



The book cover features a composite image. In the foreground, a shirtless man with a serious expression is shown from the chest up. His skin is partially covered with a translucent American flag pattern, with stars visible on his chest and arm. He is wearing denim jeans. In the background, a man and a woman are shown in a close embrace. The man is looking towards the camera, while the woman is looking slightly away. The overall color palette is warm, with a mix of reds, oranges, and browns.

Mechele  
Armstrong

VETERANS

*Nothing  
to Lose*

# VETERANS: NOTHING TO LOSE

Mechele Armstrong

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# Veterans: Nothing to Lose

Mechele Armstrong

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Published by  
Loose Id LLC  
1802 N Carson Street, Suite 212-2924  
Carson City NV 89701-1215  
[www.loose-id.com](http://www.loose-id.com)

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ISBN 978-1-59632-308-7

Available in Adobe PDF, HTML, MobiPocket, and MS Reader

Printed in the United States of America

Editor: Georgia A. Woods  
Cover Artist: Croco Designs

## Dedication

*Dedication: To all the men and women of the military who have served our country so well. My hat is off and I salute you.*

## Prologue

Rich,

Well, I did it. I finally told my parents I had applied to State and joined ROTC. As I figured, they've threatened to disown me, but I really could care less. I couldn't go to one of those Ivy League schools and become a lawyer just because Dad did. Thankfully, with my inheritance from Grandpop, I won't have to rely on them for anything.

Joining the Air Force will let me see the world, and maybe I'll meet some interesting women. It's not like I'll find anyone in my backyard. Besides, I'm never going to be one of those losers at the country club, married to a debutante.

Don't know if you heard, but Adam's going into the Air Force, too. Maybe someday we'll be stationed together and he'll have to salute me. After that stupid nickname, don't think I won't rub it in.

Keep in touch and let me know where you end up. Hopefully, somewhere sunny, and maybe I'll visit. Take care of yourself, dude, and we'll see each other soon.

Baldwin

## Chapter One

Richard propped his boots up on his patio table and took a swig of his whisky, letting it burn all the way down his throat. He blew out a breath of alcohol-warmed air before listening to the crickets and katydids sing their quiet night sounds. Tranquility soothed him in ways that he didn't deserve before the restless sleep of nightmares came to disrupt any peace he might have.

Only it didn't stay quiet long.

Giggles broke through the humid air.

Lots of them.

He turned his head to survey his neighbors, who accompanied several people outside of their house. The others went down onto the lower deck and into the backyard. The lights, which illuminated everything in their path of brightness, clicked on, activated by the motion.

A few lightning bugs zigzagged through the air. The night sounds stopped, and the lightning bugs would fade, driven away by the noise and light.

The new neighbors, who'd taken the house next door a couple of weeks ago, had shattered a calm he'd enjoyed for three years living next door to an eighty-year-old widow.

The houses were ungodly close together for such a small town in the country. He'd heard they'd been built by two brothers who'd wanted their places to be near enough they could see what the other was doing. The buildings were closer together than a lot of houses in the suburbs. He could see most anything he wanted to in their backyard or deck from his backyard or deck. No other houses around meant he'd been witness to things no one else had, no matter what the gossipmongers tried to say.

Another party. Must be Friday night. He hardly paid attention to the dates, but could set his calendar by the entertainment next door. Friday and Saturday nights meant something went on. Something wild.

He watched as a giggling woman ran past the newly installed hot tub. Watched as a man grabbed the back string of her bikini to untie the knot holding it closed.

She squealed, turning with her hands over the now loose patches of cloth. Not that she should have bothered. The two small scraps of material didn't do much to conceal her tits. Even from a distance, Richard had seen them near to bursting out.

One more tug and the top came off. The man pulled her against him, dipped his head, and must have taken her nipple in his mouth from the angle of his head.

Another squeal -- and a look on her face exhibiting bliss.

Richard closed his eyes.

No bliss for him. Why didn't what these people did fill him with something? Anything?

When he opened his eyes, another man had come up behind her. He watched as they lowered the willing woman to the ground, ripping off her swimsuit bottom.

The second man stuffed her mouth full of cock, and the first tugged off his shorts to mount her.

Moans echoed where only insect sounds had been a moment before.

Since when had he turned into a fucking Peeping Tom?



Since the neighbors seemed so determined to put on a show for him to watch. Beat reruns on TV.

He sat outside every night, drawing peace and strength from the dark, tranquil countryside. But lately, his Friday and Saturday nights had been a damn sight less peaceful, and more entertaining than they had been. Yet, he kept sitting outside and didn't leave once things got going. He'd stay until he couldn't take seeing what unfolded before him anymore, or rather, when he couldn't take not feeling anything about what he saw.

The first man pounded into the woman on the ground before lifting his head much like a wolf about to howl. His body spasmed.

The second man bobbed until he let out a cry, as well.

Both men collapsed with the woman on the ground.

Until another man and woman duo joined them for another round of orgy. Other people's clothes flew through the air, tossed to the side. Cocks poked up through the humid night air, looking for sucking targets.

So many townspeople had made cracks about the new neighbors. Rumors abounded about them. Richard hadn't confirmed or denied the speculation, leading to even more rumors, not even a quarter of which were true. They'd be as gossiped about as serial killers before long, if the talk continued.

Everyone said the same thing in hushed whispers whenever Richard came around. "How will straitlaced Richard Rollins deal with the pair of 'wild child's' who've moved in next door?" and "He'll be scandalized."

He'd never permitted himself to even smile at the comments that filtered his way on the breeze.

If they only knew that not much could scandalize him, but they only knew of him since he'd moved into their midst. Once upon a time, he hadn't been straight-laced. Before

things had changed in him. Too long ago and too many things to even think about. Perhaps that was why he permitted himself voyeurism.

He wasn't the only one watching.

On the upper deck, a golden-haired woman, matched by a golden-haired man, sat together on a lounge chair.

While Richard had seen them watch and fondle each other, they never joined in with the partygoers. Not once in the time since they'd moved in.

Why did they throw such parties, never to partake in them?

A puzzle.

His gaze settled on the woman, who sat in front. She wore a two-piece bathing suit. He couldn't tell exactly what color, but something light. From what he'd seen of the other women over there, she was modest. Her scraps always covered the appropriate areas. Long, curvy legs set beneath rounded hips. A delicate ankle sported something shimmery. An ankle bracelet. He'd noticed it before in a glimpse of her around town. Her blonde hair crested to her mid-back, thick and wavy. Even from this distance, he could tell her mouth was pouty and lush.

His cock, which had partially hardened in pure instinctual response to the orgy, rose to full stiffness.

As it always did when he saw her.

He'd seen prettier women come to their place, but never the same women, of course. None of them drew his eyes like she did.

The man behind her wasn't hard on the eyes, either. Rippled muscles within a lean build. Tall. A strong jawline. A slight tan while his woman was pale. Hair always tousled.

A golden couple. Even their last name, Gauld, meant gold in Spanish.

A couple.

They were married. He'd gathered that much from the locals in town. They loved to gossip about the new people, Niki and Bryan Gauld.

She lifted her head, her sight directly on him.

He could feel its weight on his skin as it seemed to bore right through him.

If he could see her, she could see him. Granted, he didn't have the light effects outdoors that they did. Nor did he have the show they put on, either.

So he sat, continuing to watch the couple, drinking in their golden goodness. Not that any would rub off on him.

Until she held up her hand and curved her fingers. She motioned to him, inviting him over. Instead of using one finger, she beckoned with them all.

Temptation wore a bikini, had a silver ankle bracelet, and had a muscular man beside her.

His breath hitched.

Too old for this shit and undeserving, Richard got up before stalking back into his house and slamming the door behind him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Niki frowned as she watched the big man saunter into his own house. She gazed until she couldn't see him anymore.

"Gone?" Bryan placed his hand on her shoulder, patting it absently with long fingers, rough from carpentry work he'd done around their house.

"Yeah." Her skin tingled from the contact of his hand on her flesh. She rolled her shoulder more into his touch. Her bikini top slid down a little to give him access to more bared shoulder. His touch, as usual, set her aflame. Maybe they'd have to send all these people home.

None of them interested her anyway.

Not like he did.

The neighbor watched them every night they came out here. Tonight was the first time she'd tried to make contact with the lone man.

That hadn't gone well. Her frown deepened.

Maybe he was as uptight as the people around town said he was, but if so, why did his hot gaze burn a hole through her psyche? No one could remain unaffected when torched by those heated eyes.

"He fascinates you." Bryan's voice came out cool. Collected and analytical. So unlike her lover. Had he and the fascinating man switched places?

"You, too." She didn't have to say the words aloud. Bryan was like her second skin. Always had been.

Since the first moment they'd seen him standing on his deck watching, she'd been curious about him. Bryan's curiosity ran just as deep.

She stifled a yawn as she looked over at the undulating bodies screwing on the grass. When had it all become so...boring?

"Yes." Bryan's deep baritone shivered along her senses. "He interests me. With his voyeurism." He leaned forward to rub hands against her back.

Why did a lonely man they'd never met intrigue them, while people who bared all didn't interest them anymore?

Niki ran her fingernails lightly over Bryan's arm.

He didn't suppress a shudder. "You've seen him in town. You've asked about him a few times?"

Niki nodded once. She had, curious about a man who'd watch for hours, but never approach them. "He's a veteran. Settled here about three years ago, after coming back from a tour in Iraq." She shrugged. "For the most part, he keeps to himself, according to everyone in

town.” The people she’d asked had looked down their noses at her with prim, pruned expressions for asking. She’d expected nothing less.

Of course, his holding back was why he fascinated her. He didn’t advertise himself with everyone. God knew, he could go inside if he wanted, disgusted by their debauchery. So many would have. The townspeople insinuated he would find them amoral, not that they knew anything for sure of what went on at this house. He hadn’t blabbed about them to anyone. He stayed outside, watching them every night they came out. Aloof and apart from anything they did.

Well, he stayed a distance from what the people they’d invited did.

How many people had traipsed through their parties before and after they’d moved in?

At first, the parade of people through their soirees had been an interesting diversion. Now it seemed...like it didn’t give her what she longed for. Didn’t give them what they’d hoped to find, something...someone to befriend. Possibly even take as a lover. Or more.

It wasn’t working.

As if he knew what she was thinking, Bryan said, “No one can replace Jenner.”

The name hesitated on his lips and made her stomach clench. She turned her head to gaze into Bryan’s calm, brown eyes. “I don’t expect to replace him. Ever. We don’t even know this man. He might be offended by our tastes.” So many didn’t understand their relationship. Not like Jenner had. They saw Niki and Bryan as a party couple who wanted sex with everyone else. Not true. Just because he watched didn’t mean he would participate in anything they wanted him to.

Bryan leaned in to lick his tongue over her shoulder, causing goose pimples to rise along her skin. “I don’t know. You taste pretty good to me.”

“You gonna come down here and suck me off?” A lanky man with a wet face stood at the top of the deck stairs.

The smell of sex followed him like a dirge. Niki kept her face flat. “No.”

His face wrinkled up in confusion and anger. "I thought you were supposed to do these kick-ass parties. What kind of a party is it if you just sit up there and watch?"

She swallowed past the lump that wouldn't go down her throat. Was that why the man next door fascinated her? Because they were so much same? Watching but never participating. With the crowd, but apart from it. A truth existed in there. She and Bryan had been alone since Jenner had left them. A shudder racked her. What had left Richard alone? "It's our party. We do what we like."

The man sneered, coming closer. "I wanted some of your pussy. That's why I came here, and no one's going to stop me from getting what I want."

Partygoers had been insistent before, but backed away after the initial confrontation. Unlike this asshole.

He reached for Niki as she steadfastly met his gaze, refusing to jerk away from him. She'd not give him the satisfaction. She decided who she sexed with. Not some overeager buck with an inflated ego.

Before his hand could touch her, Bryan was off the back of the chaise lounge and had the man's hand in his. Squeezing it.

The man tried to throw a punch with his other hand.

Bryan grasped his arm fully, blocking the punch and pushing the man's arm upward as if he would break it. He could, too.

"Don't break him. He's not worth it." Niki sniffed. They hadn't chosen well for this affair. A clear sign, the whole idea of finding someone for them wasn't going to work out. Not this way.

The man sniveled as Bryan let him go. "I could take you." He huffed up his chest like a rooster, trying to make himself look bigger.

"Try." Bryan crossed his arms in front of his open shirt.

Niki had never seen a sexier sight. With his easygoing attitude, most assumed Bryan didn't have it in him, but he could be a tough guy with the best of them. "Not worth it."

The man ducked his head, not meeting Bryan's challenging eyes. He didn't say anything more except to mutter under his breath.

She stood up. "I think you need to go home." She waved a hand and raised her voice. "You all do. The party's over."

Bryan nodded to her. "Yep."

Collective groans came from down on the grass.

After they'd shepherded everyone out, with the belligerent man still trying to make a scene, Bryan closed the door behind them. He looked at Niki before enfolding her in his arms. "No more of these."

"No more parties." Disappointment didn't fill her either. Instead relief did at the edict. Her lips curved up into a smile. "Him?"

Bryan nodded. "Him."

They had to find out more about this fine, upstanding gentleman who watched their guests fuck. A new territory to explore. One more interesting than anyone who had come to them, up until now.

Their next party would be intimate.

\* \* \* \* \*

Bryan roamed down the grocery store aisles, looking for the cookie section. He was still figuring out where things were in the supermarket. Chocolate chip cookies for Niki. Not on his list, but they'd make her smile. Or rage about her weight. Not that she had anything to worry about. He liked her curvy, not stick thin.

He got lost in a tangle of thoughts about her creamy thighs. Best to hurry this trip up and return to her. Maybe have cookies and sip milk from her body.

Sure a goofy grin conquered his face, he rounded a corner.

And who should be at the other end?

*Him.*

Richard Rollins.

He studied the soup cans as though debating a national treasure before lifting a hand to grab one. The can disappeared in his fingers before he dropped it in his basket.

Bryan's cock swung to attention. His breath caught in his throat. Niki had seen the man in passing on the street, but Rollins had left before she could get a word out. This was Bryan's first up close encounter.

Muscular and tall, the man radiated power. No other way to phrase his aura. A sadness hung about him, though. Why did that emotion come to mind? Why did Rollins watch them every night they had their parties? And would he watch what Bryan and Niki had in mind next?

Bryan watched as Rollins sauntered down the aisle, eyes scanning the shelves. He stopped twice near the soups to pick up something and fling it in his basket, oblivious to Bryan's scrutiny. Some military man. Bryan could have snuck up on him anytime. Must be because he was out of the service.

Until Bryan noticed Rollins made no effort to look toward him. Not even an idle glance. That Rollins wouldn't look at him was telling.

The man knew he was there. Had the entire time.

Bryan didn't disguise his attention, but now openly watched the man. If Rollins wanted to be obvious about seeing him, Bryan could be obvious about watching.

Tanned hands reached up toward the top of a shelf with his torso stretching out. Rollins liked the outdoors from the color of his arms, and he was tall. Bryan liked tall. Athletic. Hard body. Bryan's mouth went dry. If only Rollins had had to reach farther up. Then, some stomach would have peeked out. Ripped abs made for good kissing.



Rollins fidgeted with a box of soup mix. It would soon come down to a choice as he neared the end of the aisle.

Would he come to the end? Or would he turn around before he reached Bryan?

Bryan took a deep breath and four large steps down the dingy tile. Damn if he was going to risk the man walking away.

Rollins didn't look over at him. Simply tightened his hand on the box and took it off the shelf.

Heart pounding, Bryan cleared his throat.

Rollins's eyes shifted his way.

"You're Richard Rollins, aren't you?"

Rollins nodded once. A simple movement of his head. His chin barely moved.

Small acknowledgement, but one nonetheless. "I'm Bryan Gauld, your new neighbor." Rollins had heard their names by now. And, they were the only new neighbors he had.

Rollins turned to face him. No smile turned up the edges of his mouth. Was he irritated or angry? Hard to tell. But he stuck out his hand in front of him. "Pleasure."

Bryan took the strong hand in his own. Rough. Warm. His hand tingled up to his elbow. Rollins squeezed but not painfully. Just enough to show the strength he held back. "Mine, too." A swipe of tongue cleared across Bryan's lips.

Rollins's blue eyes darkened with something Bryan couldn't name. "Nice to meet you. Bye." And away he rolled his cart.

Bryan watched the retreating ass in front of him. Even under jeans, it was well-defined. A quarter might bounce.

