



Nice and Naughty
A Red Garters, Snow and Mistletoe Tale

By
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Chapter One

“Dinner?”

Cassandra Franklin glanced at her computer screen then back to her work. Not tonight. No time. She stared down at the grant proposal she was editing. It was due next week in D.C. and there was something not quite right about the *purpose of need* section.

Dammit.

She had to get this right. Her department depended on the funding this grant would provide. This cycle the competition was stiff and it made her extremely nervous. As the new head of the English department at Compton University, she was responsible. And vulnerable. This was her year to prove herself.

She'd be damned if she'd let anything get in her way.

The white instant messenger box popped up on her screen again.

“I know you are there. Working late. You need a life, sweetheart.”

Except, maybe, that.

Ignore him. He had no clue whether she was at work or not. Besides, he wasn't even a real person. He was just a name behind a little white box.

She clicked the X to make the messenger go away. Instead of looking back to her proposal, however, she stared out the window. Icy flakes of snow pelted the glass. Perhaps they would have a white Christmas, after all. Unusual for this southern college town. The night behind them was black as pitch. She was here way too late but what could she do?

Bing. This time the box came with sound. She jerked back.

“C'mon, professor. Get a life. Come out to play.”

Shit. She didn't even really know the man and he knew her better than most of her friends. She did need a life.

“It's Christmas,” he added. “Have some fun. Be festive. Ho-ho-ho.”

Bah humbug.

Sighing, Cassie maximized the box on the screen, then placed her hands on the keyboard and clicked beside her screen name, SexyProf. "I'm not at work." She typed the lie and hit send.

Pause.

A second later the space at the bottom of the box read: kittylicker is typing.

Kittylicker. What a screen name. She waited for his response.

"Sure you are. Your office light is on."

Something panged inside her. He knew where her office was? She sat up straighter and typed furiously. "You're a liar."

"LOL," he replied. "Touché."

Cassie sighed and relaxed, sitting back in her chair. Last thing she needed was for kittylicker to actually know who she was.

"Let me take you to dinner."

She shook her head. They had been down this road before. "No. We've already discussed this. No face-to-face."

"☹" Then he started typing again. "Tell me what you want."

"What are you talking about?"

"You know. Tell me."

"I don't want anything."

"Now you are a liar."

Cassie huffed out a breath.

"I know what you like, sexyprof."

Again, she heaved a sigh. She'd been working all day on this proposal and was bone weary. Last thing she needed was to stare at this computer screen any longer. But this was different, wasn't it?

"Shit," she said softly. "I'm so addicted..."

Rising, she stepped to her office door and locked it, extinguished the overhead light, then went to the window and adjusted the blinds so they were fully closed. Only the desk lamp and the computer screen lit the room now.

Bing!

Bing!

"Hold on. Sheesh..."

“Say it,” he urged. She could almost feel the whoosh of his words against her cheek, like he was whispering in her ear.

Her fingers paused over the keyboard. “You say it. Tell me what I like.”

“No.”

Fuck. He was going to make her do this. “Lick my pussy.”

“Is that what you want?”

“That’s what I said.”

“No you didn’t. Say it again. Tell me.”

Her breathing came in shorter pants. “I want you to lick my pussy,” she typed, and then added, “please.”

He did not type back. “Don’t make me wait, you bastard,” she hissed. Then the words came.

“Your panties off?”

“Hold on.” Cassie stood and hiked her slim suit skirt up and slipped her bikini panties and hose to her ankles, then kicked them off under her desk. “Yes,” she typed.

“Put your legs up on the desk. Spread them.”

Cassie shoved stacks of research manuals and journals aside, one long leg on each side her keyboard. Her skirt was hiked to her waist now, her bare bottom against the slick oak desk chair, which she had now tipped back comfortably.

“You touching yourself?”

She was. Almost.

Reaching into her desk drawer, she pulled out a small bottle of lube and squirted some on her clit. Shit, that was cold.

“Yes,” she typed. “Eat my pussy please.” She wasn’t going to be able to type much now...

“My tongue is flicking your clit.”

Cassie worked her nimble fingers over her swollen nub while she read what he was typing.

“Sweet, baby you taste good.”

“Lick harder,” she said out loud.

Her fingers slipped in and out of her wet hole. “Oh, damn,” she breathed. Her butt scooted closer to the edge of the chair.

“I’m putting my tongue in. Deep. Lapping up your juice.”

Cassie pinched her clit and then reached inside her shirt to squeeze a nipple.

“So fucking wet.”

“yeah...” She typed with one hand. Tension built inside her.

“Baby, I love to eat you. Come for me babe...”

“Yes,” she said cried out. She was close. Oh, so close. Her eyes were closed now, her head lolled to the side. “Yes, baby... eat me.” This was not going to take long.

Warmth and sensation built under her fingertips, and from somewhere in the background she heard a series of *bings* but she didn’t need to know what he was saying. Didn’t care. The fantasy was all in her head at this point. His tongue inside her, his teeth gnawing at her pussy. His chin raking against her asshole...

Oh, shit!

Cassie convulsed with pleasurable extortion, her hand working wildly over her clit and lips, her head falling back, and then slowing, massaging until she returned to the world of the living.

Bing!

Bing!

“You coming on my tongue?”

“Yes, baby. I came all over your face.”

“Ah sweeeeeeeeet. I love that.”

She exhaled again. “Yeah,” she typed and then closed the messenger box.

* * * *

The black dress would have to do; there was no time for shopping. Cassie turned to the left, then right, and looked over her shoulder to study her backside. The ten pounds she’d lost since taking on the new position at the college actually looked good on her. The dress fit better than it had in years. Secretly, she was thankful that the ten pounds were gone, even though it wasn’t an intentional effort.

Stress could do strange things to a body.

