.

“Are you crushing on the cute new doctor?”

“No.” She answered a little too quickly, she realized.

“Lucy, sweetie, I don’t mean to be cruel, but I don’t think you’re his type.”

“I know.” Her self-esteem had never been very good.

“If you’re really serious about trying to catch his eye, I’d be happy to er—um—help you.”

Before Lucy could answer, Dash popped in. “Ready, Lucy?”

He knew her name. That was something. “Yeah.” She grabbed her purse and followed him. Damn, his ass looked fine as he walked. It had a nice curve and what she imagined was a strong thruster muscle. She’d never been one to stare at men’s rears, but God, her fingers itched to touch Dash’s. What did such an amazing tail feel like anyway? Once they reached the parking lot, Lucy was forced to look up.

“Why don’t you go in your car and I’ll follow.”

“Where?”

He shrugged. “Wherever. You probably know what’s still here better than I do.”

“There’s a little pizza place on the Strip. Usually, it’s pretty quiet at night since they don’t serve alcohol.”

“Fine with me.”

“Actually, we’d probably be better off walking.”

Dash waved his hand towards the sidewalk. “Just lead the way.”

Her legs were killing her and each step was agonizing with her feet cramped into the heels. Nonetheless, she continued to walk. They arrived in silence.

“Two, please,” Dash requested of the man at the host stand. With a nod, the anonymous host, whom Lucy knew doubled as a waiter on weeknights, led them to a table in the center of the restaurant. As usual, Louis’s was dark with candlelight flickering from tapers in Chianti bottles.

“You like pepperoni?”

She nodded.

“How about a medium pepperoni?” he requested of the man who seated them. “And I’ll have a Coke to drink.”

“I’ll have water,” Lucy popped in. She hadn’t lost all that weight to let empty calories add more pounds to her waistline.

The waiter/host nodded and walked away.

“I’m very impressed with your research,” Dash said. For some reason, she couldn’t get enough of his compliments.

“Thank you.” Her voice was soft and barely audible.

“I must admit that you find some interesting ingredients. How did you figure out the thing about the cat hair?”

“Well, I remembered reading in a zoology class that there was a chemical found in cat hair that had medicinal effects. I have a bunch of cats so one day I gathered up a bunch of their shed hair and tried a few things with it.” She nodded. “According to the trial period, it destroys the cancer without killing the cell, allowing for normal cells to reproduce.”

“And the cat urine?”

“It also has a chemical in it that is unique to felines. One of my cats has this habit of peeing on a particular towel on the floor. I took it to the lab and found some interesting molecules. In a concentrated dose, it had deteriorated part of the towel fibers. Lavender oil has a relaxing effect so I mixed them together.” She shrugged again. “I guess I just stumbled on something. Basically, it allows all the cells to slow down a bit and the cat urine manages to eliminate the cancerous cells. It seems to be limited to leukocytes, however, because I tried the same thing with my lymphoma research and it didn’t do anything.” She shrugged, feeling as though she’d been talking for an hour. Swallowing hard, she took a sip from the glass of water the waiter had just set in front of her.

“That’s really great. I’m sure there aren’t many biochemists that are as devoted as you.”

No, some of them actually have lives. She nodded and shot him a forced smile.

“Anyway,” he continued, leaning forward in his seat across the table towards her. “I’m really glad we met up again. I think together we might be able to do some good things.”

The good things she wanted to do had nothing to do with the lab. God help her, she was still head over heels in love with Dash Braden. *He’ll never be interested in a dweeb like me.*

She folded her arms beneath her breasts and sat back in her chair. Perhaps in time she’d find a way to get over this little obsession.

Chapter Three

"I'm in trouble," Lucy whined to Amy over the phone after getting home from her dinner with Dash.

"What's that?"

"I think I still have a crush on Dash Braden."

"I knew it. That's why you wore a dress to work today."

"Fine." Lucy groaned. "I need your help. How can I make him notice me?"

"Okay." Amy sighed. "This is going to sound strange but there's a potion you can brew and drink."

"A potion?" As a scientist, she'd spent years coming up with logical ways of dealing with life. She certainly didn't believe in magic. "Like a spell."

"Sort of. I brewed it and drank it when I first met Rick. Then, once we had sex, I had him drink it as well. And presto, we're still together."

"I don't see how something you drink can make someone fall in love with you."

"You've never been drunk, have you?"

"No, why?"

"Nothing." Amy giggled. "I'll email you the details. Go out to the store and buy a bouquet of roses, a bottle of sweet red wine, chamomile tea, ginseng root, and some mint leaves."

"Is that all?"

"Well, I assume you have honey, nutmeg, vanilla extract, and cinnamon."

"No." Three of the cabinets in her kitchen were bare.

"Okay, well get that too."

"I can't believe this."

"Just trust me okay. If you drink the potion before bed tonight, then tomorrow morning, Dash won't be able to keep his hands off you."

Lucy sighed. "Okay." She didn't see how it would work, but was willing to try just about anything.

"Head out to the store and I'll email you the recipe."

"Okay, bye."

Lucy couldn't believe she was doing this. Then again, it had been four years since she'd had sex. She was willing to try a so-called love potion. She remembered something from her college days about the power of the mind being strong enough to overcome insurmountable odds. Therefore, maybe if she believed Dash would fall in love with her hard enough, then he would.

* * * *

"I don't see how this concoction is going to get Dash Braden to fall in love with me," Lucy murmured as she stirred the mixture together in a heavy metal pot on the stove. She'd followed the directions to the letter and a sweet sensation filled her nostrils. It certainly smelled tasty enough.

The title had really cracked her up—Love Potion Number 69—designed not only to

make that crush fall in love with you but have the passionate desire to be with you.

According to the directions, she was supposed to drink it before going to sleep. The results in the morning were supposed to be miraculous enough to get the intended to want passionate lovemaking.

"I don't see that happening, though." Dash was still hot and sexy and could probably get any woman he wanted. He wouldn't waste his time trying to get inside Lucy Kaplan.

Nonetheless, she poured the mixture into a mug. Picking it up, she headed for her bedroom. Switching on the television, she turned it to CNN to catch up on the news.

She sat in the middle of the mattress, her mug in hand. Slowly, she took a sip, her heart thundering in anticipation. The warm liquid swirled over her tongue, the sweetness and delicious flavor teasing her senses as it moved down to her stomach. "Not bad," she said with a shrug. She continued to drink, each sip relaxing her further. Before she knew it, she'd drained the mug. Her stomach twitched and almost ached with desire. Dash floated through her mind and she imagined what it would be like to kiss him and have his hands all over her body.

"Soon," she moaned, placing the mug on the night stand, dizziness starting to spin around her head. "If this works like Amy says it will, I'll be with Dash soon."

Lucy reclined against the pillows, her eyes fluttering shut the moment she became horizontal on the bed.

* * * *

Lucy awoke the next morning with a strange euphoria fermenting in the pit of her stomach. Slowly, she rose, stretching her arms overhead to work out the kinks in her muscles, and the feeling intensified. Bolting from the bed, she hurried to the bathroom to look at herself in the mirror. For the first time in as long as she could remember, she could see clearly without the help of her glasses.

And from the reflection in the mirror, the woman staring back at her was gorgeous and sexy. Her red curls fell in soft tendrils with no hint of frizz in sight. Instead of her face being red and blotchy, it had a perfect ivory hue with a bit of accent along her high cheek bones. Her lips were unusually full and red. It appeared as though someone had put makeup on her face while she was asleep.

Turning on the faucet, Lucy splashed some of the spray of cold water on her face and then used a hand towel to wipe it dry. Not only did her makeup appear to be soaked into her skin, the white towel remained pristine as though she hadn't washed off anything. "This is really weird," she murmured.

Shaking her head, she unbuttoned her night gown and let it fall to the floor. She glanced back in the mirror. Normally, she couldn't stand the sight of herself naked. Even as a raving heterosexual, she found what she now saw in the reflection as deliciously appealing.

Her breasts seemed to have a natural lift to them and her stomach was flat. Glancing down, she noticed that the cellulite that even losing thirty pounds hadn't eliminated, was gone. Her legs were smooth and silky in appearance.

Stepping to the shower, she turned on the warm spray, letting the steam build up before she stepped inside. Surely whatever weird thing had befallen her would diminish after a shower.

She scrubbed every inch of her body with a washcloth and loofah, making it

impossible for anything to be left, including dead skin cells. Considering her skin was raw from all the washing, she assumed she was clean.

Turning off the water, she stepped out and dabbed a few wet spots with a towel before wrapping it around her and knotting it between her breasts. She wiped away the steam build-up on the mirror to see if the shower had washed away her new makeover. It hadn't. Even her lashes were thick and long with no signs of mascara goo that normally built up when she wore makeup.