He shook his head to clear the web Rollins had spun. Out here in Bumfuck Small Town, USA, best not to show any leanings toward his own sex. The town already thought they were weird. No sense getting them riled up further.

He glanced around to make sure no one else had seen the encounter.

When he reached the checkout, Rollins was heading out the door, groceries in hand. Bryan didn't let himself admire the sight of Rollins walking away.

The supermarket checker chewed a piece of gum at rapid fire pace, pausing only to enunciate. "Got any coupons?"

"No, ma'am." Bryan loaded his stuff onto the rolling conveyor belt. He couldn't drag his thoughts away from Rollins. Would he watch their solo show? Or walk away sooner? Would he enjoy them? Or did he like the strangers more?

"...that new couple?"

Bryan blinked as the last half of the sentence told him the woman was talking to him. "Sorry. What'd you say?"

She chewed twice before answering. "You one of those new people who moved in next to the Rollins's place?"

"Yes, ma'am." They definitely were famous in a small town. The song by Miranda Lambert had it right.

"Hmmm." She passed each item over the scanner as she cracked her gum.

"Do you know much about Rollins?" Not that he expected her to tell him anything. They seemed to be distrusted by the locals, but she'd been nice the few times he'd been in here before.

Her eyes narrowed. "I know enough."

Bryan waited patiently.

"I know he came back from the war. That Iraqi war. Settled here. Likes to be left alone. Don't say much, either."

That much Bryan had seen for himself. "No, he doesn't." He sighed. If only the woman could have told him something he didn't know, but Rollins didn't seem to be a man who

shared confidences with anyone. They'd never seen anyone over at his house. "Kept to himself" had Rollins's picture under it.

"Heard tell something in the war changed him. From someone who knew him before he settled here. He lived not too far from here before Iraq."

Bryan's breath hitched. "Did he?"

The woman shrugged. "That's the gossip, anyhow. Came back different. Don't know what or why, so don't ask."

Gossip didn't have to be true. Look at all the flying talk about him and Niki. Most of it was ludicrous. Since Rollins had settled there, he'd been so quiet, so staid, yet, he watched them every time they had a party. This idea of him being different after the war was as sensible an explanation as any. "Thanks."

"See ya next time."

By the next time, their experiment would have been carried out. His legs hurried to his car to get home and put their plan into action.

Just how would Rollins react?

## Chapter Two

Richard fired back his second glass of whisky, letting the hot taste savor in his mouth for a spell.

They were late.

It was Saturday night. It had never taken his neighbors' party this long to break outside of their house.

His eyes closed.

Why did he care what they did?

He shouldn't. Shit, he hadn't even met them except in passing. A mumbled hello to the woman and a grocery store encounter with the man didn't make them anything to him but strangers.

Yet, somehow, that they hadn't ambled out of the house yet had his insides tied up into a Boy Scout knot.

It made no sense. Not to a practical man.

The lights turned on outside.

His breathing hitched as he leaned forward.

They were just running late tonight. That shouldn't make him feel so good. He propped his feet up on the table as he leaned back, refusing to think too much about why peeping was such an important part of his schedule.

Holding hands, the two blonds came out of the house, illuminated by the heavy-duty lighting. A smile lit the woman's face before she dropped Bryan's hand. She walked on the upper deck to the open portion where a large lounge chair rested. Someone had moved it from its usual position.

She had barely glanced his way.

He stilled. No way in hell she could be smiling because he sat there. No, it must be the night of watching the fucking that appealed to her. They were so much the same.

The man followed behind her with a loping gait.

No one else came out of the house. The others always came out first.

Richard's mouth dried as he waited to see if others would come out of the house. He stretched more forward, watching the event unfold before him. His cock hardened as the reality sunk in.

The Gaulds were the only ones there.

What were they going to do?

For so many weeks, he'd never seen them do anything more than fondling and light kisses. They never did anything with any of their partygoers. Now something had changed.

Why?

He didn't have time to speculate as the woman turned so she faced him. The man pulled the chair around at an angle, giving Richard a side view of the chaise

She wore a fluffy white robe, which she dropped away. She turned to both sides, giving him a ripe view of her body before stretching out on the chair.

And what a body it was. The bikini hadn't even done it justice from what he'd just seen. Long, shapely legs with one ankle circled by the anklet. Heavy breasts with large

nipples. They'd fit in his hands. He'd seen that before she sat down. Along with a blonde patch of hair at the center of her body. If only he could find his binoculars. His cock grew tighter at the sight of her.

Richard lifted his head, his view unobstructed by the man who stepped to the foot of the chair.

Good thing Richard's deck was raised above theirs. It gave him a complete view of the chair, though her lying down obscured things he'd like to see in more detail. All that creamy white skin. His fingers curled up on his hand to dig into his palm.

Beauty incarnate.

Richard's breath stopped momentarily in his lungs before rushing out in a traffic jam eager to exit via his mouth.

The man faced him, while standing at his wife's feet. He slowly reached down the front of his shirt, undoing buttons one by one. He shrugged it off, his shoulder rolling with the effort.

Pecs exposed.

Richard's mouth didn't know whether to salivate or dry out more. Something about the skin exposed seemed decadent. Like he was seeing something from a place he couldn't touch.

*Of course you can't touch it. They are your neighbors. Go.*

Richard didn't. He sat transfixed. Watching.

The man reached down to unsnap jeans. Something poked out the top of the now loose waistband.

The man's cock.

Richard's heart couldn't plug on any faster.

Staid old Richard Rollins liked an occasional cock. An occasional pussy. But he hadn't had either in a long time. Since...

He shook off the thought. Since he'd come back from the war.

She rose up on the lounge chair on her knees. Slid forward to the foot. Slipped off his pants with knowing hands.

He could almost imagine the movements he couldn't see. Could almost feel the butterfly passes on his own skin.

The smile she shot sideways at him made the blood boil inside of Richard. Been so damn long since he'd seen anything so sexy.

The man faced her.

Another look shot Richard's way. Just before she took the man's cock in her mouth, sucking it down like the best dessert she'd ever sampled.

Richard couldn't see them that clearly to read her face. And yet, he'd seen that look before, a look of bliss at going down on her man. Lucky guy.

Up and down, she moved her mouth around the man's length.

The man dropped his head back, a look much like hers overtaking the hard features of his face.

Richard swallowed. He licked too dry lips.

A moan escaped the man's mouth, drowning out any night sounds that had remained. Seemed loud to Richard's ears, as he had focused in on their moment.

Their moment. Not his.

And yet, he still couldn't tear himself away. Had to see this to the finish. Their finish. He moved around on the deck chair, seeking a measure of comfort. He didn't find it.

She didn't back away but redoubled her efforts on the man's cock. Sucking and taking him down as much and as fast as she could. Her face blurred as she moved around the member in her mouth. The man bucked and strained as much as he could.

A breeze moved across Richard's face, cooling off his heated skin. Not that it would do too much. He sniffed as his hands relaxed from the tension held in his palms. Honeysuckle. Too far away to smell the couple. Yet the sweetness of the scent, associated with the wildness of his youth, incited his arousal even more. His cock stayed at full mast and showed no signs of releasing him. Or releasing.

Unlike what the neighbors had in store for the night.

The woman pulled away from the man, leaning back toward the head of the chair. She mumbled something.

Richard saw her lips move despite not hearing the too soft sound.

She'd had a Southern accent when she'd spoken to Richard before. Dulcet tones. That accent had repeated in his mind since their lone encounter. The man sounded more neutral, mostly Midwestern. No twang rolled from his lips.

The man growled, loud and clear, in the humid night.

He surged forward, pushing the woman back more onto the chair. He plunged into her, penetrating her. She met him stroke for stroke, thrusting her hips up against him. They pummeled against each other, tightly, seeming to come together as one entity before pulling apart briefly.

The chair creaked.

The sensual sounds of their lovemaking carried on the same wind that blew Richard's hair back and caressed his face. He kept his head straight, straining to keep them in his line of sight. Couldn't look away. Didn't want to.

His hand tightened on the arm of his chair, clenching.

They rocked back and forth, back and forth. Muscles tensed and released. Heads rolled back in passion. Sighs, pants, and groans.

A scream rent the air.

Niki's.



She'd come.

Richard swallowed convulsively again. His throat burned like lava had rolled down the passage. Needed more alcohol to soothe. To deaden. To fill him up. But he couldn't move away from the scene in front of him. Not yet.

Had to finish this out.

His cock stretched even more, straining against his jeans, aching to be a part of something. Something he'd denied himself for too long.

The man's head tossed back, hair falling across his forehead. A sheen of sweat glistened on his face in the light. His face went slack before contorting.

His face tensed in the ultimate little death. What an appropriate name for an orgasm the French had. So many loved to die again and again in a moment of true desire.

A moment this man now faced.

Bryan came with rapid-fire shakes of his body. A couple of aftershocks seemed to rock him back and forth.

Richard's hips shook in time with his thrusts for a brief moment before stilling completely. He'd have none of that.

Bryan collapsed on top of Niki, spent, and the orgasm finished.

He had to be sated after what Richard had just seen, while Richard sat back, cock heavy and aching, no one to bring himself home to.

What he'd wanted since he'd come back. To be alone. To remain aloof.

Before, he'd always remained detached, even when he'd watched their parties. Nothing the people next door had done had affected him beyond the instinctual response of his libido. He'd watched with a clinical eye. Tonight, his clinical eye had taken a backseat to emotion. His arousal had been long buried, but it sure wasn't dead. The heavy member in his pants was proof of that.

This time, he couldn't remain impassive. Not with the two Gaulds doing each other in front of him. Niki and Bryan. They'd given him a show and more.

He was no longer remote, but still separate.

Bryan's head turned to look straight at Richard. A self-satisfied smile broke across his face as he quickly ducked his neck down.

Richard saw the expression.

They knew he'd been there.

They knew he'd watched them.

Everything they'd done, they'd known they had an audience for.

And they'd put the show on to draw him in. To make him react to the things they did to each other.

No wonder they'd moved the chair to give him a good view.

Why the fuck would they do that?

He should feel angry, but all he could think about was the scene that had unfolded in front of him. All he could picture was how aroused they'd been, how much of the scenario he hadn't been able to see or experience from this distance, and how drawn in he'd been to their lovemaking. Yet, he'd been a watcher, not a participant.

The man slid off the chair and helped the woman up. They locked arms and headed back inside.

Their show was over for the night.

They left Richard alone on his own deck with the night sounds. The way he'd been before they'd come here. Only now his loneliness gaped inside of him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Niki moved through the produce tent with a spring in her step. Richard had stayed out long after they'd gone in last night. Watching. Usually, he went in before they did. He'd

observed them making love, and a look had come about his face. What it was, she wasn't sure. Her skin hummed with anticipation.

And something more.

She idly tapped a watermelon, listening to the thump sound. Reaching over, she tapped another melon. Needed to find the right sound.

A prickling ran up her neck.

Someone intently watched her.

She turned her head slightly to the side to peek through her hair. The strands would obscure their vision of her.

Someone ducked behind a pole.

She went back to her produce manhandling. Wanted to find a lush watermelon to enjoy later with Bryan. She tapped two more before she found one that sounded ripe enough. Her mouth watered. Couldn't wait to hack it up.

She placed the melon in the wagon she'd pulled along for her bounty.

Someone scattered out of the corner of her eye, heading away from her, ducking behind a produce rack.

Whoever had watched her was still there.

Shaking her head, she turned to get away from the anonymous starrer. A few of the town's curious had started watching her from afar. If only she had someone to make a show with, but Bryan was back at the house. She smoothed down the tail of her long tank top, accentuating her breasts. She'd gone braless today. She should have expected this scrutiny. Worn something more revealing.

Because she wasn't watching where she walked, she bumped into a hard wall-like plate.

Only it wasn't a wall at all.

A chest.

Meeting it was like brushing against steel. Only that product would be less supple than what came against her.

A basket from the shelf clattered to the floor with a crash.

She looked up into blue eyes. Bluer than the ripest berry. A strong jawline that thrust out. Thin lips that looked nippable. A face so rough and masculine, it looked almost beautiful.

Richard Rollins.

Her breasts burned with their tips hardening in response to being close against him. So close to his heavy gaze. Her thin, dark pink tank showed off a little cleavage as it dipped low on her chest.

"Mrs. Gauld." He nodded to her with a slight bob of his head. Had he worn a hat, he probably would have tipped it. He stepped away so her breasts weren't pushed up against his chest before picking up the basket on the floor.

"Hello, Mr. Rollins." His formality grated upon her nerves. They were stuck in the politeness zone. She didn't want his manners. "Though you really should call me Niki." She let her voice purr as much as say the words. After all, last night he'd seen her come. Seen her lover come inside her. They'd moved past formality at that point.

He shrugged. "Niki, then."

She waited for him to say she could call him Rich or Richard, but he didn't offer. Her lips pursed together. He was going to make her work for anything beyond voyeurism with him. So be it. "Shopping for some produce?"

He nodded. "Squash." His hand stroked along the yellow phallic vegetable on the shelf, fingers lingering along the curve of the squash. His thumb slowly brushed down the underside before encircling it to pick it up. "You?"

Her eyes couldn't move away from his long fingers stroking up the squash. She squirmed, shifting her weight. Her tight jean shorts chafed in the right place. "Watermelon." She moved so he could see the wagon at her feet with the huge melon resting in the bottom.

The squash went in his basket. "Have fun, then." He moved away from her in the other direction.

"You, too, Mr. Rollins." She narrowed her eyes. Why not? "Maybe you'd like to share in our watermelon. Have a little festival of our own." She dared him to meet her eyes, staring at his retreating back.

He stopped to turn and face her with an expression on his face she couldn't read. Usually she was good at knowing what someone was thinking. She didn't have a clue with Rollins. His clear eyes met hers, not showing anything that would tell what his expression meant. "I don't think that would be a good idea."

"Why not?" She shook her head, hair bouncing up and down before she smoothed it back. "I think it would be a wonderful idea. Neighbors getting together, being neighborly. We should socialize more often, Mr. Rollins. Instead of just watching each other." She'd never been a simpering flower and wasn't about to start now.

His jaw tightened.

Maybe that had been a step over the line. She moved toward him before he could back away. Maybe he was too uptight and disgusted by them, but as he hadn't stopped going outside at night, she'd bet it was an act. "One piece of watermelon surely wouldn't hurt. Among neighbors."

He didn't retreat, but stayed rooted to the spot watching her. Got points for meeting her eyes. "When?" His terse tone belied his control. Someone was more affected by her than they wanted to let on.

She kept the smile of victory from her lips. "Later this afternoon? Maybe around threeish or so? The best time to eat watermelon is when it's fresh." She lowered her voice on the last word, emphasizing the sound. "So, today would be best."

He nodded. "So I've been told about melon." His hand tightened on his basket. "I'll be there."

She turned. Another victory. Richard Rollins would be coming over. Best to go before he changed his mind. "See you then, Mr. Rollins." Her voice managed to stay in the neutral tones, despite the emotions swirling.

"Niki."

Her heart almost stopped at the sound of her name on his lips in his so deep voice. A shiver raced along her entire back. She didn't turn his way. What if he'd changed his mind? "Yes?"

"Call me Richard."

Now, she turned back to him to try and catch a glimpse of his face, but he'd already started to walk away. "See you then, Richard." She watched his retreating back as he stalked to the checkout before pulling her wagon to the cantaloupes. She'd find a honeydew to go with the others.

Her skin went back to crawling. Now that she'd made contact with Richard, the whole vegetable stand was buzzing. This time, she barely felt the weight of their stares as she skipped along. Nothing could bring her down now.

\* \* \* \* \*

Richard stalked down his front steps. The grass crunched under his feet. Needed cutting and watering. His boots clumped up the steps of his neighbor's porch.

His heart pounded unevenly even before his hand went to knock on the door. He preferred knocking to the chime of doorbells.

Dammit, he'd faced down men with guns and tanks and never had this much of a reaction.

They were more dangerous to him than any enemy. A danger to the self-imposed prison he'd locked himself up in.

A challenge.

Just what they would challenge in him remained to be seen.

His hand hammered on metal as he stepped back to wait for the door to fling open. They had a welcome mat. It had welcomed enough visitors. The flowery scrawl of "Welcome" reminded him of a greeting card. Somehow he doubted they had "Come to fuck" cards. Not that he was there for that. Not his style.

At the pause of his knock, the door opened.

Bryan smiled as he opened the door wider. The smile was without guile or pretense. "Hello, Richard."

"Bryan." Richard waited for the invitation to step through.

"Come on in." Bryan motioned with one hand. "Niki is in the backyard. But, of course, you know that already." He didn't wait for Richard to follow him, but trotted into the open kitchen. "I'm cutting the melon. Go on out. Be there in a sec."

Did Bryan know for sure he'd seen Niki in the backyard already? Or only suspect?

She'd gone out about fifteen minutes before Richard had left to come over. He hadn't been out on his deck, but had looked out his window. She'd reclined on her chaise lounge like some sort of queen, still wearing the clothes she'd worn to the produce stand.

Richard moved to the back door and let his fingers linger on the cold knob before turning it with stiff fingers.

The deck looked bigger than he'd envisioned as he stepped out onto the stained wood planking.

Niki sat on the lounge chair near the table, legs stretched out under her. She looked so alone on the small deck full of patio furniture that they must have moved up from the lower deck. Her head turned as he stepped out of the house. "Richard." Her cool voice had a throatiness to it. A full-bodied sound, like the head to a good beer. She'd be just as nice to drink down.

"Niki."

Bryan came out carrying a tray with melon on a big, white platter. He sat the platter on the glass-topped table.

Every mission had a point of no return. A point where you couldn't turn back. Sitting down with the Gaulds was Richard's point of no return. Once he sat down, he wouldn't get up and leave until it was done. He'd never backed away from anything in his life. Wasn't about to start now. He had nothing to lose. No parts of him were in danger. The score was obvious with the Gaulds. He planted his butt in the chair.

"Did you have your squash for lunch?" Niki pulled her chair closer to the table with metal squeaking across the wood.

Bryan sat in the chair closest to her, making sure one pair of tongs for the watermelon sat right in front of him.

"I did. Fried them up with onions."

She laughed. The sound carried through the air. A fresh laugh with nothing to hold it back, as if she gave into it all the time. "That's not healthy at all. Steamed is better for your heart."

Been a long time since anyone had ever cared for his heart before. In any way.

"But d...good." He amended the cursing out of habit. Didn't do such in front of women. An old school ritual.

Bryan smiled. "I bet it was good." He rubbed his stomach. "I can almost taste them. My mom used to make them that way. I'll have to cook some up."



“You would think it was tasty. I swear every time you cook or go grocery shopping, I gain ten pounds.” She sighed, with a disgusted bent to it, while smoothing down the tank top and giving her thighs a once over.

She could afford pounds. Not a skinny woman, she was the kind that his mom would have said “had meat on her bones.” Her look suited her though. His gaze was drawn by her hands against her legs. Such pale skin and muscular thighs. She’d wrapped them around Bryan tightly the other night.

Bryan snorted while reaching for the tongs. “You do not. I swear, women and their weight.” Softly capturing the slippery piece of pink flesh of the melon, he picked it up. “Ready?”

“Umm huh.”

Bryan dipped the tongs lower, and she nipped the fruit with her teeth. White flashed as she leaned up to grab her morsel.

Must be why there were no forks or plates on the table.

A dribble of juice poured a path through the corner of her lips. Her tongue swept out to lick her mouth clean. A small circular scrap of flesh. Pink. A dash of taste buds fastened to a wiggly muscle. That’s all it was. But so much could be done with such a fine tongue.

Richard drew his gaze away, looking first to the blue sky. He’d seen two ways this could go. Either they’d try and draw him into them, which wasn’t going to work. Or they’d try and see how far he’d go with them to try to embarrass him. Looked like the latter was the pitch. Little did they know, he didn’t discomfit easily. He looked then to Bryan.

Bryan looked at Niki as though he was mesmerized by the sight of her. His eyes fastened upon her face, lit up with longing.

Richard enjoyed the flash he caught in the man’s eyes. Such a look. Once upon a time, he’d given looks like that.

As if coming conscious from a trance, Bryan cleared his throat and looked to Richard. "Want some?"

Several answers came to mind to reply. All Richard said was, "Thank you." He reached over to grab the other pair of tongs before Bryan could nab them. He picked up a chunk, took it in his hands and gulped down the slippery fruit. He tossed the tongs back on the plate when he'd finished chewing.

Niki laughed again, pulling her feet up under her and sitting up in her chair. Admiration reflected on her face. "Slick."

"No slicker than not having anything to serve me with." He met their gazes, calling their bluff. He'd been through too much to be embarrassed by a pair of amateurs who thought they'd take a curmudgeon and show him up.

Bryan clicked together the tongs. "Hello?"

Richard leaned back in his chair, folding his hands on his knee. "That's for putting on a plate. Not putting in a mouth." They'd thought to feed him for show. How far did they expect him to go?

"Who died and made you Martha Stewart?" Bryan set the tongs back down on top of the watermelon plate.

"Look. I want this clear up front. Don't play games with me." Richard moved to get to his feet. Time for him to go. Not a retreat. But after a full on frontal assault of confrontation, it was best to get out while the leaving was still good. He'd laid things on the table.

"Games?" Niki arched a finely honed brow at him. "What do you mean? You're the one who's been watching *us* for weeks."

Richard didn't sit back down but stood beside his chair. "Yes, I have."

Bryan took another slice of melon and nipped the fruit from the tongs. "You watched us last night. Making love."

Richard sunk back down in his chair. "I..." He swallowed. What could he say? He had. "I did."

Niki leaned over toward him. "We've seen you out there."

Richard nodded. "I know that, too. You don't have to worry. You won't anymore." His days of Peeping Tom were over, so it seemed.

She frowned. Her pretty mouth turned up at the edges. "This isn't a game, Richard. It's very much real."

"What do you mean? Not a game? Course, it is." It had to be. These two had player written all over them. That had to be the point of the parties. They were jerking with him sure as Sunday would come.

Bryan shook his head. "She's telling you the truth. It's not a game."

"Then, what do you do with those people out here?" They weren't the only ones who could throw out the truth gauntlet.

"That's different."

"How so?" What they did with other people was no different than what they wanted to do with him. Only logical to come to that conclusion after what he'd seen of them.

Niki leaned forward in her seat, her eyes capturing his. "Because we never wanted to fuck any of them."

### Chapter Three

Niki hesitated once the words left her mouth. Had she gone too far? Not anything she'd ever worried about before now. No, she'd been right to put it out there. They could spend time bantering, or get down to the sticks. That was the way she preferred things.

Richard didn't move, or even seem to breathe. Nor did he speak. The stillness she could deal with. The quietness was disconcerting. After all, she'd just told a man she wanted to fuck him. Granted, she came with another man in tow, but somehow she hadn't sensed any disgust at being with another man. Hard to tell, because like before, she couldn't get a true feel of Richard's emotions, but she had a feeling.

"It's the truth." Bryan broke the silence that stretched out between them like a gulf too far to traverse.

Niki nodded.

"Then you're a pair of fools." Richard snagged some more melon, placing it between his teeth to chew, with a distant air about him.

Only a look down to reveal one clenched hand on his thigh revealed he was not so removed from this discussion as he'd like to be. That, and the fact he didn't leave them

behind immediately. The tenseness in his jaw revealed even more about his inner conflicts, which boded well for herself and Bryan.

A breath she'd held in released with a puff. "We're not fools."

Bryan slipped his arm around Niki, a steadying force around her. The contact of his body always provided comfort. Now was no different. "Not at all. We want to...see where things go with you." He snagged a tong with watermelon onboard. Holding it in front of Niki, he allowed her a bite before taking the rest of it for himself. The fleshy fruit mushed between his teeth. Juice ran over his lips.

Richard's smile was self-depreciating. Not a look she'd envisioned on his strong features. "Out of the question."

"Why?"

"Because."

"Why?"

"You're not two-year-olds." His terse voice softened up about half way through, as though he hadn't meant for it to come out so sharp. "Quit asking why. Just accept it's not possible. Not for me."

Niki took a tong for herself, lifting melon to her mouth before slurping the fruit, barely tasting the sweetness. "If you expect us to accept that, you'd best tell us why. Even reasons can be given to two-year-olds." She batted her eyelashes at him, even as she pressed her tongue out to clean her mouth.

Richard's lips snapped into a frown even as his eyes didn't move away from her face, seemingly centered on her tongue. More silence.

"Look, I know the Army isn't big on giving reasons for doing things." Bryan shrugged his shoulders, the effort rolling them under his T-shirt.

Niki reached over to stroke her fingers along his bared arm. The muscles moved under their tips.

“How do you know that?” Richard appraised him with curious eyes. “You say that like you know.”

“I was in for all of one tour,” Bryan said. “I know you were in a lot longer than me.”

Bryan didn’t talk often of his brief stint in the Army. It hadn’t gone well from what she knew. For him to bring it up, even that little, meant a lot. He was trying to work with Richard as much as he could.

She moved her hand down his firm, tanned arm to squeeze his fingers briefly before releasing.

Richard’s gaze swept from her over again to Bryan. “How do you know I was in the Army?”

“Because it’s common knowledge in town. You went to Iraq.” Niki took another bite. How would they convince him? How much should they say? She didn’t want to drive him off so soon without spending some time with him, but she wasn’t used to keeping her thoughts to herself. That had never been her, and she didn’t expect to start now.

Richard stood up.

She pointed tongs at him. “Where are you going?” No, he couldn’t leave yet. But he wasn’t making a move to go other than standing up. That was a good sign.

“Back home.” He pushed his chair aside, took a step, and paused at the rounded part of the table.

“Don’t, Richard. Stay.” She let the plaintive note come out in her voice. If he left now, she wasn’t sure she could continue on with what she wanted. She needed at least some sign he was interested before she took this further.

“Why?”

“Now who’s asking the why questions?” Bryan grinned at Richard. “Besides, there’s more watermelon.” Bryan opened another container and popped green melon in his mouth. “There’s a honeydew melon, too. Don’t leave yet.”

Richard hesitated. He blew out a breath as if the very air he breathed pained him. "I...don't d -- I can't stay."

"We won't talk about Iraq if you don't want to." Niki leaned one arm on the table. If he wanted to go, there wasn't anything she could do but try and talk him out of leaving. "Promise." She crossed her fingers in front of her heart.

He folded his arms across his chest. Didn't say anything again. Would this one go her way?

"Stay." She bit her lip, looking up into his blue eyes that looked like the sea on a turbulent day. Other times, they probably looked like a calm ocean. Not today. They were the cause of this friction inside of him, but she needed him to stick around. Needed to explore what made him tick. She wanted to give in to her fascination.

He plopped down in the seat. Grabbing the tongs, he picked up a slice of watermelon and sucked it down. His throat moved with the swallowing.

She had the strangest urge to lick down it while he was eating. She resisted the odd urge only by her own will. It would be so easy to lean over and take a taste of his golden skin. A nip of the delicious cocktail sure to be his. She twisted in her seat. Damp panties clung to her. Her clit pulsed in time, aching for a touch.

"Fine." His lips twitched. "Since you have so much more melon. Don't wanna waste anything that fresh."

"I'm sure." She crossed her legs, the silver bracelet rubbing against her skin. Caught him watching her ankles. Not the sexiest part of her, but she uncrossed her legs again to show them off. Checked his lap to see his pants still remained tented. Yes, the man wasn't as aloof as he tried to appear.

He dipped another piece of melon into his mouth, grinding it between his teeth. "Sex is still not going to happen."

“Care to make a bet on that?” Bryan waggled his brows with a suggestive leer. “I’d flip you for position.”

Another man might have shown annoyance at a man hitting on him. Richard didn’t show where it fazed him. “I’m not a betting man.” He’d have given that answer to her, too, if she’d said the same line Bryan had.

Niki grabbed the last slice of watermelon. She gently positioned it in front of Richard’s mouth. Would he take her invitation? Not that not taking it meant a whole lot, but somehow accepting the melon from her would fill her with more ease at what she wanted to happen.

Eyes blinked at her before his lips closed on the red fruit. He didn’t attempt to make contact with her fingers despite her best efforts to get him to. So, he took her offering on his own terms.

And she let him.

A small victory. As long as it wasn’t Pyrrhic, she’d take whatever was offered.

After he’d finished the bit of watermelon, she took her fingers up to her mouth and licked across them, slurping off all the juices, careful not to miss any.

His eyes heated at the movements of her tongue. They changed from cold blue to snapping aqua fire.

“I’m not a betting woman either, Richard.” *Only on things I know will happen, and it will happen with you.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Bryan watched as Niki shimmied on the tight black dress. She reached to pull one strap up a cream-colored arm. Slowly, she slid up the second strap. Lifting a brush, she started to smooth her golden halo of hair.



“Let me.” Bryan took it from her and using gentle strokes, he brushed her hair, leaving no tangles. He pushed the hair from the back of her neck to the side and lowered his mouth. He kissed along the side of her neck, breathing in the deep scent of her beauty.

She let out a soft sigh.

The sound of her pleasure pulsed through him like a bolt of lightning. Nothing made him hotter than knowing how much she was turned on. His already hard cock grew even more rigid as the urge to take her took him over.

She tilted her head, giving him easier access to her throat.

He kissed the soft spot under her ear, her melting spot. He felt her relax and go as boneless as a chicken. He winced. Not a sexy analogy. But, he loved her noises and her responses when he kissed her in a particularly sensitive place.

A breath of frustration pushed out through her nostrils. “We have that party to go to. The one we’re getting ready for.”

They had some town function to attend, a black tie affair honoring philanthropic people in the community. “So?”

“We don’t want to be late.”

“Ummm.” That remained to be seen. Having fun might outweigh being a little late. He laved the spot under her ear again.

She moaned, reached back and grasped his hair in her fingers. Pulling his head down, her lips met his in a frenzied joining.

Her mouth felt fantastic on his as he took possession of it fully. He moved around to her front to face her. Kissing her thoroughly, he ran his hand down across her chest. Her nipples pebbled under his questing fingers.

Her hand rested on top of his. She broke the kiss. “We really do have to get ready if we’re going to make this party on time. We’re already running behind.”

“I know.” He lowered his mouth again.

She put one finger up to his lips, blocking him from reaching hers. "Richard will be there. Remember our plan."

Yes, the plan. After Niki had laid things out in front of Rich this afternoon, they'd settled down to polish off the rest of the honeydew melon. He'd left soon after, and they'd decided to put forth a plan of attack. Pretty good idea for going after a military man. Tonight was the night to start it.

Bryan moved back to sit on the bed. "I know, I know." His breath hitched at what they had in mind for tonight. "Are we sure he's going to be there?"

"He's on the guest list." She reached into the drawer that contained their toys. "Help me with this?"

"Sure."

She arched a brow at him. "We don't have time to mess around."

He grinned at her. "You sure about that?" There was always time to mess around in his world.

She laughed, probably at his expression. "Well, maybe a little. You're incorrigible, you know that?"

"And that's why you love me." He took two steps to the drawer and searched around. "I have a feeling that Rich, when he's good, is just as incorrigible."

"He probably is. Just like Jenner was."

"He's a lot different than Jenner, though." Bryan pushed around several things in the drawer, finally seeing what he wanted to implement tonight for himself. He grabbed that and also some lube. He sat them down on the bed. "A lot different."

Niki's slender fingers settled on her silvery choice. "Yes, he is. Much more tortured. Does that bother you?"

Bryan shook his head. "I don't think so. Even though we just met him, he seems to complement us." Sitting around eating melon after their small talk had been an exciting

experience. They'd enjoyed the conversation. Though sitting with him and not being sexual toward him was torture. Tonight, they'd cross the boundary of being sexually intimate with Rich. A great divide to cross.

"Help me put this in." She grasped the skirt to the dress and twisted it up. Moving around, she pulled her black, bikini underwear down around her ankles and took them off before lying back on the bed. Flattening her legs, she spread them apart.

Bryan's knees buckled slightly at the sight. His usual reaction. Her pink folds enticed him, filling him with arousal. He wanted to swipe his hands and tongue across her at the same time. He couldn't think for a minute as he looked down at her.

She rolled her head. "Hurry up if you want to play."

He grasped the small egg vibrator in his hand, clutching it in his palm to warm it up. His other hand drifted to rest over her mound. His pointer finger pressed down into her folds, encountering wetness. The finger moved quickly around, finding the bud of her most intense desires.

She panted.

More wetness seeped around his finger.

He plucked her clit quickly, moving it back and forth. He slid his fingers across her bud before pinching it between two fingers.

Her hips bucked.

Yes, this was his woman. So responsive to his touch. How much she slayed him with that alone.

Would Rich be as responsive? The fun would be in finding out just what the military man was made of.

He flicked and pressed until he'd driven her right over the edge.

She groaned as the orgasm washed around her. Her face contorted in the most joyous tenseness he'd ever seen.