Instead of red frizzes sticking up from her wet hair, it fell, though still soaked from the cleansing, in a soft cascade. Taking out the hair dryer, she began drying the red curls, which as she watched in the mirror, fell into that same cascading mane.

For the first time in her life, she dressed in front of the full-length mirror on the inside of her walk-in closet door. Her breasts heaved in two delicious scoops in the cups of her bra. Where normally there were gaps because she didn't have much of a bosom, she had cleavage. Pulling on a pair of plain khaki pants, she turned around a bit to watch as they perfectly molded around her ass, accentuating two rounded cheeks. Buttoning the blouse, which was fitted around the waist, the cotton molded around her breasts, making her waistline appear even slimmer.

Blinking several times, she expected her usual frumpy self to reappear at any moment. No, the new person, who she herself had to admit was beautiful and sexy, remained.

"Nobody will recognize me," she said with a smile.
Maybe that was a good thing.

* * * *

As Lucy walked through the front door of the hospital, she glided by the reception desk.

"Excuse me. Excuse me, miss," Fran, who worked behind the counter, called to her.

"Yeah," she said over her shoulder. Usually, she strode by without anyone even noticing, much less stopping her. Lucy and Fran had fallen into a habit of not even saying "hi" to one another.

"M'am, all guests must check in at the front desk and be accompanied back."

Lucy pulled out her identification badge and flashed it to Fran. "It's me, Lucy."

"What department do you work in?"

"Research."

"The only Lucy in research is Lucy Kaplan."

"I know, that's me." She let the badge, which was clipped to the bottom of her blouse, fall back down.

Fran narrowed her eyes. "Holy shit." A hand went to her lips as though the older woman attempted to take back the two words she'd just said. "What happened to you?"

Lucy shrugged. "I guess I just felt like making myself look nice today."

Frank shook her head. "Well, I guess you can go on back, then, Lucy."

Lucy nodded and continued along her normal path to the lab. Using the barcode on her identification badge, she entered the secured research area. All her co-workers seemed to stop and stare after her as she walked past.

With a long sigh of relief, she stepped into her lab.

"I told you it would work," Amy greeted her.

“Oh my God.”

“I know. Isn’t it great?” Amy beamed and clapped her hands.

“Will this wear off?” She feared that her new look would only be temporary.

“Yeah, in about forty-eight hours.”

“And then what, I turn back into a pumpkin?”

“Sort of. You just got to keep brewing the tea to stay this way.”

“What else?” Lucy tossed her purse onto her desk and sat down in the swivel chair with a huff.

“It doesn’t hurt if he drinks it as well. Not that Dr. Sexy could be more improved.”

“What if I stop drinking it?”

“Everything will go back to normal.”

Lucy groaned and buried her face in her hands. “This is scientifically impossible,” she moaned.

“No.” Amy knelt in front of her and took her hands, forcing her to look up at her.

“It’s very possible. You know that the herbs can be very powerful, and it just so happens that when you put them together they turn you into a sexy goddess.”

“How long have you been drinking it?”

Amy shrugged. “Three years. Before that, I didn’t have a life.”

“Kind of like me.”

Amy bit her lower lip, apparently unwilling to respond to that particular remark. Lucy knew instinctively that her assistant agreed with what she’d said.

“When I said I wanted him to fall in love with me, I meant I wanted him to do so of his own accord.” Crossing her arms beneath her breasts, which were unusually perky, she sat back in the chair.

“And he will.”

“Okay, why is it called ‘Love Potion Number Sixty-Nine’?”

Amy giggled and then put her hands on her hips. “You really want to know?”

Lucy cocked her head to one side. “Yeah.”

“Okay, you’ve heard of Love Potion Number Nine, right?”

“Yeah, it’s that movie where the geek comes up with that potion to get that—oh.”

Lucy put her fingers to her lips, remembering the rest of the movie.

“Okay, well, this is just like that. Except it took more than nine tries to get it right.”

“But sixty-nine? That sounds like…”

“It’s supposed to bring on a sixty-nine?”

“Yeah.” That was one of those elusive sexual things Lucy had never allowed herself to think about.

“And that’s the kicker. If you and your intended indulge in a sixty-nine while the potion is still in your system, then you’ll be this permanently new-and-improved you, which will make him want to be with you forever.”

“Yeah, right.”

“Hey, it’s worked for me and Rick,” Amy shrugged.

“You just said that you keep drinking the potion.”

“I did—until about a year ago. Damn, that was a great night. Best sex I ever had.”

Lucy put her hands over her ears. “I don’t want to hear about this.” It was bad enough she and Amy had discussed sex in this much detail. She didn’t want to know about her assistant’s love life.

Lucy glanced at Amy and saw a satisfied smile dancing across the younger woman's face. Lucy slowly dropped her hands and inhaled deeply. Who knew? Maybe it would work after all. Still, even if Dash did do the unthinkable and make love to her, she doubted she'd be able to pull off a sixty-nine.

Just then, the door to the lab opened and Dash stepped inside.

His eyes widened and became two brown saucers. "La—lu—Lucy?" he asked with a stammer.

"Yeah."

Within moments, he'd walked across the room and pulled her up into his arms. Burying his mouth over hers, he kissed her with a crushing passion.

Well, maybe it's worth it after all.

Chapter Four

Dash Braden had enjoyed his share of women, but he'd never kissed one the way he did Lucy Kaplan. As his tongue probed the confines of her mouth, he realized that the lip lock wouldn't cut it for very long. His cock twitched and throbbed, almost begging to be set free from his pants.

Cupping Lucy's cheeks, he broke away and took a deep breath, looking deep into her emerald green eyes. How had he never noticed how beautiful her eyes were before that moment?

"There's something different about you," he murmured.

She nodded and smiled.

"I need to make love to you."

"We're in the lab," she reminded him.

"I don't care where we are. I need to make love to you." He covered her mouth again, kissing her with even more force than before. It still wasn't enough.

"Umm, Dash," a female's voice said from behind him.

After stroking against her tongue one final time, he broke away and glanced over his shoulder to see Amy, Lucy's assistant, standing over him.

"What?" he grunted.

"Just wanted to remind you that you guys are not alone."

"Then get out."

"This is a workplace. Maybe you can lasso it in for a few hours."

"No, I can't," he growled.

"Then, why don't you two get a room or at least go somewhere a little more private?"

"Fine." He spoke through clenched teeth, hardening his jaw muscle. Grabbing Lucy's hand he went for the door. "We're going to my office."

From her shoes clicking along the linoleum floor, he knew she was following along with him as he sped towards his office. Luckily, they didn't pass anyone in the hallway.

Once inside his office, he'd barely closed the door when he enveloped her in his arms. His hands cupping her ass, he lifted her up and her legs wrapped around his waist. Claiming her mouth, he kissed her again, searing them together as he carried her to the desk, which was, thankfully, bare. He set her down on the desktop, kneeling to assault her blouse. Nimble fingers took possession of the buttons, slowly opening it. Her breasts seemed to be poured like two delicate scoops of ice cream into the lace cups of her bra. Once she shrugged off her blouse, he took a breast in either hand, probing them. The straps fell. Taking it as a sign, he reached back with one hand and released the clasp of the bra. Even as the silk and lace fell forward, her breasts remained pert.

Strawberry nipples now revealed, he once again took each curve in a hand. They filled his palms perfectly and he fingered each nipple between a thumb and forefinger. Both hardened and puckered.

As Lucy threw back her head, he kissed the inside of her neck, searing a trail down to her bosom. He took one of those beaded tips into his mouth, circling his tongue around the edge and then grazing the very edge with his teeth. He heard her heart thundering

against her ribs.

“Ohh,” she moaned from deep in her gut.

“I’m getting there, baby,” he said.

Holding her hips, he pulled her, and she laid her back against the table. With lightening speed, he yanked off her shoes and socks with two simple movements. Her ass lay at the very edge of the desk and he gripped the waistband of her pants, finding her fly. He’d barely opened it when he started to slide them, along with her panties, off her hips.

Once he’d let them fall to the floor, he grazed his hands along the inside of her legs towards her sex. He dipped a finger into the folds, the warm moistness greeting him with ecstatic anticipation. He groaned, his cock once again twitching in his pants. Removing his finger, he licked it, the delectable sweetness of her sex rolling over his tongue. He had to have her. One taste wasn’t enough.

Holding her thighs, they slowly parted and he buried his face in her pussy, delving his tongue in first, the creamy warmth flowing into his mouth. Digging his fingers into her skin, he probed deeper, wanting as much as he could taste. The rich appeal couldn’t be matched by any food he’d ever eaten, including the most expensive desserts. No, a wine hadn’t even been developed to go with Lucy Kaplan. Not that he needed one. She was an enjoyment on her own. Her hips rose a bit; his tongue delved a bit deeper. It still wasn’t enough.