Removing his hand from her, he replaced it with the fingers holding the vibe. Slipping it up into her, he patted her before removing his touch.

He lifted his hand to sniff her essence. Damn, he loved the smell of her musk. He grabbed the remote and pressed the button.

Her whole body flattened out as the buzzing started. "Ohhhhh." She looked up at him as he grinned down at her.

"Battery works."

"Uh-huh." She moved along the bed, yanking up her panties and fluffing out the skirt to the dress. "Your turn."

He moved to the bed and pulled down his briefs. He'd not put on his pants or shirt yet as this was coming. He lay face down.

Cold wetness dribbled down his ass as she poured in some lube. "That's chilly." More followed.

"Sorry."

He didn't look back to glare at her.

The rough towel rubbed across his ass before she positioned the harness-type support that would keep the anal vibrator in and also ensure they could retrieve it when the time came. She caressed his ass with both hands, slipping them around the twin globes, making him shiver with the feel of her touching him.

"You'd better hurry." He spoke into the pillows, muffling his voice.

Her finger slid into his hole, steadily moving up and down, testing him with delicious moves. She took it slowly and gently, pressing in deeper each time she went down until he was ready to scream with the pleasure.

His hole stretched to accommodate her finger. His eyes went half closed. Pleasurable sensations started and banked the fires waffling in him. So good, and this wasn't even all of it. Tonight, he'd let himself be driven to the brink of madness, right along with Niki. And

Rich would be the cause. The knowledge of what they were going to do tonight set him up on the edge already. Niki had been the same way. How well he understood the woman with her finger up his ass.

Another finger joined the first one. She stretched him with the digits, making him roll his hips around throughout the procedure.

He pressed his cock into the mattress, wishing it had a different feel. If only it were Niki and her dripping folds. Or Rich with his tight ass. He'd take either one.

A dip down had him groaning with the feel of being penetrated. He bucked into the mattress.

Fingers slipped out. Metal slipped in where they'd been.

The anal vibe inserted, she ran the fingers of the hand that hadn't been inside of him over the swell of his ass, sliding across the drips of lube before making a pass around his hips to his cock. She encircled him, gliding up and down around him from tip to base. As turned on as he was about the night, it wouldn't take much to send him over the edge.

He lifted his hips so she could access him. Up and down around him, she slid with the one hand, her body pressed up against him from behind.

A buzz startled him, making his whole body tense and rise up in the air. He couldn't think beyond the blinding sensation of the vibrations.

Come spurted from his stiffened cock onto the sheet in waves.

The sound stopped, as did the sensations rolling around inside of him. He came back to earth with a plop of himself down on the mattress.

"Battery works, I think." A kiss pressed against his cheek before she removed her body from his.

"Yeah. Yeah." He languished on the bed, enjoying the press together of his buttocks around the inserted item.

"We'd better get going. We want to find Richard before the festivities start."

Bryan sighed and slowly got out of bed. Only Rich could have gotten him up after the afterglow. They did need to find him and get him alone, or at least off to the side. To put this plan into super action. Maybe these orgasms would take off the edge of the night, but he doubted that. They were both so excited about what was to come. "You owe me one." He pulled up his briefs over his spent cock. Wouldn't be long before he was hard again. What Niki and he would go through tonight would ensure that.

Her smile lit up the room like a jewel. "I'm sure I owe you ten thousand by now, but I always repay." She raked a nail across the top of his chest. "In kind."

He shivered. That she did. And if everything went well, maybe soon they'd have a third to take part in their repayments.

\* \* \* \* \*

Richard took a sip of champagne and grimaced. He preferred the stronger taste of spirits. Nothing they served at such a high swank party at the local country club.

He leaned back on the bar located upstairs on the balcony at the conference hall to survey the penguins -- a sea of black and white with splashes of color here and there. Tuxes and dresses designed to show off without showing too much.

Boring as hell.

Why had he shown up? Or even agreed to come?

A sashaying woman dressed in a white ruffled concoction paraded on by, then noticed him and stopped.

That was why he'd agreed to come. She was being honored tonight for her volunteer work, and she'd invited him. "So glad you could make it, Mr. Rollins." She took his hand in a simpering grip. "The plight of veterans is one near and dear to my heart. I'm sure it is for you, too."

Heat pricked at his body. Flashes of fire exploded before his eyes. Screaming echoed through the plumes of smoke in his memory.

He took a deep, clearing breath. “Yes, the plight of veterans is one I keep up with.” Any chance he got, despite the constant reminders of everything that had happened.

“I wanted to discuss with you...” She launched in on some fund-raising talk for the veteran’s organizations in the state.

He took another sip, listening to the woman blather on.

She didn’t care about veterans. It was her cause *du jour*, but he’d use the time she gave to the cause, before she moved on, to help his fellow, former military personnel. Some of them needed all the help they could get.

He was lucky compared to those who’d lost limbs and minds in the desert sands. He counted himself fortunate.

Fortunate was something he hadn’t wanted to be, yet here he stood while so many others couldn’t.

More flames. More screams.

He shook his head to clear the thoughts away. If only it were that easy to get them out of his brain. Course, he didn’t want to lose the memories. Even with as much as they hurt.

The woman thought he was agreeing, and talked more and faster. Her voice went into a high-pitched range.

Half listening, he turned to look over the balcony rail at the people milling below. That’s when he saw her.

She glided across the tiled floor on the first level. A little black dress, which covered but showed at the same time. It showed more skin than some, but wasn’t obscene. Her upswept hair gleamed under the lights of the glitzy chandelier, which looked as if it were covered in diamonds. Her sure steps meandered as she subtly glanced around the floors, as if looking for someone.

*Him.*

Bryan followed behind, dressed in a tight tux that showed off a trim, muscular body. His eyes seemed trained on the rear of the woman he followed. Were his eyes glittering? Surely they were. With passion and desire.

As if Niki felt the weight of his stare, she glanced up. A sure smile took over her lips. She pursed them together in a kiss toward him.

Richard straightened his back. She shouldn't tease him like that, and he should stay away from them. After all, they were out to ensnare him in some sport. They'd denied it, but their actions spoke loudly. At the end of any game, someone lost. And that would be him. He'd lost too much already, and he didn't intend to set himself up to lose anything more. Yet, he couldn't help the acceleration of his heart upon seeing them there at a party where he'd never expected them to put in an appearance.

A pat on his arm brought his attention back to the woman. "Anyhoo, that's all I have on it for now. We will have to do brunch and discuss this further." The woman in white patted her over-sprayed mound of hair. If she'd noticed his brief inattention to her spiel, she didn't show any reaction.

"Sounds good. Call me."

She mouthed a society kiss at his cheek.

He took the air kiss.

As if she saw the objects of his attention, she sniffed. "Excuse me while I go check the guest list." She huffed away in a dither.

Richard shook his head, then turned toward the rail again, moving toward the steps while keeping his eyes on Bryan and Niki. What were they doing here? This didn't seem like their kind of scene. Best to seek them out before they ambushed him again, like Bryan had at the grocery store. His hand clenched. There was no way to avoid people who sought you out, so he'd do the seeking.



Going down the steps with a hurry in his gait, which hadn't been there before, he lost sight of them both.

However, Bryan hadn't lost sight of him and met him at the bottom of the right side of the grand steps.

The staircases reminded Richard of the long, ornate ones in *Gone with the Wind* with thick red carpets, the kind that your feet would sink into.

"Hello, Rich."

The use of a nickname somehow made Richard pause. Some old buddies had called him Rich. The casualness of his name on Bryan's lips made his skin tingle. "Bryan. Surprised to see you here." He stopped after stepping onto the tile floor. The action brought him close to Bryan. A faint, woodsy scent assaulted Richard's nostrils. Richard resisted the urge to sniff him closer.

Bryan shrugged without looking at all surprised to see him, lending credence to Richard's appearance being the reason they'd shown up here. "We figured we should get out more." He motioned to Richard with a careful hand motion. "Walk with me." When Richard didn't follow, he added, "Please."

Richard did so without saying anything. What was the man up to? The cat who ate the canary didn't look as self-satisfied as Bryan did.

They reached a quiet corner of the downstairs, as quiet as they could find. Bryan turned to face him with a smirk on his face. His hand dipped in his pocket before revealing itself again. He clutched something in it and held the item out to Richard without displaying what it was to the room.

Richard looked down and slowly took the offered hand. What was he being secretly passed?

Bryan passed off the thing quickly.

Richard clasped the item and held it up in front of him, trying to look at what he'd been handed.

"Hey, not so obvious." Bryan lowered his voice to a mere whisper, trying not to capture anyone's attention.

Richard looked down at what had been put in his fingers as they wrapped around the small black box. Black box? "You gave me your TV remote?" Small for a TV remote, which meant it wasn't one. Detonator? No, not from these two.

Bryan quickly shook his head. "Not a TV remote." His hand dipped in his pocket again before he held out his hand like the last time. "Take this one, too."

Another small box, but gray this time. "Another TV remote."

Bryan winked at him. "I told you, not a TV remote. Guess again."

"I don't guess. What are they then?" Richard transferred the gray one into the hand that held the black one. He tossed out another ludicrous suggestion. "Garage door openers?" That was almost what they looked like. But that wasn't what they were. The suspicion sunk in as to just what he'd been handed. His breath came faster, puffing from his chest. His cock went straight to rigid at the thought of what might be resting in his hand.

"Find out for yourself. You have to be close enough to either Niki or me. And don't show them. Put them in your pockets." Bryan started to walk away in the opposite direction he'd come from.

"Why two?"

Bryan didn't turn to face him but stopped short. "Find out." Moving again, he disappeared into the crowd that melted around him. He'd sunk into a sea of oblivion, but he wouldn't hide. No, he wanted Richard to find him. Wanted Richard to use what he'd been handed and find out what it did.

Richard stared down at the two small devices in his hand. He took one and put it in his right pocket before adding the second one to the left. He could feel them as he started off the

way Bryan had gone. He shouldn't do this, having an idea of what he held. But the control that Niki and Bryan had bestowed upon him...

He blew out a breath before slicing through the crowd like a knife through butter as he searched idly for the two he sought. A reconnaissance mission. Something he'd been good at a lifetime ago.

He spied Niki, sitting at the bar, sipping on a yellow-colored drink. He walked a fine circle line behind her, keeping the same distance between them. She didn't notice, didn't seem to be looking behind her. She wasn't on the lookout for him. Had known he'd find her. How well they knew him was a little disturbing.

Did she suspect he was standing there? And didn't want him to know that? It wouldn't matter.

Nothing would save her from being hit by what the remote controlled. His finger caressed the button.

He'd noticed earlier that Bryan was in the crowds nearby, talking to a man. Bryan had his back to him, not looking around either.

Both of them must like the element of surprise. Which Richard would give them. In spades. They'd never see him coming.

He was equidistant from both Niki and Bryan. A deliberate move on their part. They had stayed within the remote's reach of the other. Each of them waiting, probably with impatience, for him to push a button and see what happened. No TV to cut on or garage door to open here.

Either remote he pushed would start up someone. Maybe Richard could be a betting man on occasion -- when all the cards were in his favor. Either way, he bet, he'd win a little victory.

Black or gray?

He hit the button on the gray remote.

Bryan's body shivered and straightened out. His legs shifted as he turned his position, tensing against something.

Hardly discernable, but Richard caught the action, and he kept his gaze on Bryan. Watching every little motion. Savoring them. His cock lay heavy and pulsing. His heart raced as if in a fight or flight situation.

The vibrators must be silent enough so that no one could hear.

*Got him.*

An anal vibe, which was exactly what Richard had thought that it might be for Bryan. He couldn't draw his thoughts from the delectable ass that contained something inside to bring about sensations to drive a man wild.

Richard pressed the button again, cutting the vibrations off. He resisted the urge to fool around, cutting the power off and on. After all, he had another remote try. He could have fun with them both later. Torture them.

Would they repay him in kind one day? With what? The implications of what he played with were ones he knew, but he couldn't step back any more than they could.

Bryan relaxed. He continued not looking around, but another shiver racked his body. One of anticipation.

He wouldn't know when Richard would hit the button again until Richard's finger planted itself to push. Bryan would wait for the sensations to begin within, knowing it could start at any time. Each time would surprise him.

Did his ass muscles clench under those trousers as he waited for Richard to hit the button again? Did his body scream out with impatience, waiting for the pleasurable sensations to start?

Richard smiled. Not quite time yet to begin again with Bryan. Time to explore the other pocket. He dipped his other hand into his right pocket. Slipped his finger against the button on the black remote.

Niki's back straightened, her spine going ramrod stiff. It was the only outward sign she'd been affected by what he'd done to her. Had he not been looking closely he wouldn't have seen the action. After a minute, she licked her lips but kept her eyes open. A breath panted out of her mouth.

The hum that rocked inside of her, a vibrator of some sort, filled him with wonder at the internal reactions she had to be fighting. He couldn't hear any sound, but it had to be there. And some reactions she could never fight. The involuntary kind. The clenching of her thighs around the object. The oozing of her musky juices around the small, metal egg that must be contained there.

Richard's heart pounded as his breathing increased. He wanted to scent out her reactions. Smell her musk. He wanted to dip his cock into her after having had his fill of her taste on his tongue, a taste and smell of honey.

She shifted in her seat, crossing her legs while leaning back slightly. Her back arched like a cat's.

He switched off the remote and blended back into the crowd. Time to retreat. His next campaign would be coming soon.

Another sneak attack.

\* \* \* \* \*

Niki resisted the urge to glance around her as she chatted with a woman she didn't know. She wouldn't look for Richard. Wouldn't give him that satisfaction. Not to mention, nothing would ever prepare her for the vibrator starting up anyway.

Richard liked playing way too much. Not that she looked for him, but she hadn't seen him all night. Each time he'd pressed her button had been a complete surprise. The sensations started and stopped without her seeing the culprit.

The hum began.

Niki tripped over a word, but didn't lose her train of thought. She managed to finish the sentence, then nod and look interested in the woman's reply.

Pleasurable sensations banked, running through her like some wild river. But, before she reached the plummet of the waterfall, they stopped.

Her breath hissed out in frustration. She walked on, feeling the wetness between her legs as things slid together in lovely motions. But still not enough. Pressing her thighs together, she wanted to drop her hand down there and get herself off.

*No.*

She couldn't do that. Yet.

Richard wouldn't let her come. He seemed to know how to push the vibrating sensations in her just so far. Take her to edge, stop the vibrator, and leave her there, perched, needy, and trembling.

Her gaze shifted, finally looking for him. Had to see the source of her angst, but she didn't spot him. Damn, he was good at this.

She did find Bryan, standing in a corner by a potted plant.

He shivered a little. His face tensed for a few seconds before leveling out into smooth lines. His hand clutched the top of the pot beside him and clenched around it tightly.

She wasn't the only one that Richard messed with.

He'd been doing the same to Bryan as he had been to her. From the sheen of sweat beading on his upper lip, Bryan must be close to the edge, just as she was.

By the end of the night, they'd be ready to jump each other. Especially if Richard kept taking them to the precipice and not letting them go over.

Bryan blew out a breath and released the plant pot. He stretched his hand before he saw her and grinned.

Bryan would enjoy this playing that Richard did. He liked to tease and being teased back. They'd get along fine.

She turned, surveying the crowd. Good thing the buzzers weren't loud enough to be heard. She'd managed to contain her reactions when she'd been with people. But doing that was becoming strained as the taunting continued.

Where was Richard?

Hiding in plain sight. Too many people wore black and white. Too many men wore tuxes. He was hard to spot, even with his height. Hard to believe such a big man had been so good at not being found.

A hand settled on her shoulder, almost making her jump, hot and heavy against her bared skin.

She straightened against the body behind her, backing into him as close as she was able to get. His cock pushed up against her backside.

So, they'd affected him just as he'd been tempting them. He'd pushed them close to the edge. Had he been pushed as well?

"Hello." His warm bass tones settled over her skin like a mist. Goosebumps rose along with the hairs.

"Hi." She let his warmth and his scent overwhelm her already frayed senses. "Having fun?"

He ignored the question. "Dance with me?"

She nodded, turning toward him. She'd do anything with him right now. Without touching her, he led her to the dance floor. He didn't need to touch her. She'd have followed him anywhere. Her insides melted as she watched the muscles of his butt strain against each other deliciously, obvious under his short jacket, walking to where a few other couples danced on a wooden floor.

Once he'd stalked out in the middle of the couples, he spun around with a grace she hadn't expected. He seemed to always be doing things she didn't expect. She hadn't even been sure he'd go along with them tonight.

Putting both hands on her back, the heat of them moving through her like a lance, he pulled her toward him and swayed with the quiet, slow music. There had to be a slow song playing. A quicker beat might have helped her get out some of the pent up feelings inside, but the method of dancing did allow her closeness.

His light touch made her hum, so overwrought were her nerves. She couldn't believe how edgy he'd made her feel. Nothing had ever made her long so much for release as the teasing from Richard Rollins tonight.

They danced in silence for a few moments.

She concentrated on his scent. On his touch. On looking at the golden lapel pin fastened to his shirt. Something to do with the military. She let herself get lost in his person, focusing on all the little things. The little scar on his neck just above his starched white shirt. The tenseness of his jawline. The ruddy color of his lips.

Leaning into her, his breath blew against her hair, tickling the spot under her ear. He'd had to bob his head down to reach her.

From her spot against his neck, when Richard turned her, she noticed Bryan standing across the dance floor, watching them. A look of longing graced his features. Unfair. He wanted to dance with Richard, too. Society wouldn't take well to that. They would have to dance later. In private. A more intimate dance.

When she turned back toward Bryan, a shudder rocked his frame.

She hadn't even noticed Richard's hand dip into his pocket.

She couldn't control her own shiver. Even as he held her, Richard toyed with the buttons to her lover's anal vibe. She licked suddenly dry lips. Sexy didn't cover this scenario. Yes, Richard was full of surprises. They'd thought to ambush him, and he'd turned it all around on them.

Which side was which? Or did he have both remotes in the same pocket? That way he wouldn't know whose button he hit until he saw their reaction. No, her in-control Richard



would want to know which button he pressed. He would want to know which of them he was turning on at that moment.

Richard's voice came low. "Yours is in the other pocket." He rubbed her back, showing her which hand was free and which one wasn't.

She closed her eyes, emotions swamping her. Her source of salvation and torture rested in his other pocket.

"So..." He breathed hot breath against her ear before pressing his lips briefly against her skin. "You have a choice to make."

She swallowed, her throat pulsing convulsively before she could force out words in a croaking voice. "I do?" What choice could she have in anything? He had all the power with a click of his buttons.

"Uh-huh."

She leaned back so she could look into his face. See those serious eyes, so like the ocean or sky with vastness. See the firm set of his chin. The tense twist of his thin lips. "What's that?"

He leaned over again to whisper against her ear. "Which pocket your hand reaches into. Right is yours. Left is his. Which one will you choose?"

Her breath came in spasms. When they'd started this, they thought they'd push Richard along with them. Maybe into them. She'd never envisioned him pushing back. But, here he was, pushing her as much as Bryan did. As much as Jenner had. What an intriguing man. "I get to choose which pocket I go into?"

He nodded. "You do."

"Do I get to press the button?" Going in the pocket was one thing. Pushing the button was something else.

"You do."

"Any suggestions?"

“No.” She detected a hint of amusement. “This is your choice. But I’ll tell you one thing.”

“What’s that?”

He leaned over again, voice low and soothing like he talked to someone spooked. “If it’s yours, I’ll let you come.”

She froze, her heart stopping for a hair-raising second. He couldn’t be serious. Not now. Yet, he didn’t seem like the type to go back on his word. “Bullshit.”

“Not conning.”

“If I pick *my* pocket, you’ll let me come? Right here. Right now.” Her voice came in unsteady whispers. “In the middle of all these people.”

She felt his nod. “Right here. Against me. But you’d have to pick yourself. You’d have to choose to ignore Bryan’s need.”

She lifted her gaze to see Bryan watching them. He had a quizzical expression. Probably wondering what they were talking about.

“You’d better choose. I won’t give you the option long.” Richard swept her around in arc of dancing. “Once it’s gone, it’s gone.”

Bryan had just gotten a hit from the vibrator. And he wouldn’t want to come now. Not in his pants. His climax would be much more obvious than hers. “Would you leave it on long enough for Bryan to come, too?”

“That’d be your choice. By your hand.”

She hesitated. Pleasuring herself was good, but she could choose to pleasure Bryan -- her lover, her soul mate. What a situation she found herself in. Who should she choose to receive the pleasure?

“Make your choice. Or I will.”

With a baleful glare, she ducked her hand into the left pocket. She had to give her lover pleasure, even if it denied her own. They'd deal with the ramification of him coming after his pleasure happened.

Only it was her own vibrator that began to hum.

Her whole body swayed with the shock of the pleasure, but Richard kept one arm around her tightly.

One arm.

The other one was in the right pocket.

He leaned down long enough to whisper. "I knew you'd pick Bryan, but you deserved this. You both get the pleasure."

She couldn't think, couldn't talk.

He pressed her head against his chest and swung them around in a circle, pulling her along. Within seconds, they moseyed over by Bryan, who looked as if bliss was taking its toll.

Richard spun her into Bryan's arms.

With the crash of his flesh against hers, with the knowledge that both their climaxes were so near, the orgasm spilled over her. Any sound was smothered by Bryan's lips, which found her own. His hips bucked against her only slightly. From the tenseness of his body, he found his release at the same time she did hers.

When they could both speak again, the vibrators went off.

She glanced around. No one watched. No one had noticed. And if they had, they thought that Richard had delivered her to her husband, and Bryan had kissed her. Little noise had escaped them and no one was too close by. The party was winding down. Guests had made their way home already, which was exactly why Richard had made his move when he did.

Richard removed his hands from his pockets. "Be seeing you." And off he stalked in the opposite direction.

“Son of a bitch.” Bryan heaved a deep breath, his arm around Niki. His hand tightened around her hip, using her as a shield to cover his pants. They’d have to fake a drink spill to explain it.

“He’ll be seeing us soon. He kept the remotes.” Yes, perhaps they’d bitten off a bit much with Richard Rollins. And she couldn’t wait until she had the full bite.

## Chapter Four

Richard hesitated before knocking on the door. Why was he here? His heart went into overdrive rhythm. Last night he'd brought both of them to a crashing orgasm. In public. He'd gone home hard and alone. Miserable, if the truth be told. Now, he stood on their doorstep, hard and alone again. But, not for long. At least the alone part.

He'd return the remotes that he'd absconded with the other night, and see whatever else they had in mind

The door opened, bathing him in light from the house.

Bryan's mouth curved up in a knowing smile as he opened the door wider to admit Richard. "Hello, Rich. Glad you got our message." There was a certain wry tone to Bryan's voice. "Good timing."

Richard's heart skipped a beat. "What message?" He stepped through the door, and Bryan shut it behind him.

"To come over after you got off work."

Richard nodded as if he'd known all along. "Oh, that message." He hadn't gone home after work. He'd come straight there. What had they invited him over for? Not going to be tea and cookies with these two.

“You came at the right time.” Bryan motioned for Richard to follow him through the kitchen.

Richard marched along behind the slighter man. “Right time for what?” So many images ran across Richard’s mind after last night. He should just hand over the remotes and leave. Instead of sticking around.

“The show.”

Richard’s cock grew harder, not something he’d thought possible. It had been far too long since his last release. Now, achieving it was all he could think about. He didn’t comment, but followed Bryan upstairs. To their bedroom. Crossing the threshold would bring him over an intimate boundary with them. Of course, he already had crossed so many other thresholds with them. More than he’d ever intended. What was one more? He had nothing to lose by going along with their sporting with him, as long as it suited him. He’d just be sure to end it before they did.

Niki sat on the bed, wearing a silk robe. She ran a string of beads over and over her hands. “Hello, Richard.” Her throaty voice purred at him.

“Niki.” His pulse accelerated. Sweat coated his palms. Her voice could ignite a forest fire.

Bryan waved a hand around. “Have a seat.” He took the beads from Niki. “I’ll be right back.” Two short strides had him going through a doorway that went off from the bedroom.

Richard heard water running as he sat down on the edge of the bed away from Niki. Must be a bathroom.

Their bed was big enough for an orgy. Probably deliberately. A red comforter covered the huge mattress. Black sheets. Silk. Several large pillows. Decadent. Suited the Gaulds completely.

Niki leaned back on the bed. Her ankle bracelet gleamed against her pale skin. Her robe gaped at the top a bit to reveal her cleavage. He'd love to run his fingers down into those hollows. "Have a good day?"

Richard nodded, unable to draw his gaze from the revealed flesh. "I did." The day was better now. Not something he'd delve into deeply. After all, this was a game.

"What did you do all day?" She ran a hand along the silky material at the top of her robe.

Instead of drawing his attention away from her chest, her hand running magnified his gaze as he followed the motion. "Number crunching." He was an accountant. Along with doing various veterans' affairs work. Most of those were volunteer. "Those darn threes bite."

Her brief laugh at his attempt at humor rung out in the small room. Did she ever keep in what she felt? Such an open woman. Not like anyone he'd ever met. So many people were closed off. Like he was. She refreshed him with her open ways. "I still don't think you look like a bookkeeper."

He got that reaction a lot. But numbers never changed. They never were anything beyond what they were on paper. Something comforting to him. When he'd come back from Iraq, he'd wanted the quickest job program he could find, and the furthest thing from what he'd been. Accounting had fit the bill. He changed the subject. "What do you and Bryan do for a living?" *Besides play sex games?* They didn't leave the house often, so they must work from home.

"Online businesses. Several of them. We manage the websites, and Bryan does design." Stopping, she regarded him for a millisecond. Then she opened her mouth to say something more.

Bryan interrupted whatever she was going to say by coming back with the beads hanging in a loop from his hand. They swung with each step he took. "All clean and dry."

Richard shifted back on his corner of the bed. Why clean a string of beads? Surely they didn't mean to do what would require them being clean? Couldn't be. He'd never seen anything like this, only heard about such things.

"Good." Niki stood up, planting her feet firmly on the floor before untying the robe. Slowly, she shrugged one shoulder free. Her gaze shot to Richard, as she acted almost shy.

Her shy? Richard couldn't fathom that. He tried to look as impassive as possible to ease whatever was going on in her mind. But a storm brewed inside him. He'd seen her naked before, but it was from a distance. This -- this was up close and personal. Even more so than what he'd done to them last night.

She slipped the other sleeve down her arm to her elbow. Then, she flattened her arms so the robe dropped to the floor in a soft swoosh.

He followed the robe down to the floor, then his gaze moved back up her body.

Naked, she stood before him. No false modesty or covering herself. She bared all before him.

Richard's mouth tried to drum up saliva to swallow, but couldn't. He'd seen plenty of women naked before. He would always remember his first close-up view of Niki. Never would he forget the image that burned into his retinas. No matter when they pulled the rug out from under him, which they could do at anytime.

She put beauty to shame with her elegance. Flared hips. Not thin, but a comfortable shape. A lovely shape. Heavy, rose-tipped breasts. The nipples hardened more under his gaze.

The view from a distance paled when compared to this one. It was like comparing seeing the stars with the naked eye and looking at them through a telescope.

Her gaze searched his face. As if finding something she liked, her eyes lit with a glow from within.



He'd shown his raging desire in his eyes. Couldn't keep the fire inside, had to let it out before he exploded, so he knew it had spit out through his look. He squared his shoulders, admiring her openly. Nothing wrong with a look.

She savored his gaze a moment before she moved back on the bed, sitting back on the propped up pillows Richard hadn't paid attention to before now. They'd been arranged for her repose. Spreading her legs wide open, she laid her head back. Her fingers came down to part her folds. Her center shone in the overhead light, damp with already gathering moisture.

Bryan fingered the first of the beads, rolling them between his fingers. They clinked together with a hollow plastic sound. He reached over to a nightstand drawer and withdrew a small bottle of red liquid.

"I don't need it." Her eyes once again burned Richard with the need and longing reflected within. She hardly gave Bryan a glance.

"Just in case. I want to have it out." Bryan settled down between her legs, blocking Richard's view. "You'd better move closer so you can see."

The latter was directed to Richard.

And he so wanted to see. He moved around and slid closer to Bryan's side so he could view Niki's beautiful pussy, bared for his eyes. And Bryan's.

Bryan took the first bead in his fingers and rubbed her clit with it.

She blew out a strong breath at the first touch. Her thighs tensed. What did the hard, small piece of plastic feel like?

Bryan curled the beads down to reach her pussy. His fingers moved to first one. He slipped the bead into her hole, drawing the other ones across her clitoris. His fingers slipped around, almost obscuring Richard's view but not completely.

A low moan escaped her lips as the bead disappeared from view.

Richard didn't want to look. Didn't want to see the beads being threaded into her. But he couldn't tear his gaze away. He had to see the pink, small hole, accepting bead after bead. Had to see the glistening pearls of moisture. His hands clenched, nails biting into his palm. Bryan had said something about a show. Richard had never expected this.

Bryan kept rubbing the beads against her, even as he placed each one inside, being careful and going slow.

Her hips bucked slightly. "Bryan..."

"Just a few more, babe. Promise."

She whimpered.

Richard made a noise. That sound from her sounded like pain. Did this cause her distress?

Bryan sensed his worry. "They aren't hurting." He rubbed her clit slowly back and forth with his thumb. "Right, Niki?"

She nodded. "So full." Her voice came out measured, as though it was difficult for her to string words together.

Richard relaxed and watched the last of the beads fill her.

Bryan slid back. "Ready?"

She nodded.

Richard watched, holding his breath.

"Well, don't just sit back and stare." Bryan tapped his shoulder. "Give it to her."

Niki looked up at him, much as an angel would. So golden. So much need. "Eat me, Richard. Please." She arched her back. "Please."

\* \* \* \* \*

Richard settled down in front of Niki as she flattened down her knees. The fierce look in his eyes gave her pause. To be the subject of his attention -- well, she might not survive the night. Never a more single-minded individual had she met.

God, but he suited them in every way. He just didn't know it yet. He thought they had started a game with him. She'd seen that in his face a time or two. Only, it was a game she intended to win, and she intended to keep him. The more she was around him, the clearer that became.

He inhaled, the sound evident. He looked like a wine connoisseur about to taste a new flavor.

And she'd be the tastee.

Her gaze caught movement from Richard's side.

Bryan shifted in so that he could see what happened. His face was a mask of passionate hues. Of need and wanting.

She looked him full in the face, promising him things with her eyes.

That's how the first lick caught her off guard. She wasn't looking at Richard, only felt the sensations of the caress beginning.

His tongue swiped along her opening from stem to stern.

Her whole body got lost in a spasm of pure pleasure.

The string inside her filled her up and moved each time she did. God, what an experience vaginal beads could create.

Not to mention, this was the first time Richard had done anything to her with his body. Sure, he'd controlled the remotes, but that hadn't been him doing the touching. Somehow that made this all the more rich an experience.

He looked up at her, an expression of abandon on his face. Gone was the sadness she'd noticed so often. With a wink, he lowered his head.

His tongue went back to work on all her nether parts, which tingled with arousal. She was so wet and humming for his touch, which he so readily gave. He tongued her clit, the beads, anywhere he could put the dastardly muscular piece of flesh.

Her back straightened into an almost exclamation point. She wanted his face, his mouth, completely on her. Didn't want anything light, instead, she wanted the full touch.

So naturally, he took his time giving that to her.

He flicked her clit with rapid-fire precision, grasping her bucking hips to hold her in place for his torture, sweet though it was. The flicks grew harder, but weren't quite enough to bring her over.

Her head moved back and forth, so wild was her desire. She begged. Whether it was in her mind or out loud, she couldn't tell.

Finally, his mouth suctioned down on her clit, drawing the piece of skin into his warm depths, and sucked on it as tightly as he could. He teathed on the little piece of flesh, not hard enough to draw pain, but enough to make her writhe even more than she was already. He grazed her more forcefully, still not enough to hurt. It drove her wild. Being filled and licked brought her so close to what she needed.

Her moans came with grunts and shifts of her hips, trying to reach that one graceful foothold on the edge.

Bryan's guttural voice sounded, but she barely registered what he said. It was as if he spoke through a fog. She paid more attention to the fact that Richard had drawn his mouth from her, taking away the actions giving her so much pleasure. A curse formed on her lips, even as Bryan spoke. "Draw the beads out."

The cussing about to come forth left her, and a shudder rocked her as the impact of the words sunk in. While she rested at the brink of her orgasm, Richard would take out the beads one at a time. Each one would add to the spiraling vortex of pleasure.

Bryan knew what that would do to her. The removal of the small, plastic circles would send her over many upper edges. They'd used the beads before.

Her head rolled back as she whimpered again. No matter how many times they used this toy, it always sent her into realms she couldn't fathom.