“Oh my God,” she moaned. “I—I—I’ve nev—never done an—anything like this be—before.”

He heard her pounding against the desk, her hips arching as much as humanly possible against the resistance of his mouth. Her slow, shallow breaths turned to deep, audible pants, her hammering against the wood increasing in speed and decibel. “Ohhh, ohhh, ohhh,” she sighed in succession as her hips and ass flattened on the desktop. He knew she’d climaxed.

Running his tongue along the inside of one of her thighs, he found some leverage by holding onto the edge of the desk. He looked up over her wet, spent sex. Her chest moved up and down with pants that were beginning to slow into more even breaths.

She propped herself up with her elbows and glanced down at him, those green eyes once again locking with his gaze. Even with beads of perspiration around her forehead, her face appeared as delicate and sexy as it had before their little passion play. Was she wearing a new, special kind of makeup? He didn’t care.

“I—I don’t believe that just happened,” she said with a small voice. Her delicate fingers went into her auburn hair, brushing away a lock that had fallen across her forehead.

“Baby, we’re far from done.”

*

Lucy swallowed hard, still trying to catch her breath after the unbelievable thrust of ecstasy that had floated through her blood. All these years she’d never known that all-American quarterback and top-notch Doctor Dash Braden’s talent lay in his tongue. Or his mouth, since his kissing was pretty damn good as well.

When it came to sex, or anything related to male companionship, she’d been missing out. For way too damn long. As far as the concoction Amy had referred her to, this was beyond her expectations or dreams.

Dash stood and took her hands, pulling her up to a seated position.

“I’m feeling a little naked here,” she said, embarrassment heating her cheeks.

“That can be rectified fairly easily.” A mischievous smile curled his lips upward.

Under normal circumstances, she might have reached for her clothes and covered her bare skin. This was an abnormal situation.

Finding her footing, she pulled the tail of his shirt from his trousers, suddenly aware of his giant erection. Button-by-button, she opened his shirt, which he shrugged off with ease. Starting at the top of his thick shoulders, she slid her hands down the rugged muscles of his pecs, not quite believing that something so wonderful could exist on a human being. Fine blond hair dusted his torso. The hint of light streaming through the closed blinds highlighted his tanned chest. It was soft and invited her to go lower past his hard, firm stomach.

Her fingers were almost shaking when she reached the clasp of his belt. Leisurely, she unclasped the leather and metal, opening it to give her access to his fly. A simple snap and a zip, and she’d opened that as well. Dipping a hand inside through the waistband of his underwear, she found his hard cock within a nest of fine hair she imagined felt the same as that on his head. Her fingers curled around the throbbing organ in her palm.

“He wants inside you,” he said with a moan. “Deep inside that sweet pussy of yours.”

She took that as encouragement and slid his pants and underwear off. As they pooled around his ankles, he leaned down and pulled them completely off along with his shoes and socks. When he uprighted himself, they stood mere inches apart, naked bodies in luscious proximity. Her sex warmed and pooled along the inside of her thighs.

“I—I—uh—I don’t know what to do,” she admitted quietly.

He placed his finger under her chin and raised her gaze to meet his. “Just do what feels right.”

She nodded.

He clasped her hips and cupped her ass, bringing her skin to his. Pulling her to her tiptoes, his lips found hers again for another of his crushing, passionate kisses. She ached to get closer. Leading the way, he brought her to the couch, where he fell in a thud, drawing her down into his lap so she straddled him. “Perfect,” he said with hot breath against her mouth.

With one hand still cupping her rear, he eased her up a bit. When the tip of his cock found its way between her legs, she assumed he used his other hand to guide it. As it probed into her pussy, she trembled, gripping his shoulders for balance.

“You okay?” he asked. Genuine concern clouded his eyes.

“Yeah.” She pushed down on him, letting her sex tighten around him. A shiver went up her spine, sending bolts of energy through her blood. Catapulting her movements, she moved her hips in a clockwise motion, which he matched with an athletic grace. All those years of working out certainly had its benefits as Lucy was suddenly aware.

No thoughts cluttered her head nor was there a need for words. Feeling, touching, moving was all that mattered. All Lucy needed. Her pelvis burned with what had become a familiar sensation—desire and fulfillment. It remained at a constant plateau, giving her ample opportunity to enjoy and savor it.

Tightening her jaw, she held her bite together with a determined clench. The rest of her muscles followed suit, her entire body becoming a contracted ball of muscle. It

heightened the pleasure zone, her nerve endings tingling. Orgasm gripped her and the tendons in her neck loosened and joints softened, letting her head fall backwards. Finally, ecstasy leveled, and the dizzy feeling had ceased, allowing Lucy to think clearly again.

“Oh my God,” she shrieked.

“What?”

“We’re not using protection.”

“Shh.” His tone had a soothing nature that eased her mind. “I’ll let you know when it’s time.

She nodded, continuing her dance, moving with an eerily common rhythm. Knowing he slid inside her with a hot slickness, she found his lips again. They were hot and searing, almost burning her entire mouth with the kiss. Once again, she reveled in their intimacy.

His fingers dug into her hips, clasping her and pushing her off with a thrust.

“Now,” he said between pants.

As she watched his profile, his teeth took his lower lip between them, sinking deeper for a moment and then releasing. His cock slid out of her, and she realized from the satisfied expression clouding his face that he’d cum.

He met her gaze and offered her a grin, wrapping his arms around her, bodies once again mingling, but with a different closeness. Their souls connected as well.

I don’t have Amy’s confidence. There’s no way I can make this last forever.

Chapter Five

“Have fun?” Amy asked with a sly grin as Lucy sauntered back into the lab. She answered with a school-girl giggle, feeling the embarrassment heat her entire body.

“Guess so.” Amy turned back to her row of test tubes.

Lucy exhaled loudly and smoothed a hand over her hair, finding it oddly silky in comparison with her normal dry, out-of-control curls. Stepping up to the table, she picked up a glass slide by the edges and examined it closely.

“If I tell you something, you promise to keep it secret?” she asked her assistant.

Amy met her gaze with a smile. “Sure.”

“For the first time in my life, I feel like a woman.”

“Great, ain’t it?”

“Oh, yeah.” She released a deep throaty chuckle, which added emphasis to the two simple words. “Anyway, I guess we should get back to work.”

“Technically, you haven’t started it for the day.”

“Okay. I better start working for the day. What’s going on?”

“Well, I tried the solvent on the lymph node cell again, and it seems to still be working like it did yesterday. I’m getting ready to test it on a normal lymph cell to see what it does. And if that works out, I guess we should test the effects on other cells.”

Lucy nodded. “Sounds good.” She’d apparently taught her assistant well. Not only did Amy have everything under control, she seemed to not need Lucy.

“And after lunch, I’d like to look over that article again and see if we can add some things.”

“Yeah, I want as much information as possible to prove our findings.”

“You think the FDA will approve the use of cat hair in a drug?”

Lucy shrugged. “It’s a gamble, I suppose. I guess if someone is allergic to cat hair, there might be a problem. But if it’s the difference between life and death, there are ways to counteract allergies.” For the first time all day, her mind had gone back to work. At least the potion hadn’t taken away her ability to think scientifically.

“I figured with Dr. Dashing Handsome, you’d want to go back to that leukemia research.”

“We’ll just play it by ear.” No matter how strongly she felt about Dash, she couldn’t lose sight of her purpose.

Amy returned her gaze to the table and Lucy bit her lower lip, trying to decide whether or not to ask the question weighing on her mind.

“If I don’t drink the tea again, will Dash fall out of love with me?”

“Honey, it’s for lust, not love.”

“So, he isn’t in love with me?” The passion they’d created together seemed too intimate and powerful to be simple lust.

“No, it’s just lust. Desire. Don’t confuse sex with love, because they usually don’t go together.”

How could a woman five years her junior be so knowledgeable? She’d spent the last year teaching Amy, who now seemed to be lecturing her.

“I’m not,” Lucy said hurriedly. “I just want to know what would happen.”

“Depends on Dash, I guess. But if you want to have more mind-blowing sex, I suggest you drink that damn tea every morning.”

Something nagged Lucy. It wasn’t her he’d made love to or coupled with. It was a sexy prototype of her that had been brought on by the odd effects of a tea. How the recipe had remained out of the news, including the tabloids, was beyond her.

“I want him to want me for me,” Lucy insisted, stomping her foot. “I don’t want to have to depend on chemicals to keep my life on track.” She realized the irony of it, considering she was a chemist who researched new and innovative ways for her field of science to help people with cancer.

Amy turned back to Lucy and narrowed her eyes. Scanning her from head to foot, Amy cocked one hip towards the table, folded her arms and said, “Honey, that ain’t gonna happen.”

A nervous twitch filled Lucy’s stomach. She didn’t want to admit Amy was probably right. Turning on her heels, she walked towards her desk. Even though her head was a mess, she might as well at least act like she was working.

* * * *

As Dash walked towards Lucy’s lab, he wondered briefly if there was some sort of magnet buried in his gut that attracted him to her. Maybe it would explain why he’d seen her so differently today than he had in the past.

“It’s almost like a spell or something,” he murmured under his breath.

Shaking his head, he tossed that idea aside. He’d spent much of his adult life entrenched in the theories of science and learning that magic simply didn’t exist. After all, if there was a potential for magic, he would have utilized it sooner to save his precious son’s life.

Now that the work day had wound down, he wanted to enjoy a nice leisurely dinner with Lucy and then have her for dessert. How he could think about sex and his son in the same span of moments baffled him. His cock aching against the material of his pants kept him from probing deeper into that question.

When he opened the door to the lab, he found Lucy sitting on a stool with her legs crossed. Her eyes were hidden within the dual lenses of the microscope. She didn’t seem to have noticed that anyone had entered the lab.

“Hey,” he greeted her.

She jumped and glanced over her shoulder. “Hi.” Her full red lips offered him a giant grin. He licked his own lips, remembering their sweet taste and wanting another helping of all she had to offer.

“I came in here to offer to take you to dinner, but now I’m thinking I want to go straight to dessert.” He surprised himself at how husky and erotic his voice sounded.

“Okay,” she agreed with a nod. “Your place or mine?” Hopping off the stool, she removed her lab coat to reveal the blouse that seemed to have been made to accentuate every curve of her body.

“Yours,” he said with a groan. “And I hope you live close by.”

“Do you like cats?”

“Honey, any pussy of yours is a friend of mine.”

She rolled her eyes and cocked her head to one side. “That’s not what I meant,” she

said with a gentle laugh.

“Actually, I’m more of a dog person.”

“Hmm, maybe we better go to your place.”

“It ain’t much.”

“I don’t think that really matters.”

She had a point. They could stay in the lab and do just as well. His office had also worked quite well earlier that day.

Standing mere inches away from him, she gave his chest a gentle pat. Offering a “come hither” glance, she went towards the door. Like an obedient dog, he followed. He’d be damned if he’d miss a moment of that sweet ass wiggling.

* * * *

Lost in one of Dash’s intoxicating embraces that tickled every sense, Lucy didn’t question what had brought on such a powerful physical coupling. The reason didn’t matter. She’d spent too much of her adult life analyzing to waste the feelings riveting through her blood with brain activity.

The only thing that had come into focus when she entered Dash’s hotel room was the bed. She wanted traditional lovemaking this time on a bed and in a place where nobody could interrupt them. The privacy she so desperately craved enveloped them. He was hers if even for these few precious moments.

Her skin tingled beneath her clothes, practically begging for Dash’s touch. She pressed her hips against him and dug her nails into the back of his neck. Obviously sensing her need, he reached beneath her shirt, finding a breast with ease.

“Slow down,” he ordered with hot breath against her lips. He stepped back, releasing his hold on her. Button-by-button, he slowly opened the front of her blouse, a chill hitting her skin from being exposed to the air. Helping her shrug the fabric from her shoulders, his fingers ran along the top of her cleavage with the slightest of touches. Despite the softness, it sent an amazing pulsing through her blood. Resisting a shiver, she held her spine in a firm line. His touch strengthened, floating down her belly to the waistband of her pants.

“I want to enjoy every moment of being with you,” he said with a groan.

She nodded, hypnotized by the deepness of his eyes. Trust in him coursed through her.

As he opened the fly, he clasped her hips, letting the pants fall to her ankles. Luckily, they’d both taken off their shoes and socks as soon as they’d walked through the door. All she had to do was step out of the pants to be free of them.

Holding her against him by cupping her ass, he leaned down for another kiss mingling with her lips, taking her fully and deeply. With a hint of a lift, he raised her off her feet and she might as well have been standing on a cloud as they continued to connect through their mouths.

Her breasts were crushed into the cushioned muscles of his chest, which oddly titillated the senses along her skin. Liquid desire warmed her, and slowly the kiss ended as he gently placed her back on her feet.

Their gazes locked for a moment, communicating on a non-verbal level the intense need to come together. With shaking fingers, she undid his shirt, running her hands along the smooth contours of his pecs and abs. He shrugged it off and she hooked her fingers

into the belt loop. He forged a trail of kisses down the inside of her neck, pausing at her collar bone. Adding a gentle nudge with his tongue, the combination of the saliva and heat on her skin seemed to nearly sizzle.

Finding the clasp of his fly, she opened, once again revealing the rock hard cock standing at attention for her. She took his pants and underwear off with a fluid motion. Unable to resist, she glanced down at his crotch and the tip of his sex seemed to be twitching in her direction. He took her hands and led her towards the bed.

"We better use protection this time," he murmured, reaching towards the drawer of the bed table. He removed a wrapped condom and handed it to her. "You do the honors."

Trying to keep her fingers from trembling, she opened the package and placed the disk on the edge of his cock. Slowly, she rolled it over the expanse of his shaft. At that moment, she realized how meager her sexual experiences had been. Nothing had measured up to one moment with Dash Braden. Lucy intended to savor the pleasure while it lasted.

After he gave her body a gentle nudge, she fell back into the bed and he crawled to join her. Kneeling over her, he removed the straps of her bra one at a time. Raising her up for a moment, he unclasped it and removed it. Her breasts now free for his enjoyment, he offered her a sly smile before leaning down to them.

Cupping one, he took the nipple into his mouth and she felt it tingle and then harden against his tongue. Raising her hips a bit, her pussy heated and pooled, begging for attention.

Placing his free hand on her hip, he pinned it to the bed and took the other breast for his gentle suckling and teeth-grazing routine. Soon, both heaved with her nerve endings nearly sparkling from the ecstasy he elicited.

His hand went down the waistband of her panties, two fingers nudging between the folds of clit. Moving further, she felt her pussy burn with more intensity as a finger went into her clit.

"Are you always this wet?" he asked with a hot pant.

"I don't know." And she didn't. It wasn't something she was in the habit of testing. And if she did, it wouldn't be nearly as pleasurable as the thrill he brought out.

He offered her a smile and ripped away the panties, following them down as he took them off her feet and tossed them to the floor. Holding her calves, he parted her legs and moved on his knees between them.

Reaching out her hands, she beckoned him to her. He complied, balancing himself over her. She gripped the flexed muscles of his upper arms, raising her lips to meet his. The tender kiss quickly escalated into a passionate interlude of tongues rocking together.

Breaking free, she heard him suck in a breath. Holding his cock, he reached out a finger towards her pussy. She arched her hips to meet him, and slowly he dipped into her. A shiver of unknown emotions flooded her as he moved deeper. Inviting him further, she wrapped her legs around his calves, matching his thrusts by gently raising her hips.

Their eyes remained in sync with one another, Dash biting his lower lip as his movements became more forceful and deliciously pleasurable.

Raw, passionate heat filled her pelvis, moving up to her belly. She dug her nails deeper into his skin for leverage. Still, her entire body seemed to shake beneath him, tremble with the very connection they seemed to be forging. She closed her eyes, no longer able to meet his gaze without completely melting.

How could something so powerful possibly disintegrate?

Driving the thought from her head, she popped her lids open. His teeth's grip on his lip seemed to deepen, and she imagined the inside curled into his mouth was as white as his teeth.

She relaxed her shoulders a bit into the cushion of the mattress, as orgasm gripped her. She arched her back, pressing him deeper inside her. Feeling all her muscles tighten around his cock, she closed her eyes as the gentle release swept through her.

"I'm almost there, baby," he assured her.

She nodded, the sensation reaching a plateau of delight and holding as he continued to grind against her. His pace quickened and gripped her hips with greater intensity by the moment. He paused, holding his shaft in her while releasing his hold on his lip. Relief flooded Dash's face and she knew he'd reached his peak as well.

"Did you savor it long enough?" she asked breathlessly.

"Baby," he replied, placing a hot, wet kiss on her lips. "I don't think I'll ever be able to get enough of you."

Just wait. In less than forty-eight hours, you'll go back to not even noticing I exist.

Chapter Six

"I'm surprised you can still walk," Amy said with a giggle as she walked into the lab the next morning and found Lucy standing up over the table. "Considering the look on Dash's face when you guys left yesterday, I figured he'd fuck you 'til you were raw."

Lucy groaned, still surprised every time she looked in the mirror to see the sexy siren staring back at her. "Maybe we should get some actual work done today."