Her pussy moistened even more in anticipation of what Richard would do. Of what he would cause with his actions.

His fingers fumbled underneath his chin, which lowered back down to put his mouth on her clit. He found the anchor bead and tugged on it gently between two fingers.

A bead popped out with a gush of her essence.

She cried out as the second one came free from her. Her orgasm snapped, crackled, and popped within her.

Her thighs quivering, she came back to earth.

Only to hurtle to the stratosphere again with the withdrawal of another bead. Each one leaving took her over the multiple edges again and again. She couldn't tell if the orgasm was one big one or several small ones, so high did she spiral. Reason wasn't hers. She became a mass of pleasure-driven gelatin in a pile of goo. Her hips bucked spasmodically. Too good. Surely, she couldn't take any more. Then, another bead would leave her, and further she'd go.

When the last bead exited, she collapsed completely against the pillow. Her eyes closed in exhaustion. She'd lost count of the times she'd climaxed.

A touch, featherlight and insistent, fell upon her lips.

Her eyes opened to the most wonderful sight of all. Richard's face.

Richard had brushed her mouth with a kiss. His blue eyes bore into her very soul. He lowered his mouth to hers again and kissed her lightly.

Before he could move away, she grasped his head with her hands and kissed him back. A seal of a promise.

Yes, she was keeping this man and never letting him go.

\* \* \* \* \*

When Rich had started on Niki, Bryan had rocked back to give him room. Rich couldn't peel his gaze from Niki's pussy. Bryan had understood that completely. She was a fantastic sight. No matter how many times he saw her bared, he wanted to fall down and worship the temple that was Niki.

Rich had leaned down, his nose twitching. He looked as if he were about ready to savor a tasty treat.

The look had made Bryan's skin prickle with heat. He had scooted so that he could see. He wanted to see every action in 3-D stereo sound.

Watching Niki come with such abandon was a sight that Bryan always treasured. His cock tightened even more with the need pulsing around him. They hadn't even done anything to him, and here he was leaking precum.

Niki panted after Rich's kiss, lying back on the pillows. She looked as sated as a woman could be.

Rich moved away, pulled away from both of them, as he sat up on the side of the bed.

Oh, no, he wasn't going to get away now. He could not be allowed to retreat, to go back to his nonparticipatory status. He'd crossed the line, and he'd damned well stay over with them.

Bryan placed a hand on his shoulder. The heat bubbled up under Bryan's hand as though he'd touched a piece of lava.

Rich turned toward him to see what he wanted. His distant eyes told the truth, that he was getting ready to back away. Unacceptable.

Bryan had to do something to bring him back in. He couldn't let him leave now. Not yet. Not until this was finished.

So Bryan planted a kiss on his mouth. Not a light kiss like the one Rich had given to Niki, but a deep kiss. His tongue dipped in to toy with Rich's. His hand tangled in Rich's short hair. His lips that tasted so good under his -- a flavor like a strong coffee combined with the slight taste of Niki. Bryan's libido went into overdrive at the intoxicating taste and smell of the man in front of him. Not to mention, he'd seen Rich get his woman off a few moments ago. His cock ached from being so hard.

He pulled away, breathless. Couldn't take any more right then. He had to pull back to get his senses back about him.

Rich eyed him with darkened eyes. Eyes that said he was back in the moment. That the urge to retreat had left from within, as Bryan had wanted it to.

Now recovered, Bryan reached over to drag Rich in for another deep kiss. A tug of hair. A panting against Rich's lips. Somehow no matter how the kisses started, Bryan wound up getting as much as he gave.

Rich took masterful control of each embrace, despite being on the receiving end from Bryan.

Rich growled against his lips.

The reverberating sound set off a catalyst of reactions in Bryan. He wanted to be everywhere at once. On Rich, under Rich, on top, on the bottom. Connecting with him. He didn't care which of those came true, but he had to touch the man. He slid his hand down Rich's neck to undo the first button of his shirt. He waited for a reaction. A "get your damned hands off me" spiel. No matter how sure Bryan was of the reception, he always held a breath with this portion of approaching another man.

This was first contact.

No reaction.

Emboldened and enraptured, Bryan undid the second button with hands that shook more than they had undoing the first.

Rich wanted this.

If he hadn't, he would have stopped them. He would have called a halt to this from the moment Niki had started stripping. Maybe even from the moment he'd walked in. Rich would have stopped Bryan from kissing him if he didn't want to go further.

The third button had Bryan fumbling. This was going to happen. Now and not later. Or maybe now and later.

Rich pushed his hands away, rising to his feet before standing straight and tall beside the bed.

Bryan pulled back with a heart that sank to his toes, even as he stood up, too. He wasn't sure why, only that he needed to be on his feet to face this. He didn't know what to say, so he clamped his mouth shut. Maybe he'd been wrong. Now, Rich had stopped them. Halted this from going forward. Did he want this to stop? Why had he let it go this far?

A glance at Niki's worried eyes sliced right through Bryan.

Had he gone too far? Was it his fault that Rich was pulling away?



## Chapter Five

Bryan finally opened his mouth to speak, but closed his lips upon Rich's next action.

Rich's hands came up to the fourth button, undid it, and the rest in quick succession. His shirt was tossed off his arms and to the floor in one quick motion. He exposed tanned muscles. Six pack abs. A flat stomach. A chest that men bought exercise equipment to achieve and never could.

Several scars marred the brown skin. Each one left a question as to how Rich had received such a wound.

The things from Iraq Rich didn't want to discuss. What had happened to him?

Not that they'd be discussing that right now. Bryan could only give the scars a moment's thought when faced with the skin of the man in front of him.

Few things left Bryan Gauld without a word planted in his head or mouth. He usually had an opinion.

Between the worry with Rich standing, the sloughing off of clothes, and seeing what lay underneath, nothing came to mind for him to say.

Rich's deep chuckle made Bryan lift his head. "Never been gaped at like that before." He rubbed a hand up his biceps to a tattoo of an eagle. "War doesn't leave anyone intact."

The scars.

Rich thought Bryan focused on the scars. How could he think that? Yes, he'd noted them. But he'd been too lost in the other parts to focus his attention there. "No." He shook his head violently. They had been the least of his thoughts.

Rich looked at him curiously.

Bryan shrugged. "I didn't mean no to what you said, but no to me looking at your scars. You're...well..." Oh hell, why not put it out there? It wouldn't be the first time Bryan had said too much. Or the last. "You're perfect."

Niki slipped forward on her knees, like a cat looking to mark its slave. "I agree with that." She ran a hand across Rich's abdomen.

Rich's stomach sucked in. His breath rasped upon intake.

Niki didn't remove her hand, but let it rest on his hip just above the waistband of his khaki pants.

Bryan could see goose pimples rising, though Rich didn't say anything.

For some reason, that made Bryan aware that he was clothed in a room with one naked woman and one half-naked man. That wouldn't do. He wouldn't be the last one overdressed. Time for him to even the score.

He grabbed his own T-shirt and yanked it over his head. He ruffled his messy hair into place. Not that he cared, but he didn't want it getting in his face.

Niki's hand slipped down low, under Rich's belly button. Her paleness stood out against his tanned skin.

Her hand started to undo the button on his pants.

Rich's stomach sucked in even more at her touch.

Bryan's breath caught in his throat at the promise of the sight that was about to be exposed.

Only Rich wasn't Niki's only subject of disrobing.

Her other hand snaked out to Bryan. She undid the snap to his jeans with a flick of her experienced fingers.

The click sound made Bryan's pulse race like a thundering herd of big mammals.

Bryan shifted his weight, waiting for the zipper to come down. About to become naked. About to see his new lover naked. With his wife already naked. His mouth dried to epic proportions. It had been too damn long since they'd been with another man.

Niki unzipped Rich's zipper, before moving her attention to back to Bryan. She turned to him too quick to catch sight of anything with Rich.

Bryan's zipper came down slowly. Too slowly. Each rung of the zipper seemed to be going down at the pace a snail would travel.

When the zipper was about halfway down, Niki grinned up at him. Her look was one of pure teasing.

Fooling with him.

He mock-growled at her before she reached the bottom of the track. This wasn't the time to tease. Though, if he'd been doing the playing...

"What are you both, a bunch of bears? What's with all the growling? And it's time to take off those pants." She sat back, pushing her legs out in front of her, displaying that beautiful pussy again for their enjoyment.

Rich's eyes trained on her, much as they had earlier in the foreplay.

"I'll show you what a bear I am." Bryan laughed and yanked down his pants, being careful around his cock. The legs got caught on his feet, but he wrestled them off and yanked off his briefs at the same time, for good measure. His cock sprang to attention. He shook his hips around, making his cock dance. "Just wait until you feel me inside you. You'll know what a bear I am."

Niki giggled.

They both turned expectantly to Rich.

Rich's movements slowed as he pulled down his pants. He seemed to grow tenser with each advance on the journey downward his pants took.

With no underwear.

The man went commando.

"Dude, doesn't your dick get caught in your zipper? And how do you wear jeans?" Bryan shuddered at both thoughts.

Even as he relaxed, Rich's mouth curved up into an easy smile as he pushed off his pants from his feet. "I've never caught anything in my zipper." His eyebrow lifted. "And some of us are tougher than others."

"Touché." Bryan had to concede that one. The man hadn't been wearing underwear. All night long. Probably every time they'd seen him. How sexy was that? He'd never be able to look at Rich without wondering.

"No, touchy. Both of you need to come up on the bed." Niki's eyes couldn't decide whose cock to look at.

Bryan glanced over at Rich for his longest snatch of vision since after the pants had gone off. Yeah, the man was tough. His cock really did hang like a lance. His thighs almost resembled small tree trunks with their harsh muscles. Another scar broke the skin of his right thigh.

Whatever he'd been through, it had been rough to leave so many physical scars. Not to mention there had to be some emotional ones.

\* \* \* \* \*

Richard looked over the two naked people in front of him. Two gorgeous people with nothing to mark their skin. So different from him.

Bryan's gaze centered on the scar on his thighs.

*A bomb exploded to his right...*

Richard's breath caught in his chest, hesitant to come out. It stuck in his thorax like some lead balloon.

What the hell was he doing?

Damaged goods.

Before he could say anything or walk away, Niki's hand slipped out to touch him. One brief touch.

He looked into her eyes, and got lost in their translucence.

She knew.

Understood what he was thinking.

Without her saying a word, somehow the fact that she knew made him better. It made the ache inside subside a little. Which wasn't right. It couldn't be happening. It wasn't what he deserved. Or was it?

She ringed a scar with her fingers on his chest.

Richard swallowed. Each touch set him aflame. Made it hard to think about why this was a bad idea. Why wasn't this in his best interest? How long could he punish himself for the things he'd done?

*Forever.*

Another smooth finger glided over another scar.

Bryan had moseyed over a step when Richard hadn't been paying attention. His touch finished off Richard's mind. He could no longer form a coherent thought when both of them had their hands on him. All he could do was revel in the touch of two other human beings.

It had been so fucking long since anyone had touched him like this.

And the patterns of their hands on him made him feel. Feel them. Feel himself. Feel everything in the space of a moment.

Bryan and Niki both traced scars with fingertips without saying a word.

And then Niki's hand dipped lower to trace something that wasn't a scar. Something that perked even more when she touched it.

His cock.

His head rolled back, supported by his shoulders. Her hands felt incredible on him. Like he was drowning in a sea of molten pleasure.

She pulled his cock toward the bed.

It was either follow her motion or get hurt fast, so Richard moved toward the bed. When he stood beside the mattress, his legs touching it, she released his cock.

"Lay down." She commanded him with a tone he'd not heard from her before. Her inflection would have made a drill sergeant proud.

After a moment's hesitation, he lay on the bed on his side, facing Niki.

Bryan pushed in front of her to crowd on the bed facing him. "Hi." His smile lit up like a kid who'd discovered a big jar of candy.

Out of the corner of his eye, Richard saw Niki move around to the other side of the bed. Heard drawers open and shut.

Something tossed over him hit Bryan in the shoulder. He reached up to remove the small bottle.

Lube.

A second toss was a condom.

They were really going to do this. Be with him.

None too gently, Bryan claimed his mouth in a flame busting kiss. His hands wafted down Richard's body, touching him from his neck to his pelvis.

One hand grasped Richard's and brought it down to Bryan's rigid cock.

Bryan broke the kiss. "In case you needed help finding it." Bryan's strained voice beat at the fog rushing Richard's brain.

Richard clamped his hands, clasp and stroking. His other hand met the first to create a channel, which he moved Bryan's cock through.

"Or maybe you didn't." The last ended on a squeak. Bryan's eyes rolled back before he lifted the little bottle and dripped lube on his cock, swirling it over Richard's hands.

The scent of strawberry hung in the sweetened, supercharged air.

"I didn't." Richard slid his hands up and down Bryan's cock, squeezing and releasing, and driving the man in front of him nuts. How long until he begged?

A touch on his shoulder almost startled him. Niki had settled in behind him. Her throaty voice revved near his ear. "Have you ever been fucked before?"

Richard's hips tensed to buck. Such an intimate question. From a lady. He didn't have to ask what she meant. No sense acting coy. "I've been penetrated before. If that's what you're asking."

"It was." She nipped his shoulder, causing a shudder to roll along his body.

How could one press of lips send so much pleasure rushing through him? "It's been a while."

"I figured."

How well she knew him should bother him on many levels, but it didn't.

She licked a path down his back before whispering loudly, "Bryan likes to be taken fast. Hard. In case you were wondering."

Richard looked at Bryan, who had his eyes closed, his face the picture of pleasure.

"That...I...do." Bryan spoke out between white clenched teeth.

So if Richard was taking Bryan...

Lube and a finger ringed the hole to Richard's ass.

His throat dried as he figured out what was coming for him. Niki. A fit of eagerness overtook him as he speeded up his pace on Bryan's cock. Quickly, he raised his hands to the tip where moisture continued to gather and rushed his hands back down to the base. One hand slipped under to cup Bryan's balls.

Bryan let out a long moan.

Richard had caused this reaction. Somehow, the control he had over the situation made this work all the better.

They knew him too well.

Richard grunted. "Roll over." His hands kept doing things to the man in front of him though. He could barely think straight with the finger now starting to probe into his ass and the sweet lips still laving along his spine.

The mouth left his back, but the finger stayed. Pressing into him. Opening him.

"Let go first." Bryan panted, his breath coming out in short spurts that resounded. "Let go, and I will."

Richard dropped his hands. Yes, it was hard for a man to think with anything or anyone touching him on his cock.

Bryan flipped.

Richard leaned to blow softly on the skin of Bryan's back before he spoke. Hairs rose in reaction to the contact, and probably what was said. "Give me the lube."

Bryan reached up to hand him the bottle.

"You like it fast?"

"Yes."

The finger drove into Richard's ass with unforgiving pressure. So, he'd be finger fucked by a woman while he drove into a man from the front. What a situation he'd found for himself. His kind. The best kind.



“You like it deep?” Richard drizzled in lube, smearing it into Bryan’s hole with his fingers. “Wild?”

“Hell, yes.”

Richard slipped on the condom with both hands and covered himself in lube. Before Bryan could say anything more, he parted Bryan’s cheeks and drove himself forward into his depths. “Good.”

Bryan arched his back as Richard tossed a leg over his legs to anchor himself. He drove in hard, fast, and unrelenting.

The finger, which had stayed with him until now, fucking Richard, withdrew even as kisses resumed down his lower back, paying special attention to the back of his spine and the beginning of his ass. She stopped at his lower ass, and a tongue found its way into his hole. The flesh rimmed him, going around the outer circle. His muscles clenched in brilliant reaction to the delight.

Richard quivered, even as he continued his pace of pulling out and pushing into Bryan. He slowly inched himself deeper in to the fullest measure. He’d never had sex in this position before. The different feel aroused Richard as much as his partners.

His hand slipped over Bryan’s stomach to find his cock. Not that he could miss the hard flesh projecting from Bryan’s body.

Bryan’s cock was still coated in lube. Richard tugged on the solid member, creating a channel in it for him, or at least as much as he could with one hand. In and out, he pressed the length of flesh against his fingers. He kept the pace regular, matching the pace that he set with Bryan.

The tongue left his ass.

What happened next, Richard hadn’t accounted for. Fingers and tongues, he’d expected to be breached by.

The tip of something else penetrated his ass. Even as the muscles clenched, trying to expel it, his body welcomed the invasion of the foreign object. Only the tip slipped in, but it belonged to a much longer piece of plastic.