Amy shrugged and tossed her purse to the side. "I suppose," she said dryly.

"Dash wants to talk to us about the leukemia research. He has some ideas based on his own research at St. Jude's."

"He must be pretty damn good in bed."

"What?" Lucy's head snapped in Amy's direction, finding a sly grin on her assistant's face.

"I thought nothing could tear you away from that lymphoma project. Now, you're all about the leukemia cure."

Lucy signed loudly and she bobbed her shoulders a bit. "You know that we can't let our hearts lead us with this job." She realized that a mere twenty-four hours earlier, she'd said that nothing would make her lose her focus.

"You should be giving yourself that advice."

"Huh?"

"You've been on that lymphoma additive since I met you. And you're prepared to throw it all to the side because you got laid."

"That's not true." Lucy heard the audible shriek in her own voice. She turned her gaze back to the tabletop. Anger started to flood her at what her assistant was implying.

"Whatever. But since I helped you land him, I think I'm entitled to some details."

"I thought we should work instead." Talking about her personal life didn't rank high on her list of priorities.

"Fine," Amy said with a loud sigh. "We'll go back to the leukemia research. Maybe Joe will actually let it go further this time."

"If Dash wants it to go forward, I don't see how Joe can get in the way."

"Okay. I'll get on the computer and print off some of our notes."

Amy went into one of the dusty corners and switched on the computer. Her efficiency with the paperwork of the research world had made Lucy's job much easier.

With a shake of her head, Lucy opened the notebook containing the details about the patient who'd undergone the treatment. She bit her lower lip.

"I wonder if we should give cat pee a more scientific name."

"Like what?" Amy asked over her shoulder. "Feline urine? It sounds about the same to me." Either way, it was gross, though oddly effective.

"Okay." She giggled softly. "We never really tested the compounds of the urine to see what the active component was. I'm thinking if we can replicate that one chemical, it might work better than plain old cat pee."

"I think it's something in the ammonia."

"Yeah, probably."

"I think in the files somewhere I actually have the details on the cat pee. You have to

remember that we used the pee of your cats. Obviously, it's going to vary from cat to cat."

"Good point. They all eat the same kind of cat food and drink the same water."

"You know," Amy said slowly as she typed her password in. "It could be something in the city water. And when it mixes with the digestive juices in a cat's stomach, it creates the component."

"Oh, my God, Amy, that's it."

"What's it?"

"We should also look at the chemical components of the food and the water."

Amy groaned. "That will take forever."

"Not really. If we can get some of the stomach acid and test it against the cat food and the water, then we may not even have to use the urine."

"Okay, Lucy, that potion has muddled your mind. How in the hell are we going to get stomach acid from a cat."

"Good point." Lucy sighed and began rubbing her eyes. Normally, she would have taken off her glasses and massaged the bridge of her nose. It seemed strange once again to be able to see without the help of her glasses. "But we really need to figure out what the compounds are. If we go public, nobody is going to want to take cat pee as a drug."

"Didn't I tell you that a year ago?"

"Yeah. I just didn't realize how gross it was until now."

"See, getting laid has its benefits."

"Okay, we have some of the pee still in the fridge. Let's test it to get the exact components. Then, we'll go from there."

"Sounds like a plan."

* * * *

By the end of the work day, Lucy and Amy had narrowed the component down to the ammonia in cat urine. The only problem was that the specific properties were virtually impossible to recreate in the lab.

"We really need to figure out what is in cat stomach acid," Lucy said with a whine.

"You don't ask for much do you?" Amy shot back with a grin. They both stood over the stainless steel table glancing at reports and the details of the urinalysis.

"Maybe we should just find a cat with acid reflux disease."

"You mean one of your twenty cats doesn't have reflux?"

"No. And I only have six cats." She rolled her eyes. Had Amy made some sort of a hint by saying she had so many cats. "However," Lucy wondered aloud. "Tiger does tend to have a quick gag reflex and throws up at least once a week. I suppose I could collect some of it."

"Okay, I was just kidding." Amy released one of her moaning sighs. "Look, I think we're getting a little loopy. I'm going to head on home."

"Have a good night."

"Oh," Amy said as she righted herself. "Don't forget to make the tea tonight. And if you can, get Dash to drink some as well."

Lucy didn't answer and kept her gaze on the papers in front of her. Without another word, Amy left and Lucy heard the door behind her.

Several moments later, she heard the door creak open and assumed Amy had

forgotten something.

“Did you forget your purse again?” Lucy asked with a laugh.

“No,” Dash said in her ear and grabbed her ass. “I forgot you.”

Slowly, Lucy turned around to face him and he had her entire body pinned against the table. “It seems you finally remembered.”

“Finally.” He covered her mouth and thrust his tongue forward. Within moments, he’d seared inside and taken possession of her entire body with a simple stroke. If anyone possessed magical powers, it was Dash.

If only I’d known about this damn potion when I was in college. No, Dash had been worth the wait.

“So,” he said against her mouth as he pulled away. “Ready for a repeat of last night?”

Her pussy warmed and creamed and her pelvis practically melted against him. She could only manage a nod.

Cupping her ass, he raised her up and sat her on the table. With her legs comfortably parted, she allowed him to step between them and come in for another kiss. All thought and sense seemed to be taken away. The only thing left was to feel and let him show his affection for her. It was only physical. For the moment, it made sense. Wrapping her legs around his waist, she pinned him against her body. Her skin practically seared beneath her clothes, almost begging to be set free from their restraints.

“You know,” he murmured as he pulled away. “I’ve always wanted to do it in a lab.”

“Looks like this is your lucky day.” He released a throaty groan and pushed his hands up the hem of her skirt. “Your skin is so fucking soft. It’s almost unreal.”

You have no idea.

His fingers hooked along the waistband of her panties and gently tugged them off. While she should have felt a chill at having her privates exposed to the air, warmth seared along her thighs.

“As much as I want to have another taste of you, I know I have to bury my cock in there instead.”

She could only manage a nod in response. Her fingers found his fly and opened it. As she usually found it, his cock was hard and erect.

“Do you have a condom?” she asked breathlessly.

“Yeah, it’s in my pocket.”

She found the package and pulled it out. Taking it between her teeth, she tore it apart and took out the rubber disk. Placing it on the tip, she slid it on.

“We’re all set,” she murmured.

“One problem.”

“What?”

“As inviting as your pussy is, the table’s a little too tall for me to reach you.”

“What about my desk.”

He glanced over her shoulder towards the corner where her desk was. “Perfect.” Grabbing her bare ass cheeks, he picked her up and carried her easily, though his pants fell further down his legs as he walked.

Who knew there were so many places to have sex in the lab?

Her skin made contact with the smooth wood of the desktop. Moving his hands off her ass, he found his way to her sex, dipping his fingers inside.

“As usual, you’re so warm and wet.” It was his turn to sound breathless.

She opened her legs wider, and slowly she felt him guiding his cock towards the wet delta aching to invite him inside. Shaking her hips ever so slightly, she met his tip, clasping his shoulders as he entered her further.

He slid against her easily, the liquid fire heating so much that she expected there to be burns from the contact. Nonetheless, the pleasure that filled her pelvis made any future pains worth it. As she knew, there was a way to treat any ailment. Though some were a bit unorthodox or strange, anything was possible.

With Dash, nothing seemed impossible. In fact, endless unspoken promises seemed to be relaying between Dash’s heart and hers. Or maybe it was just the pounding she detected from the way his chest was pressed against hers. Holding her face, he took her lips, and with the kiss, he sent vibrations through her system.

If only feelings like this could last forever. If only someone could create a drug that would mimic the endorphins released during sex and let those sensations fill her body. Then again, it still wouldn’t be as good as what she now experienced with Dash. Nothing ever would be. He had found a spot inside her that none of the three men she’d been with before him had ever managed to touch. Teasing and massaging it, the blaze seared up to her pelvis with a delightful ache. She couldn’t get enough. She’d never have enough.

Her hands traveled down the expanse of his sculpted back and gripped his butt cheeks. As she suspected, with each thrust, the tight firm muscles clenched and released in a delightful rhythm. This didn’t come from simple butt flexes. No, this was from an exercise created especially to make him into a perfect lover.

Pleasure smoldered and held in her pussy, wet and taking him. His movements increased, the tickling of that specific spot continuing. Finally, orgasm gripped her and she threw her head back, letting it fill her entire body. With one last thrust, she felt him cum inside the condom against her womb.

“Holy shit,” he said between pants.

As she righted her head, he placed a warm, wet kiss on her lips. Desire continued to vibrate over her skin. It still wasn’t enough.

“You know what I just realized,” she said, pushing a lock of hair away from her forehead.

“What’s that?”

“You’ve tasted me, but I’ve never tasted you.”