And still his own cock rammed into Bryan, though his hand froze in a grip on Bryan's cock.

How unexpected.

A dildo.

Had to be.

Niki's voice lulled in the stillness. "Like?"

Richard groaned in a deep answer. Like he wouldn't.

Bryan's muffled moan of agony or pleasure made Richard begin to move his hand again. And move the pace even faster.

The hard plastic inched into him, centimeter by precious centimeter. Niki was careful. She stopped when the pressure would become too much and eased out again. His tight muscles slowly relaxed under her driving motions. She added more lube a couple of times to ensure that his passage wasn't too dry.

She'd had experience with this sort of thing before.

Bryan suddenly arced again, tensing in a brief moment of pleasure. His entire body spasmed.

Richard had hit his pleasure spot. A place guaranteed to bring a man to his knees if he wasn't already there. He'd heard it was the prostate.

The dildo pressed in even farther, before continuing to retreat and go in deeper.

It wouldn't be long before...

His own spot engaged, making Richard sound an undefined noise of pleasure. Nothing had ever sent him so close to the edge before. So close to the bliss that took over and wouldn't be filled with anything less.

Something warm engulfed his hand as Bryan's orgasm flew through him. The last of the stream flew out, and Richard relaxed that hold.

The dildo pushed into that sacred place again.

And Richard roared as the climax drove into him like a speeding bullet, piercing his being. He rocked against Bryan again and again with pleasure seeping from every pore. He'd been driven over a wild, wide edge.

The dildo remained buried in him, moving forward with each spasm of his body. Didn't seem as if it would ever stop, but finally his orgasm came to a rolling end. His body shook from the aftereffects.

He pulled out of Bryan to grasp the condom and pull it off. Too long. He couldn't remember when the last time he'd even jerked off had been. And forget about being with someone else. Actually, he did remember. It had been before...the last tour in Iraq. That should have sobered him, but it didn't. He was too tired to think about what he shouldn't or should have done.

The dildo retreated and hands came over his side to take the condom away. His body wouldn't move to release it so she eased it away from him.

He rested against Bryan now that the condom was gone, spent and sated in a way he hadn't been in a long time.

Bryan turned to move against him in a maneuver that brought them right up against each other. They both groaned at the contact of their sweaty, hot bodies.

Niki leaned over Richard, letting her breasts press into him while stroking Bryan along his side. She slipped over Richard to push them away from each other and climb in the middle.

They both reached to cuddle her in.

And that's how they fell asleep. Body parts touching everyone else. No way to be this close and not touch each other.

And it was the best damn night of rest that Richard had had in years.

## Chapter Six

Just home from work, Richard pulled the mail from his box in a big jumble. Not that he'd be home long. Soon enough he'd be going over to the Gaulds. For dinner and more. The more made him smile. Last night had been more than he ever thought he'd have again.

A flash of white caught his eye against the brown ground. A letter had fallen. He bent to pick it up, sniffing the honeysuckle that grew nearby.

The return address boomed out at him like a beacon. The slanted handwriting across the front would have alerted him to who it was from, even if the address hadn't. Was it that time of the month already? Why did she bother writing him? Nothing ever changed. Couldn't change what he'd done, only bring him news of the unhappiness he'd caused.

His eyes closed.

*Screams. Fire. Blood.*

Opening them again, he picked up the letter with fingers that trembled. He carried the small, white envelope separate from the other mail. Dropped the other mail onto the table and carried the letter as if it were a baby onto the deck, the closest point in his house to the Gaulds' house. Even knowing that, he couldn't help but stay there.

He tore into the envelope. Praying about what it would say. The reality of the black scrawl on colored paper would be much different than anything he wanted. Prayers never were answered. Especially not his.

He skimmed the careful handwriting. Phrases popped out before his eyes. "...doing as well as can be expected..." "...getting used to life in these circumstances..." "...physical therapy helps some...as does counseling..." "...he still blames you..." "...I'm glad to have him back..."

Even the last phrase didn't take away the pounding in his chest. The other phrases, which brought home everything he'd been running from these past few days, stole his breath and wouldn't return the air. He gulped in great spasms until he could breathe normally again.

Both of his hands gripped the letter tightly and smashed it between them. If only he could get rid of everything so easily.

Instead of heading where his feet had planned before the letter, he walked back into his house. He threw the balled up letter on the carpeted floor, where he'd never find it again, as he grabbed a bottle of whisky. Opening it quickly, he drank from the bottle. The burning didn't ease his insides. He stalked up the steps to his bedroom.

After taking another sip, he grabbed a chest on his dresser. Ripped through it until he found what he was looking for. A picture with four men. Four young men. So full of hope and life. Hard to believe he'd once had such a face. He pulled out a letter from Baldwin, one of the four pals he'd gone to high school with, and read it carefully. They'd all gone into the military. He hadn't seen them in a long time. Yet, they were still the best friends he'd ever had.

He ran his hand over his eyes and tossed the letter and picture back in the chest. Took another long sip of alcohol.

The Gaulds should've met that man in the picture. The man he no longer was. That young face would have played their games and exalted in them. Would have been the man they deserved, for whatever they wanted.

Who was he kidding?

Himself? Them? The town?

He wouldn't deny to himself the attraction they posed. The fires and emotions they'd set off inside him.

But none of that could be.

He wasn't sure how long he'd sat there when the doorbell rang. Chimed all through the house.

Richard gripped the neck of the bottle tighter, willing them to go away.

More bells. Followed by knocks.

They wouldn't take the hint. They were going to make him tell them, and they did deserve that much. Carrying his bottle, he stalked down the steps to the door and flung it open in a big arc.

Niki and Bryan stood on his doorstep, their faces puckered in confusion. He saw them take in the bottle. And his appearance.

Niki placed a hand on her hip. "Thought you were coming over after work? When you didn't, and we knew you were home, we got worried."

Worried? Richard ignored the ball spreading upwards from the pit of his stomach. "Yeah. Not coming over." He started to shut the door.

After removing her hand from her hip in a quick movement, Niki grabbed the door. "What do you mean, you aren't coming over?"

"I'm not coming over." He wrestled with the door, but couldn't shut it without shutting her in it, especially when she stuck her foot in the way. He didn't want to hurt her. Why wouldn't she let go?

“Why aren’t you?” Bryan sidestepped them but couldn’t make it into the house either. “We can come over here, instead, if you’d rather.”

“No.” The sharpness of the tone cut both of them. The look was apparent on their faces. “No.”

“Why aren’t you coming over? Or letting us in here?” Niki shoved her full hip against the door.

“Look, you had your fun. Now it’s over.” Richard took another swig from his bottle. “Easier that way.” On all of them. He’d been a fool to ever think they could take away...anything.

“Oh, no.” Niki grabbed the bottle from his hand.

He was so stunned at her action, he let go before thinking it through.

She put a hand on his chest and pushed him back, strolling through his door.

Bryan followed.

“Get out of my house.”

“No.” Niki whirled around to face him, clutching the bottle in her hands. “Not until you tell us what’s going on.”

“I told you.” Richard slammed the door so that the rafters shook on the house. They were inside. Inside his domain. His chest constricted. Inside him. “The game’s over.”

“There never was a game, Richard. You knew that. We wanted you.” Niki still held the whisky, but kept it out of his reach, where he couldn’t grab it back. “Both of us.”

“And you got me. You fucked me, okay?” Richard saw her wince. “Like you said you wanted. And that’s that.” That was all it could ever be with him. He didn’t want to hurt them. If they tried to stay with them, he would.

Bryan’s eyes scanned Richard’s. “No, it’s not over. That’s not all we wanted, not by a long shot.” He moved forward, only to cock his head and look at something on the floor. “And you knew that, too, no matter what you try to tell yourself.”



Richard had known. Deep down. It had been easier to let himself do what he'd wanted with them, while repeating those words to himself to keep an illusion of distance. The things they'd done were things he wanted to do, so he'd told himself half-truths so he could do them. No more. He wouldn't go down that road again, not now, when others could get hurt. "It's over." His voice grew lower and bitterer. "It was never supposed to be."

Niki padded over to touch him. To put her hand on his arm. She still carried his bottle of whisky.

He pulled back from her. No one needed to touch him now. He didn't want this. Her. Bryan.

*What do you want? To be alone with your bottle?*

He rubbed his head. *No. Yes.* He only knew what he couldn't have. Happiness. That wasn't something he deserved.

"What's changed?" Bryan moved forward, but Richard didn't see what he did. "Something changed from this morning to now."

Richard had been reminded of who he was. Of his sins. He didn't answer the posed question. "Just go."

"No." Niki looked him full in the face with an uplift to her chin. "After last night, we deserve more from you."

"It was just fucking."

Bryan shook his head. "It wasn't. It was more, and you know that." He held something in his hand. Something contained within a fist.

*Fuck.* The letter. Richard had forgotten about dropping it on the floor where they could find it. He'd been more focused on getting them out of his life. "Give me that." He moved to take the paper. Didn't want them to see the words.

Bryan opened his hand but didn't move to hand over the balled up letter. "Is this what made you change? A letter. Who's it from?"

“Nobody.”

“Richard...”

“Rich...” They spoke at the same time. A look passed between them.

Richard saw it, and it was almost more than he could take. Their love, their loving, reminding him of everything he didn’t have. Couldn’t have. Everything that he’d shut himself off from. “Just go.” His voice cracked.

“No.” Bryan curled his fingers up again around the wad of paper. “Talk to us. Tell us what happened. What’s in here.”

“It doesn’t matter.” It didn’t. It wouldn’t change anything any more than wanting to be with them changed anything.

“Please. Tell us.” Niki moved even closer. Her body almost touched his, but she kept the slight distance between them. She knew he’d balk if she touched him.

“You two really want to know?”

“Yeah. We do.” Bryan settled back on his heels, the letter still contained in a palm.

“I killed someone. And I left a man to a fate worse than death.” Now they’d have no choice but to walk away.

\* \* \* \* \*

Niki had never heard such pain and anguish in a voice before. Never seen such turmoil on a face. And she’d gone through things with Jenner and his family, so that was saying something. “What happened?” She would have pulled Richard to sit, but didn’t know if that would break the moment. She couldn’t chance that. He had to open up to them, so they would have a chance at something more.

Richard’s voice grew even more gravelly with emotion. “I...was married before. A woman who accepted all of me. We...well, we took other lovers sometimes. She died while I was in Afghanistan.” He swallowed. “She had an accident. In the snow.”

No one spoke for several long seconds.

Niki chose her words carefully. "You didn't kill her."

Richard laughed, but it wasn't a happy sound. "I should've been home for her. Ann didn't know how to drive in snowy weather. I'd reenlisted. I'd already done my time in the Army. If I'd been here..."

Guilt had been eating Richard Rollins alive for so many years. "You can't know what could have happened if you'd been here."

Bryan nodded. "That wasn't your fault."

Richard's eyes denied their words. Convincing him wouldn't be easy. He'd taken all his grief from what had happened and formed it into blame.

He held himself responsible. For not being there.

"There's more."

Niki nodded for him to go on, and took his hand. She held her breath. Would he let her hold him? He let his hand remain in hers. That was a start. A sign that maybe he didn't want to leave them completely.

"In Iraq, near Baghdad, our unit fell under heavy fire. Some of it was artillery. There was a grenade. One of the younger soldiers was close when it went off. He was...burning. I put him out. He'd lost his legs. I...pulled him out. He begged me to die, and I pulled him out." His eyes grew hazy with the memory. What did he see? Fire? Brimstone? What did he hear? Choppers? Screams? "He wishes I'd let him die."

Richard tortured himself for not being there to save his family, and for saving a man who didn't want life. He'd thrown himself into serving in the Army after his wife died, then his rescue had taken away that safe haven. It had given him the physical scars he bore, and some hefty emotional ones.

Her heart wrung out for the veteran standing in front of her, holding her hand like it was a lifeline. No wonder he'd been so stoic and so pent up since he'd come back from the

war. He hadn't been allowing himself to live. And with them, he'd started to. Now he wanted to back away.

She wasn't going to let him.

"The man lived."

"He was little more than a boy." He squeezed her hand. "But yes, he lives. He...doesn't want to. I consigned him to that fate."

"Is this from him?" Bryan held out the balled up letter he'd found on the floor. "Is this from the man you saved?"

Niki squeezed Richard's hand back, determined to give him the support he needed. She wouldn't turn her back on him, though he expected her to walk away.

"His mother."

"May I read it?" Bryan began to unfurl the edges.

"Go ahead." The vibrancy was gone from Richard's voice. Such a dead flat tone.

She wanted to put life back in his voice. Time. It would take time. But she wouldn't give up or move away from him. Not now or ever.

While Bryan read, Niki asked, "How badly was he injured beyond his legs?" He'd told them, but how much of him had been hurt? That would impact his recovery.

"Lots of burns. He lost both legs. He'll never be the same."

Bryan handed the letter over to Niki. "You'd better read this."

Richard's chest sucked in on a breath.

Niki took it in one hand, but Richard dropped her other. Dropped their link. She saw from his face he expected her to pull away from him after reading of this thing he'd done. So, he'd pulled back first.

After a moment, she read aloud from the end of the letter. "...Paul is doing so much better than he was. He's coming through physical therapy and learning to walk again, slowly.

The pain has been great. The skin grafts have been successful, and the burns on his chest are barely noticeable. He's been talking to a woman who was at the hospital. I think they're dating, though they say they're just friends. I know Paul still blames you for saving him. But, Mr. Rollins, I don't. You gave him a second chance at life. In time, Paul will come to see that. He'll see that you were his angel. Saving him, even through the fires of hell. I'll write again soon. Tamara Jones."

Niki waved the letter around. "Did you read this? Really and truly read this?" He hadn't. He'd seen what he wanted to see. What would feed into his blame.

Richard frowned. "Of course, I did."

"You read the words, but you don't see the picture they make." She wanted to hit him over the head with the words so they'd sink in.

"I do." Richard snapped the words like he would his fingers. "He still blames me. He's in pain. Can't walk. Still burned. And I did that to him. If I'd left him to die..."

"His mother would be without a son."

"But he'd..."

"Be dead." Bryan stalked over to both of them with long strides. "He'd be dead, Rich. And he wouldn't be doing *anything*. With his mother. With anyone. He wouldn't be learning to walk again. Wouldn't be talking to that woman. His mother said, 'You gave him a second chance at life.'"

"Sometimes dead is better."

"You do not say that." Niki drew back from Richard. Her hands clenched tightly by her sides. "Unless you aren't living, in a coma or comatose, it sure the hell isn't. This boy is living. He's learning to walk again and getting his wounds taken care of. Do you know how special that is? So many die, and yet he lived. Because of you."

Richard's head ducked down low. But not before she saw something spark in his eyes. Hope.

That warmed her more than anything else, and filled her with emotion, too. Despite his strong words, he didn't want them to walk away. The time had come to put everything out on the table. He wasn't the only one with scars from his past.

"We had a...a lover. A man named Jenner." Her voice lowered to a hushed whisper. "He was mugged. Stabbed. For a stupid wallet that had about five dollars. People stepped over him, Richard. As he lay dying. No one would help him." How many times had she thought of that? Cursed the people who would not help her lover? Too many to count. That was why they'd had to leave the city where they'd lived. Had come to the country to see if things were different there. And they'd found Richard. What a wonderful thing.

Bryan cleared his throat with a cough. "He didn't have to die. If someone had helped him, like you did the soldier, he wouldn't have bled out. We wouldn't have lost him that day, if someone like you had come along."

"I'm sorry for your loss." Richard looked weary. Tired lines etched across that beautiful face. "I know that's little comfort."

Niki ached to smooth the skin on his face out. "No matter how damaged Jenner would've been, we would have wanted him to live. If your wife had been injured in the crash, wouldn't you have wanted someone to help her? Even if the injury was as severe as Paul's? Or would have you have wanted her to die, too?"

"Of course I would've wanted her to live." He looked shocked she would have even suggested such a thing.

"Exactly. And she would've eventually been glad to live because of you in her life. Just like Paul will eventually find his will to live again, too. And then, he'll thank you for saving him." She grabbed his hand for the second time and wouldn't let him resist or pull back. "You see, you're blaming yourself for two people's lives, when you aren't guilty, Richard. You aren't guilty of anything."

He opened his mouth.

She pressed her fingers on his lips to shush him. "You aren't. But the real question remains."

His lips moved to ask, disengaging her fingers, "What is that?"