He stepped back and held his cock in his palm. “It’s all yours, baby.”

Chapter Seven

Slowly, Lucy moved off the desk. Gripping Dash's hips, she lowered to her knees. His cock remained erect and in front of her like an erotic lollipop begging to be suckled and licked. Placing her fingers around the rim of the condom, she tugged it off his shaft and depositing it in on the floor beside her.

Her fingers folded around the organ, and it pulsed and filled her palm. How did he manage to get erect so soon after cumming? It didn't seem scientifically possible, but she didn't second guess it. Her thumb ran over the moistness at the edge of the tip, wiping it away.

Despite devoting her entire adult life to science, Lucy had never spent much time examining the male sex organ. So, she took time to do just that. All of it seemed so surreal for the moment with a hard phallic form. Uncurling her fingers, she saw that it remained hard and erect, almost beckoning her. She'd never given a man a blow job. Here, as she faced it, all of it seemed to be a the natural course of things. Perfectly normal as human beings.

She ran her tongue over her lips, wetting them for a moment. Moving forward, she took the tip in her mouth, slowly letting her lips envelope his skin. Oddly, it seemed like a treat instead of something forbidden.

She could feel her heart thundering in her chest and her eyes closed easily, as she allowed herself to feel instead of think. Comfort filled her stomach and her nails dug deeper into his hips. All the while, she worked him, teasing and tasting as much as possible. She enjoyed the salty and musky taste of him. Like an intoxicating candy, she allowed her heart to lead the way, wanting to tell him exactly how she felt through her motions.

I love you. I love you. I love you.

In that moment, she realized she wanted to be loved back, but not as this person she'd become thanks to the potion. She wanted to be loved for herself—frizzy hair and cellulite.

"Damn, baby, I didn't know you had such hidden talents," Dash said between audible pants. His hands dug into her scalp, gripping it as she continued to move against him, his rod running along the expanse of her tongue. Her pussy burned and she could feel desire flooding down the insides of her thighs.

Everything seemed so new and different with Dash. All of it powerful and pleasurable. Nothing could make up for it. Despite her intentions to feel, one thought came screaming through her head. What would happen when the potion wore off?

Hardening her lips, she pursued licking and suckling and gently taking of him in her mouth. His grip on her scalp intensified, indicating that he too enjoyed the coupling.

"Baby, I'm gonna come." His voice was gritty and husky.

Stiffening her jaw muscles, her teeth lightly grazed his skin and soon the thrust of his orgasm flooded her mouth. Tightly keeping her eyes closed, she swallowed hard. Sliding him out of her mouth, she licked her lips and glanced up at him.

His dark eyes were clouded with fulfillment.

"All these years we've known each other, and we've never done that," he said with a

wicked grin.

She nodded. "I guess we've been wasting a lot of time."

He took her hands and pulled her upright. Bringing her hands to his lips, he gave each a hot, gentle kiss. "I don't know about you, but I want to seize the rest of this night."

"Sounds good." Her breath caught in the back of her throat. "But I have to go home."

"I'd like to see where you live."

"No," she said with a harsh shunning. "I need to go home alone."

"Why?" He narrowed his eyes and tightened his grip on her hands, threading his fingers through hers.

"My apartment is a mess. I have six cats and they—they—I have to clean things up—the litter box is probably—one of them has a bowel problem." It seemed as though she'd strung together too many random thoughts that she didn't want to admit to anyone, especially the sexy man who wanted to go home with her. Why couldn't she just enjoy it?

"Well, why don't you go ahead of me and I'll come over in about an hour?"

"No." She added a shriek to the single syllable. She pulled her hands away and turned, seeing her panties in a wad on the desk. Slowly, she picked them up. They still had a hint of moisture on them.

Strong hands gripped her shoulders and she felt Dash's hot breath on the inside of her neck. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing." She shivered and pulled away. Stuffing the panties in her purse, she took out her keys and held the giant car key between her thumb and forefinger. "Maybe some other time." She shrugged.

"Okay," he agreed softly.

As she walked towards the door, tears stung her eyes. She avoided looking back at him. If she did, she'd melt into a human puddle. Fear gripped her. She had to know the truth. That meant going back to her old self. Not only would she not drink the potion again, she wouldn't indulge in a sixty-nine until long after the effects had worn off. Love wasn't about false appearances. She wanted to be herself.

Holding her head high, she walked out of the hospital.

* * * *

Taking the plastic wrap off the mug in the fridge, she poured the contents down the drain of her kitchen sink.

The recipe for the potion that she'd printed out from her email message lay on the counter. Balling it in her palm, she grabbed her candle lighter and set the paper ablaze. Watching a flame overtake it, she tossed it into the stainless steel sink and watched it transform into charred remains. The fire extinguished itself, leaving behind the ashes.

"That's that," she said softly. She'd already deleted the message permanently from the mailbox. Of course, she knew she could always ask Amy for another copy, but she wouldn't.

Folding her fingers into her palm, she made a fist and tightened it. "I have to know if he can love me for me." She stomped a foot against the linoleum for emphasis.

"Morrow," one of the cats murmured as it rubbed against her leg.

"I know, I'm sorry," she told it. Slowly, she leaned down and seeing it was her solid gray cat, Smokey, she gathered him in her arms and began scratching the top of his head between his ears. "But after tonight, you guys will have me back to yourselves again."

“Morrow,” he said again, his purring intensifying.
At least, someone loved her.

* * * *

Lucy’s head throbbed as she awoke the next morning.

“Ughh,” she groaned. Blinking her eyes several times, the blariness coated her vision. “Damn it.”

Maybe she’d finally get that eye laser thing done so she wouldn’t have to worry about waking up bleary-eyed again. Reaching for her glasses on the bed table, she unfolded them and righted them over her eyes. Two cats jumped off the bed as she sat up. A lock of hair fell over her shoulder and she glanced down to see that the frizz had returned.

“I guess everything is back to normal.” Stretching her arms over her head, she noticed the sag around her upper arms had also come back. Instead of being disappointed, it seemed oddly comforting to go back to her old self. Would Dash feel the same way?

Clearing her throat, she got out of bed and went into the bathroom. As she suspected, her frumpy nightgown seemed extremely appropriate for her back-to-usual appearance. She walked to the shower and turned it on. Maybe she could at least wash her hair and blow dry it with that frizz serum. Then her hair wouldn’t be such a disaster.

But even after she’d showered and fixed her hair, the reflection staring back at her in the mirror was far from the sex siren she’d been for the past two days. She was back to normal.

Something she’d heard someone say years ago echoed in her head. “You can’t expect anyone to love you until you learn to love yourself.” It seemed right for the moment. She had to follow that piece of advice. Even if it didn’t bring Dash to her, she had to do it for herself and for any future relationship she intended to have.

“I must love myself,” she said under her breath. “I must love myself.”

Easier said than done.

Chapter Eight

“Geez, Lucy, why didn’t you just drink the damn potion before you went to bed last night?” Amy cried as she walked into the lab.

“Because I want to know how he feels about me.”

“He doesn’t know you exist.”

Though Amy’s words were harsh, Lucy knew she spoke the truth. She shrugged. “We better get to work. Joe wants to see the info on the ammonia this afternoon.”

“Okay,” Amy said with a resigned sigh. “What do you need me to do?”

“Go down to storage and see if we still have that compound we created a few months ago.”

“The one that we used as a cat pee replacement?”

“Yeah.”

“Okay.”

When Lucy heard the door close behind Amy, she exhaled slowly.

“I’m here to work,” she reminded herself. For the first time in a few days, she leaned over the lab table with her chin resting in her hands. Through the lenses that were in need of a good wiping, she looked over the compound recipes so many times that she’d probably be able to replicate them in her sleep. Closing her eyes, she tried to do some figures in her head, and without even realizing it, she managed to escape from Dash.

Even the opening and closing of the lab door didn’t interrupt her or even make her look over her shoulder. She assumed Amy had returned and would interrupt her when she was ready to start. Instead, Lucy felt a sharp pinch on her right ass cheek.

“Oh,” she screamed and jumped around to find Dash. As he seemed to focus on her, his brown eyes clouded with confusion. “Hi,” she said tentatively.

“Hi.” Clasp ing her shoulders, he took a step back and sized her up. She bit on her lower lip as the dread mounted in her stomach. “Something’s different about you.” His voice was quiet and almost seemed to be filled with disbelief.

“Yeah, I went back to my old self.” It was much simpler than trying to explain that a potion had made her hot and sexy for forty-eight hours. Like her, he was a scientist and wouldn’t believe it if she told him the truth.

“How—how is that possible?” His fingers probed into her forearms, feeling that the toned area was now replaced by flab and extra skin from the weight she’d lost. Considering how much exploration of her body he’d done during the time she’d been under the influence of the potion, she realized it probably didn’t make much sense.

She shrugged and pulled out of his grasp. Slowly, his hands fell to his sides. His mouth was open and he appeared flabbergasted beyond belief. From the look in his eyes, she realized that he didn’t know what to say or do next.

He took another step back and blinked several times. Each time, she could see the disappointment flooding his face that she remained the same frumpy old Lucy in his vision. At least she knew that those feelings were real and not brought on by a so-called potion. The thought that he would never touch her the same way or want her again shattered her heart, but it was real. Stiffening her spine, she held her head high. They were, after all, at the hospital to work.

“Amy and I are trying to find a way to replicate the ammonia compound. We think it may be the key to the destruction of the cancerous cells without destroying the healthy ones.”

“Okay.” He nodded. “You guys work pretty fast.”

“I know how important this is to you.”

“Yes, it is, but it’s too late to save my little boy.”

“I’m sorry.” Her voice was small and she stared down at her feet. Her loafers were scuffed from not having been polished. “I wish I could have finished everything earlier.”

The door opened again and Lucy’s gaze shot upwards to see Amy had returned with several vials. “Hi, Dr. Braden,” she said with what Lucy could tell was a forced enthusiasm.

Dash simply nodded. As Amy stepped beside Lucy, his eyes darted between the two women. “You look the same,” he said slowly to Amy.

“Same as what?”

“It’s okay, Amy,” Lucy assured her. “We’re here to work, remember. It doesn’t matter how any of us look.” Tears stung in the corners of her eyes. She swallowed hard to avoid succumbing to the crying in her heart.

“Yeah, I guess you’re right.” She felt Amy’s arm go around her shoulders. “Lucy is a damn good researcher and she’s going to save a lot of lives.”

“You’re probably right,” Dash mumbled. Without another word, he turned and left the lab.

Amy set the vials on the table just in time to embrace Lucy as she turned into her assistant and finally let the tears fall freely from her eyes.

“I still have the recipe, you know,” Amy said softly.

“No, it’s better this way. At least now I know his feelings are real.”

“How can it be better to hurt so much?”

“I guess Dash and I were never meant to be. It’s as simple as that.”

She heard Amy suck in a breath as she patted the back of Lucy’s hair. “Maybe you’re right.”

* * * *

Dash blinked several times as he stared blankly at the papers before him on his desk. He might as well have been reading a foreign language. Though he understood all the words in the notes, he still didn’t comprehend what they were really saying. The two faces of Lucy Kaplan kept floating through his mind.

Maybe it was all a dream.

He pinched his arm and fluttered his eyelids several more times. He remained in the same world. How was it possible for a woman to be so different in less than twenty-four hours? It seemed almost as implausible as this research sitting before him. Not only could the compound Lucy discovered cure leukemia, it would be the most non-invasive treatment for a child suffering from leukemia. It eliminated the need for chemotherapy and bone marrow transplants. If it worked as well as her previous trials, it would be almost equivalent to the discovery of penicillin.

“Maybe the woman just has a knack for performing miracles.” A knock sounded on his office door. “Yeah,” he called.

Joe opened the door and stuck his head in. “What do you think?”

“Well,” Dash said slowly as he reclined in his chair and laced his fingers behind his head. “I think we may have a cure for leukemia.”

“I know. Did you see the details of that patient trial we did last year?”

“Yeah, and it’s amazing. I just wonder how it would work on a child.”

Joe shrugged. “We don’t get many pediatric cases here. Most are referred to St. Jude’s in Memphis as you know.”

“Yeah, I know. That’s why I was wondering if we could share this info with them.”

Joe tightened his lips into a thin line and Dash knew he was thinking. Though the world of research could be a cut-throat business, Dash knew that every doctor realized that with innocent lives at stake, one couldn’t be so callous.

“I would make sure St. Catherine’s and Lucy got all the credit,” Dash assured him.

“I’m sure it wouldn’t be a problem. I have the authorization to let you take it to Memphis.”

“Well, I got an email from a former colleague and there is a little boy hospitalized. Because he is so weak, they’re hesitant to try chemotherapy. His parents have pretty much given up hope since he has a rare blood type that makes a bone marrow match—even with his parents and a sibling—very unlikely. They’re willing to try anything.” Dash felt their pain. He’d been there himself.

Joe closed his eyes and Dash watched his Adam’s apple bob a couple times. “Why don’t you head on out there? I’m sure Lucy will understand.”

“Great.” Dash stood and thrust his arm across the expanse of the desk. Joe stood and took the outstretched hand, pumping it. “I’ll call the airlines and see if I can get on the next flight out.”

“I’ll explain everything to Lucy.” Joe took back his hand and left Dash’s office.

Dash picked up the phone and dialed the airport.

* * * *

“Damn it, Joe, when we did the patient trial before, you let me in on the whole process. How could you let everything go like this?”

“Lucy, give me a break, okay.” Joe groaned and raked a hand through his hair. “You know that this is a matter of life and death—a little boy’s life and death. I couldn’t just sit on my hands. Dash said the parents are willing to try anything.”

“I know, but we don’t even know how to administer it to a child.”

“The biochemists there were faxed the info and are going to tailor it to a child’s needs.”

“Why can’t I do that? It’s my research. Amy and I have worked really hard on this and you know that if it works, those guys are going to get the credit.” Fury filled her entire body. It was a good thing that Dash had left on the last flight out of Knoxville. Otherwise, she might have killed him. If her credit card wasn’t maxed out from her shopping spree the day before, she’d be on a flight to follow him. Joe and Amy had threatened to tie her up if she considered driving out there.

“We need you here,” Joe insisted.

“Amy and I have isolated the ammonia compound and I think we can test it to see if it will work so we don’t have to use actual cat pee.”

“Dash has a sample of the serum with him. He has twice what we used on that patient before. It should be more than enough to help this little boy.”

“He doesn’t know how it works.”

“He has the notes and he has all the follow-up. Besides, the parents have signed a consent form to let them administer it. So...” He shrugged, leaving out the awful possibility that they might give him too strong a dose, which could kill him.

“For all we know, we just lucked out with that one man. It may not work a second time. There’s a specific acid in the ammonia that appears to be the key. I don’t know exactly what you sent with Dash.”

“Lucy.” Joe stepped forward and clasped her shoulders, eerily the same way as Dash had earlier that day. “Don’t worry, everything will work out. Just sit tight so they can call you from Memphis if they have any questions.”

She gritted her teeth together and tightened her jaw. Did she have any other choice?

Chapter Nine

Lucy heard nothing regarding the Memphis experiments for four days. All through the weekend, she stayed near her cell phone that she paid for and hardly used, but never got any calls. By the time she walked into the lab on Monday, she assumed that the serum either didn't work or they'd found another treatment.

In any event, she felt as though she'd come to terms with the events of the past week. Her years of secretly crushing on Dash had led to a wild fling that lasted mere microseconds in comparison to the amount of time her heart had invested in him. Every time she imagined his touch, him grazing her thigh, she tingled and her stomach fluttered. He'd evoked a new and surreal emotion deep inside her, one she chalked up to one pure and simple word—love.

"Yes, I'm in love with Dash Braden," she said softly as she pulled on her white lab coat.

"It's about time you admitted it," Amy said from the doorway.

Lucy shivered. "Damn it, Amy, you need to wear a bell or something so I can hear you coming."

She giggled. "Sorry. I just walked in and heard you say it and couldn't help but comment."

Lucy rolled her eyes and took off her glasses to clean the lenses on the tail of her coat.

"Have you seen the paper, today?" Amy asked, walking towards where Lucy sat at her desk.

"No." She never read the paper. Somehow, it always depressed her.

"Well, girlfriend, it looks like we did it." Amy tossed the paper to Lucy's desk with the front page of the health section visible.

"Did what?"

"The serum helped that little boy that Dash went to see."

Curiosity took over and Lucy glanced at the paper. Slowly, she read. Dash Braden was given all the credit for finding the "magical cure" that saved a nine-year-old boy too ill to undergo chemotherapy. While one sentence gave a passing mention to St. Catherine's and Dash's current employment with the hospital, there was no mention of Lucy or Amy.

"And he didn't give us any credit for it." She groaned and folded the paper back up.

"Maybe the reporter just didn't have enough room for all the details."

"No, Dash stole it. That's all there is to it." Fury boiled in her blood, and she was angry at the possibility. "Damn, Joe. He never should have let Dash take it to Memphis."

"At least now other kids will be helped by it. The doctors there obviously found a way to treat a child with what was concocted as an adult dosage."

Lucy slammed a fist on the desk. "It was my discovery." If Joe or Dash had been in front of her, she would have strangled him. As it was, Amy took a step back with trepidation. Lucy held her lips in a firm line and felt her teeth grind together.