"Do you want to live? What you've been doing isn't living. You may have saved Paul, but he has more of a life than you do." Bryan's hands clenched into fists, as though he were ready to fight. Did Bryan think they'd lost Richard? No, they couldn't. Not when they'd been so close to having him in their lives.

Angry eyes stared out of Richard's stony face.

"Are you going to let what happened in those desert sands kill you? Let what happened to your wife deny you any further happiness? Let your past take away what you could have with us? If so, you should have died over there. In place of Paul."

\* \* \* \* \*

Richard looked into the faces of the two people he'd only just met. Two sets of eyes stared back at him. One was a calm woodsy brown. The other a spitting green, much like a cat. He'd never realize how catlike Niki's eyes were until that moment. So much to learn about them. It could take years.

If he'd let down his guard.

Somehow, it seemed as if they'd known each other longer than they had. Parts of him felt as if he'd known Bryan and Niki his whole life. And that wasn't something you found every day.

Richard rolled his shoulders, which somehow seemed almost lighter for the weight that had been sliced from them. He'd never told that story to anyone else. He hadn't wanted to see anyone's reaction to the things that had happened. He'd kept them inside, dealing with them himself.

Could he do what they said he should? Go on with his own life? Not act as if he'd been the one to die instead of his wife? Or in place of Paul? Was it fair?

Life wasn't fair.

That was the God's honest truth. And his mother's and Ann's favorite saying. Had life been fair, there never would have been an Afghanistan or Iraqi war.

Parts of him would always feel responsible for his wife's death and Paul's life. No matter what anyone else said. Nothing could erase the pain of those two events, so melded together into his psyche. But they could be eased, over time. If he'd let them be. Was he ready? To let them be eased? To move on?

Did he have to give up his own life to deal with his guilt? To atone for things that Niki and Bryan said he didn't have to answer for?

Could he have saved Ann if he'd been home instead of serving his country? She'd been the one who encouraged him to stay in a career he enjoyed. The Army had suited him. Could he have willingly left Paul to die? Walked away from a soldier who was still alive? The events had dictated he'd never know the full answers to those questions.

Some things needed to be clarified with Niki and Bryan before he went further.

"What do you want from me?" Richard blew out a deep breath. That would determine their next steps. "We've only just met, and I can never replace your lover." The hell they'd gone through in the loss would always be with them. He could see the anguish in both their eyes. Jenner would be remembered, but not replaced. No one could take the place of another human. Just as they could never replace Ann and what she'd been to him. For him.

"We both know that. All we are asking for is for you to give us a chance. You might decide you don't like being in a threesome relationship. It's not for everyone. Or being with you isn't what we think it will be." Niki's face scrunched before it relaxed. "And that's fine. But give things the chance to see where this goes."



Bryan nodded. "That's all we are asking. A chance. We may all decide it's not what we want. We're not the easiest married couple on the planet to get along with." He smirked with self-targeted humor. "Believe it or not."

Both so sincere. No game was being played with his emotions. Not that they wouldn't still have their issues, or he'd have his problems with life, but a little bit of the tenseness faded from Richard's posture. Maybe he could have a future.

He'd been so decrepit inside for so long. By telling them everything, he'd bored himself out to the core. Hallowed out what used to be kept within. What would he fill this empty space with?

Them.

"We'll see where this goes." He spoke quietly. Matter-of-factly. No one was spouting any words of undying love. He wouldn't have believed them if they had. Would have stopped things if they had spoken one word of undying affection. It was too soon to know what feelings would last. The honesty was refreshing. None of them knew what would happen next. But they could find out -- together.

Niki jumped into his arms with a flying leap.

Despite his surprise, he managed to catch her, while her arms wrapped around him, and he stayed upright only by some miracle.

She wrapped her legs around his back. "I knew you'd say yes." She smothered him in many, varied kisses all over his lips and cheeks. "And I am a darling to get along with. Don't listen to him. Ever. He lies."

Bryan snorted from somewhere behind them. "Just wait until she kicks you during the night and steals your covers. And uses all the hot water. And stays in the bathroom for two hours, only to ask, 'How do I look?'"

Richard couldn't wait. Couldn't wait to experience everything.

To the fullest.

“Why don’t we move this party over to your house?” He started for the door, carrying Niki. She beamed up at him with a happy smile.

“How come?” Bryan followed behind him even as he asked the question.

“Cause you got the lube.”

“Good point.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“Are you okay with this?” Niki moved to Bryan’s side. Rich had stepped in the bathroom for a moment.

“You know I am.” Bryan patted her hand to reassure her. They hadn’t had a chance to talk about what would happen before they’d gone over to Rich’s. He was sure. His attraction to Rich had deepened over the brief time they’d spent together. Who knew what it might become if left to its own devices? And now Rich would leave the desire between them to marinate. Life had taken quite an upturn.

She smiled that breathtaking expression that always made his heart stop. She was his woman, and that smile was his token from her goodness. She broke out into a laugh. “I love it when you look all starry-eyed at me.”

“Did not.” After his denial, he grabbed her for a deep kiss that did have him seeing stars.

A body came up behind his and pressed into him. A hard body. A body without clothes. A hard cock brushed up against his ass.

Rich’s voice rumbled. “Private party or can anyone join?”

“You can.” Bryan wiggled himself against Rich’s cock. Enjoyed the groan released from deep within. Bryan loved the pleasure sounds that the man made. He was so quiet, those involuntary sounds said so much about the loss of his control. “And only you.”

“Good answer.”

Niki's lips delved into Bryan's even as Rich pushed against him even closer once more. Contained and being kissed between his lovers, Bryan gave himself over to the fires banking within him.

Be better if he were naked.

Before he could act, Niki removed her lips from his and began kissing Rich, though it involved some twisting around to accommodate heights.

Rich showed his happiness by wiggling against Bryan again.

Bryan enjoyed the feel of being between his lovers, and the contact of their bodies.

They broke off the kiss, both breathing heavier than they had been when they'd started. Bryan's own heart rate had shot off the graph.

"What a sandwich."

"Be better if you were naked."

That it would be.

It took Bryan a moment to realize that the words hadn't been in his head. Both phrases had been spoken aloud. By both Niki and Rich. His own thoughts brought to life by his lovers.

He blinked, tilting his head so he could see Rich's profile, before shifting his head back to look Niki in the face. "Aren't you two in sync?" Nice to have everyone operating at the same level. Damn, he was glad that Rich hadn't backed away from them.

"And you're right with us." Niki slipped out of Bryan's arms to lift the bottom of his T-shirt up and pull it over his head.

"Damn right." Rich growled, before reaching his arms around Bryan to unsnap the front of his jeans.

Bryan let them undress him. The air was cool as his pants came down around his ankles. He kicked them off, almost falling in the attempt.

Niki giggled at him. She still had his shirt in her hands and twirled it around like a fan. Her eyes looked so mischievous, like a kitten's.

He arched a brow at her. "Rich?"

"Yeah?"

"You and I are both naked now, right?"

"Yep."

"Niki's not."

"So I see."

Bryan leered at her, making everything he wanted to do to her shine in his face. "I say we fix that. Ourselves."

She tossed down Bryan's shirt to the floor with a flip of her wrist. "Like I'd object to that."

Bryan leaned in to give her a kiss while Rich moved away from his back.

Rich rejoined them at her back. He pulled up on her blouse while Bryan worked on getting the snaps undone to her jeans. Together, they'd get this project done. Bryan had to smile. He'd like working with Rich on all future projects.

Bryan pulled her jeans down, and went down with them to lift each foot while taking off the pants. The silver chain around her ankle gleamed as he fingered the delicate metal.

A glorious sight greeted him when he looked back up.

Her shirt was gone. Her bra had been discarded. Her breasts hung free and heavy. Beautiful.

Not to mention that he could see her golden hair on that most private of her parts. Exposed. For his eyes.

Rich's tanned hands stroked her, covering both of her breasts, while her head lolled back into his chest. The golden, shimmery locks stood out against his dark skin.

His fingers pinched a nipple between them.

Her face relaxed, as her body trembled.

Seeing her nipple between Rich's fingers filled Bryan. He hadn't been sure they'd come to this point again, and now here they were. He planted a wet kiss on her rounded stomach and led the charge. "To the bed." He pushed back up to standing.

Niki moaned. "I don't know." Her voice gasped as Rich tweaked her other nipple. "I'm comfortable right here."

"Oh?" He moved his body in close to her. Let his skin come within millimeters of hers. Kissed her with an abandon that took his own breath away. Pulling away, he asked, "You think we can take her standing?"

Rich's cocky grin was priceless. "I dunno if she can stand that long."

She lifted her arm to smack at Bryan. "Fine, let's go to bed."

They moved to the bed in a mass of limbs and mouths. No one would let go of the other so they could walk carefully.

Bryan wasn't about to release his woman, and she didn't want to let go of him. Or Rich. And Bryan did his best to keep his body in contact with Rich's.

His shin smashed on the nightstand. "Yeow." He did release her then to rub the pained part of him.

To his surprise, Niki dropped to all fours to plant a kiss on the bruise. "Poor baby." She caressed his calf and pressed more kisses up to his knee.

Her care warmed him, making heat pool in his stomach. "I'll live."

He grabbed the drawer handle and reached into their stash, pulling out lube and condoms. Both had been bought in anticipation of finding someone else, but they had doubted they'd ever be used. When it was just he and Niki, they didn't use that sort of protection. Maybe Rich would be in their lives long enough to stop. Bryan shivered.

“Good.” She straightened up. Taking the condom packet, she sheathed Bryan and then Rich. “God, I want you both.”

“You’re about to have us.” Rich moved onto the bed, inviting her to slide in with him. He tossed the bedspread and sheets to the floor.

The rightness of it all shook Bryan. Nothing had ever felt like this. Not since they’d found Jenner. Jenner would have liked Rich. They’d have gotten along. And somehow, that seemed right, too.

Niki climbed aboard Rich, like mounting her steed for the night.

Rich laughed, the deep baritone echoing in the room. A hint of sadness still marred that face, but it was better than when they’d first met. Not quite as prevalent as it had been. Together, they’d worked everything out. He gave them so much, and they’d give back to him -- ease all his worries and grief.

Bryan watched them start a rhythm, Rich’s cock disappearing from sight completely under her.

Niki moaned deep and throatily, letting Bryan know where the cock had gone, while Rich’s voice went to a growl. “You’re so tight.”

Bryan joined them, coming up on top of Niki.

Her ass cheeks tensed in reaction to his position.

He smacked her gently, not even leaving a red mark. “No tensing.”

She yelped before fussing. “Don’t do that.”

Opening the lube, he greased his cock up with it. Mounting someone who’d already gotten on top of someone wasn’t easy. But he’d done it before. He slipped carefully on top of her, keeping his weight centered so that it spread out. The trick was to get inside of her and not break their stride.

He entered her with a finger first, pressing and rolling around. Just a little stretching, Niki didn’t need much.

His heart pounded with excitement. Nothing beat sex with the woman you loved. And the man.

He blinked as he stopped all movement.

Did he love Rich?

Only time would tell, they hadn't known each other long, but the signs were there. They all pointed to deepening feelings. His eyes closed. *Let what will be, be.*

He removed his finger.

With a surge forward, opening his eyes, he entered Niki on a grunt. Taking his time, slowly running in and out of her, he matched them stroke for stroke.

Niki's back moved back against him. Her orgasm gripped her tightly. "Oh, Richard. Bryan."

Rich began to move in earnest then, spurred on by his name falling from her lips. How did Bryan know that? Because it affected him the same way. It was a race to see who could set the pace, who could take over. And they all won -- a definite tie to the finish line.

Later, as they all lay sated and snuggled into each other, Bryan put one hand on his wife's hip, and with the other he stroked Rich's hair.

They'd had nothing to lose by going after Rich Rollins. And yet, they'd gained the whole world.

## Epilogue

Richard buttoned the last of the buttons on his shirt. He turned to see Niki and Bryan dressing. Despite the fact they'd had a busy afternoon in the hotel room, his cock hardened. Had it not been his high school buddies he was going to see, he'd have ditched the event and spent the rest of the night in his room having even more fun. But who knew when they'd get together again? No, he couldn't miss this. He'd have the rest of his life with Niki and Bryan.

Niki smoothed down her black dress. It showed off her legs. They stretched out in perfect curved paleness, accentuated by the silver chain gleaming at her ankle.

They'd wrapped around him earlier, as she'd hung onto him while he pounded her into climax, and Bryan had taken him. The hair on his skin raised in arousal.

Maybe they had time for a quickie. He checked the clock. No, things were never that quick with the three of them. Even after an afternoon of loving.

"Maybe tomorrow we'll make it out of the Ritz Carlton." Niki's mouth turned up in a generous tease. They'd flown in earlier today. "See some of Chicago."

Bryan laughed. "I don't know. It is a nice hotel room."



That it was. Though Richard missed the hominess of the house he shared with them. He'd moved into their house. It had a hot tub. But, they'd kept his old house. No sense having neighbors move in and destroy their peace and quiet.

"But it's Chicago. We do have to see some sights." The way Niki's eyes sparkled moved Richard in ways he couldn't even name.

"We have a few days, and tonight is the only thing scheduled." He'd find the time to get them out of the room. Whatever Niki wanted, she would get. She did from both of them. Neither he nor Bryan could resist making her happy.

"Are you sure you don't want to go alone? These are your friends." Niki slipped on some high-heeled shoes. The spike at the bottom looked wicked enough to kill a man.

"I'm sure." He'd been alone too long, and never wanted to be that way again. Plus, he wanted them to meet the old gang.

Would it shock his buddies that he'd wound up being with a woman and a man? And what surprises did they have in store for him? They'd all been apart a long time. Things were sure to have changed from dicking around in high school and fucking cheerleaders. Letters only told so much.

Hard to believe they'd all enlisted in various branches of service. And been in wars that had taken and given so much to them all.

Bryan attached a pair of cufflinks to his shirt. "If you want us to skedaddle at any point, say the word. I know you want to get caught up with them."

Left unsaid was the unusual relationship they had, and how others would react. Bryan never had any illusions, despite his easygoing nature. "I won't." He'd enjoy introducing Bryan and Niki to his old friends.

Richard offered Niki his arm with a gallant bow. "Shall we go up?"

She nodded, taking his arm in hers and offering her other arm to Bryan.

Bryan took hold of her arm, a grin gracing his face.

How right this was, the three of them together. Little in Richard's life had ever felt more settled than things with the golden couple. He'd had nothing to lose by trying life with them, and they'd made his life golden.

They left their hotel room and traipsed the short trip to the elevator, dropping arms as they reached their destination. The elegant carpets and tapestries only engaged Richard's peripheral notice. The couple with him had his full attention.

The scent of Niki's light perfume filled his nostrils. Something flowery. He preferred her own musky scent.

Richard pushed the up arrow, and they waited in silence for the doors to open.

The elevator arrived and took them up to the 12th floor to the Trianon Bar.

He put his hand on the handle, and pushed open the door. His eyes searched the lounge for familiar faces.

He spotted Baldwin first, standing at the bar. He had to smile at catching sight of his friend.

Baldwin's reddish hair glinted in the lights. He had his arm wrapped around a woman. A tall African American woman with straight, dark hair that curled around her ears.

Baldwin had found someone.

Standing right beside him was Adam, a woman's hand on his arm. Long, dark brown hair traveled down a center braid to her waist. Her figure was curvy, and not at all like the tall stick-thin waifs that Adam had preferred in high school. Guess things really did change. Adam looked much the same, only his blond hair was close-cropped military style.

The only one missing was Mike. Just how would he look? Had he found someone? He'd sounded happy when Richard had spoken to him about the get-together.

Richard plowed ahead, walking to where his friends stood, Bryan and Niki in tow behind him. The time had come for introductions. His past would meet his future.

 THE END 

## Mechele Armstrong

Have you ever wondered, "What if crayons have a kingdom?" Mechele Armstrong did at age five. Now, turning the imagination of a wide-eyed child into intense spellbinding stories for adults, she is winning over new fans every day.

Writing stories and poetry as a hobby, she graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with a degree in Religious Studies and Social Welfare. Although there were challenges with work and family, the need to write and be published, to share her passion for books was always there.

During a rainy weekend at the beach reading several romance novels she fell in love, not with the hero, but with the genre again. So began a two-year adventure of doing what she loved most, creating worlds with strong heroines and enchanting heroes that will keep you turning pages until the end.

Using the Internet and the local Romance Writer's Association, she learned and refined her craft. Living in Virginia with a husband, kids, dog, and fish, she finds time to share her vivid imagination and ability to tell stories of adventure, love, lust, and everything in between.

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