"I'm sure we'll get everything worked out."

"No, damn it, this is ridiculous." With a huff, she stood and put her hands on her

hips. Holding her spine straight, she stared at the lab from her corner. She inhaled and closed her eyes. After exhaling a deep breath, her eyes popped open and she felt her lips curl upwards into a smile. "They say that the best revenge is living well."

"Yeah?" Amy shrugged her shoulders and narrowed her eyes.

"So, we're going to make damn sure Dash Braden doesn't get a hold of our lymph node cancer research."

"Does it even matter? Joe still hasn't approved the rat trials."

"He will. He can't stand for St. Catherine's not to get proper credit."

"You think he knows about this?"

"Yes, I know about it," Joe's voice boomed. Had they greased the door hinges over the weekend so she couldn't hear it opening and closing? "And no, I'm not angry about it."

"Why not?" Lucy stomped towards her boss. "St. Catherine's doesn't even get credit for it." She waved a hand towards the paper.

Joe folded his arms across his chest and cocked a hip to one side. "Lucy, I allowed the serum to go. You know that we've only had one patient willing to try it here. Because, at St. Jude's, they're willing to try more radical treatments. Quite frankly, Lucy, you have come up with a bunch of strange ingredients."

"But they work. That's all that matters."

"True." He bobbed his head. "Nobody has wanted to use the leukemia treatment or the lymphoma treatment here. At St. Jude's, there was one willing parent and according to Dash, there are several more."

Lucy groaned and closed her eyes, gripping her hair at the scalp.

"In fact, Lucy," Joe continued. "I don't understand why you didn't go to St. Jude's after getting your doctorate. I know they wanted you."

"Because I wanted to be here." Her grandmother had been at St. Catherine's when she'd breathed her last. It's where she wanted to be.

"Listen, Lucy, you know that despite all the good work researchers do, it can be a cut-throat business."

"It's not a business," Lucy spat. A tear fell down her hot cheek. "It's about life."

Joe offered nothing more and turned to leave the lab.

* * * *

"I want to explain what happened," Dash said as Lucy walked into his office. Her steps seemed to be tentative and he could almost see her shaking with fear. Her arms were crossed beneath her breasts and her nails dug into her shirt. For the first time, her glasses made her appear sexier. In fact, he'd never known that what so many men had found unattractive made his cock twitch towards her. From the way her green eyes glistened, his arms ached to wrap around her. He stayed grounded behind his desk.

"Tell me now," she said softly.

"Everything happened so fast. I was talking with a former colleague about your serum and he told me about a little boy who might benefit from it."

"So, you decided to skip town with my work and not give me any credit?" He saw the muscle in her jaw clenching.

"No, I gave you credit." He sighed and sat back in the chair with a heavy thud. "But there was so much information that I guess..." He shrugged.

“What? There wasn’t room for my name?”

“I don’t know.”

“It doesn’t matter. I am all for helping children with cancer. And I don’t have anything against what you did. What I have a problem with is that St. Catherine’s was basically jilted from any future funding because we didn’t get our proper mention.”

“I’m sorry about all of this.”

“No, you’re not.” She narrowed her eyes, which seemed almost magnified beneath her glasses. Instead of appearing grotesque, she was vibrant and full of life. “Nothing has changed about you, has it?”

“What do you mean?” Confusion clouded his mind for a moment.

“This isn’t the first time you’ve stolen my research.”

“What?” He’d always prided himself on being very honest.

“Don’t you remember that biochem lab we had in college? We were lab partners and were supposed to come up with an organic cleanser for a project. I found the active ingredient.”

“The vinegar,” he cut in and nodded. He remembered now.

“And when it came time to present it to the class, you took all the credit.”

Vaguely, he remembered standing in front of the class and discussing how the vinegar could dissolve stains and absorb odors. Lucy had stood beside him and looked down at her feet the entire time, obviously too afraid to speak in public.

“Okay,” he said softly. “But as I remember, you didn’t want to talk in front of the class.”

Lucy groaned and shifted her weight from one foot to the other. From watching the gentle sway of her hips, his fingers itched to be planted on them as she moved against him. Swallowing hard, he tried to push the feeling away, despite the mounting erection in his pants.

“You said you were the one who tried it on a cat pee stain in your carpet.”

“I did?” He’d never owned a cat in his life. “I—uh—I guess I just misspoke.”

Lucy’s face softened for a moment and then she stiffened her spine again, standing perfectly straight. “Either way, I suppose, you have a knack for always getting the credit. You won the SEC Championship and countless other awards.”

He’d never felt so guilty about his accomplishments in his entire life. Had he stepped on anyone else to succeed? “Again, I’m sorry.” He knew it was pointless to say it, but it seemed like the only thing to say.

“You’re right, you are.”

She turned on her heels and walked away with a fluid motion. He couldn’t help but stare at her ass swaying provocatively as she moved. The closing of the door behind her snapped him out of his temporary daze.

“God help me, I think I’m in love with that woman,” he muttered. “Now, what the hell am I supposed to do?”

Chapter Ten

Lucy arrived at her apartment with an eerily familiar feeling—loneliness. Her feline companions dutifully greeted her, reminding her yet again that Dash was gone from her life forever. What Dash had said echoed through her head. Had he really misspoken? Had it all been a misunderstanding?

She exhaled hard and tossed her purse and keys to the floor. It didn't matter. He'd never want her the way she was. Though normally such a blow-out with a man would have left her feeling broken and unsure, she felt oddly energized. Not only did she seem to have the stamina to run a marathon, but she seemed to be bracing for whatever life had in store next.

With her chest puffed out a bit, she kicked off her loafers and collapsed into the soft cushions of her couch, throwing her feet to the coffee table.

"I'm my own woman," she said with pride as one of the cats jumped to her lap. "Whatever that means." As a reflex, she began scratching the furry head. Glancing down, she saw Tiger sitting in her lap. "You still love me," she said in a coddling voice.

"Murrow," the orange tabby replied, giving her fingers a bit of a lick.

"See, I know I can always count on you guys. You won't betray me like a man."

In fact, at that moment, she vaguely remembered being sent an email forward a few years earlier about reasons why cats were better than men. It seemed perfect to explain her current feelings.

Closing her eyes, she threw her head back and finally let her muscles relax. She even considered going away when her vacation time came up. She'd always wanted to see Europe. Maybe French men had a thing for American dorks who wore glasses. Or maybe she'd go on one of those singles' cruises. There might be a guy who wasn't too choosy about looks.

Getting lost in thoughts of sitting out by the pool sipping an exotic frozen drink, she escaped into a dream that actually seemed to have the potential of coming true.

A knock sounded on the door, bringing her back to Earth.

Tiger scurried off her lap and sped down the hall.

"Someone must have gotten lost," she said with a sigh.

Rising, she walked to the door in a few easy steps. Since she didn't have a peephole, she automatically opened it a crack and stuck her head out. Dash stood on the doorstep holding a bouquet of red roses. Though she didn't count them, she assumed there were a dozen of them.

"What are you doing here?" She opened the door wider.

"I'm here to see you."

She stepped back and waved her arm, indicating he should come in. With a nod, he did and she closed the door behind them.

"I assume those are for me?" she asked.

"Yeah."

"So, what are you doing here?"

"I told you," he said with a smile, stepping forward to give her nose a gentle swat with his index finger. "To see you."

“Why?”

“I think we have a lot to talk about.”

“Such as?”

“Such as us.” Clearly one to make himself at home, he walked to the coffee table where he put down the roses.

“There is no us.” She’d given up hope that the two of them could ever be a couple.

“I think there is. You see, we go way back, and it seems I have a lot to thank you for.”

She nodded, unable to find the right words.

“And when you left my office, I came to a conclusion.”

Curiosity teased her. “What’s that?”

Offering her a sly smile, he stepped forward and clasped her upper arms. “That I’m in love with you.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, really. And I want to be with you. Who knows what we could come up with if we worked very, very closely together.”

Wrapping his arms around her, he found her lips and locked with them for a heated moment. Her knees seemed to go out and she fell against him. Luckily, he had a hard body that could support her.

Any doubts were erased. She loved him, too.

He pulled away for breath. “So?” he asked

“So, I guess you got yourself a girlfriend.”

“Good, because I’ve been wanting to try something with you.”

“What?”

“I believe in simple terms, it’s called a sixty-nine.”

The End

About the Author:

Erin Katz has been writing as long as she can remember and the dream of being a published author finally became a reality in August 2005 when she received her first contract from Liquid Silver Books. When she’s not writing, Erin is attending school to decide what else she wants to do when she grows up and raises her daughter on her own. Erin lives in East Tennessee and is a member of Romance Writers of America, Smoky Mountain Romance Writers and Passionate Ink.

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