But tonight, she'd relax. She had no choice. The annual President's Christmas party was a mandatory event. So, she'd go, make some social time and earn points.

Sometimes she wondered why she even bothered. Was it that important to her to suck up to the good old boys?

Didn't matter. She'd have some wine. Some cheese. A conversation or two with her cronies. Some major ass-kissing to Mrs. Cummings, the president's wife, by acknowledging the gawd-awful bacon-oyster hors d'oeuvres she served every year.

And then home to work on the proposal.

She fingered a pair of pearl earrings in her jewelry box. "These will go nicely. The necklace, too." After donning the pearls, she slipped into a pair of berry-red *come-fuck-me* pumps, then grabbed a red pashmina shawl and tossed it over her shoulders. A car horn honked outside. She moved to the front door and grasped her black bag off the entry table. After locking up, she left her condo for what she hoped was a quick appearance and a hasty escape.

Terrible waste of a sexy dress and *fuck-me* heels, but what the hell, she had work to do. Tonight was all business. Her reputation as a new department head was at stake.

Especially since she was the first *female* head of the English department—ever.

Her thoughts drifted as the cabbie drove the few miles to the president's home. For the first time in her thirty-some odd years of living, she was relieved there was no man in her life. She had no time for a regular relationship. Too much work. Men screwed with her head, anyway. Life was easier this way.

Besides, she had kittylicker whenever she needed him.

Hm. Perhaps she'd have to explore similar options. Kittylicker was fine, but why stop at one secret lover? She could have all she wanted, couldn't she? As long as it didn't interfere with her everyday life, there was no problem.

Ah, but that was the kicker. Secret anonymous lovers could be consuming. She'd simply have to be in control. Even though she didn't need a regular man in her life, that didn't mean she intended to give up sex. This cyber-sex thing was safe and anonymous. In a pinch, it worked for her.

The spontaneity of it fit her, too.

The cab came to a halt, drawing her attention to her task at hand. Smiling and satisfied, she glanced at the stately downtown home before her. All lit up for the holidays, it looked too festive for her mood.

Oh well, she'd get through it.

She paid the man and gave him a hefty tip. "You have a card?" she asked. "I may want to leave this joint early and quick. You work in the area?"

"Yes ma'am." He handed her his business card. She smiled and left.

After an hour of chit-chat and obligatory scholarly banter, Cassie stifled a yawn with the back of her hand and moved toward an open doorway. The room beyond was dark, and she assumed, off-limits. She stopped short of entering, and decided to prop herself against the doorframe for a second or two while she surveyed the lay of the land. It seemed as good a place as any to plan her covert get-away.

She sipped at her Pinot Noir and eyed the crowd. She'd managed to avoid the hostess quite nicely after the initial hello, a fact that she was thankful for. The crowd before her spanned several decades of scholarly intellect that for some reason, she was oddly indifferent to.

Did she really belong here? Perhaps in her desire to move to the head of the pack, she had ignored her unexpected disappointment when she'd finally secured her place at the top of this particular food chain.

"Is this really me?" she whispered.

"Well, if not you, then who?"

Chapter Two

Cassie turned, the hairs on the back of neck standing alert, and jumped at the pressure of a hand resting on her shoulder. She started to squeal until that hand clamped over her mouth and a strong arm grasped her about the waist, dragging her into the room.

She was crowded up against a wall in the dark room, the door fully closed now behind her. Some sort of odd rendition of *Santa Claus is Coming to Town* sounded from far away. A streetlight outside provided enough light to see the profile of her assailant, who was close. Very close.

“Wh—wh—what are you doing?” she finally huffed out.

“Saving you from a night of boredom.”

The voice.

Familiar.

“Who...?”

“Oh, come now, Cassie. You don’t recognize me?”

She relaxed. “Eric?”

“One in the same, sweetheart.”

She pushed at his chest and he backed away. “What the hell do you think you’re doing scaring me like that?” Eric was in her department. English Lit 101, 202, Genre Writing, and Shakespeare. Yeah, weird combination, but he was good at what he did. Essentially, she was his superior.

But that hadn’t stopped the heated eye contact between them recently, the lingering touches and the occasional opportunities to crowd up against each other.

“Like I said. Saving your ass. Mrs. Cummings was on her way.”

“Crap. Then I definitely owe you my thanks.” She collapsed onto a sofa. “What is this? Some sort of sun room?” She liked all the windows. The Christmas candles on the sill added a cozy ambiance.

He sat beside her and took the wine glass out of her hand. "Let me take that before you spill it everywhere." He set it on a nearby table.

She looked at him. "Why would I spill it?"

He didn't immediately answer, but let his gaze linger over her body. Suddenly, Cassie felt naked. "Because both our hands are going to be busy in a minute."

Cassie arched a brow. "Oh?"

He edged closer, nuzzling her neck. Damn. He smelled wonderful and that was not a good sign. "Eric..."

"Hmm?"

"Bad idea. I'm your boss."

Ignoring her, he nipped at her neck. "I feel a little wicked. Will you spank me if I'm naughty, boss?" He slipped his hand between her thighs. "You have panties on?"

"Eric..." Her resolve was slowing fading. His large hand felt rather incredible. "I'm not into relationships right now."

He nibbled at her ear. "I'm already in a relationship," he replied. "Sort of. Half in, half out... But at this moment I'm only about tonight."

His fingers moved closer to her crotch. Involuntarily, she slid forward on the sofa. He was in a relationship? Good. She didn't want him stalking her doorstep or pining after her. She couldn't handle a boyfriend right now. But sex? That was something else.

"The party," she croaked out.

"Yeah. We might get caught. Fun, huh?" His forefinger grazed her pussy. "You minx. No panties."

She should get up from here right now. "Don't like panties with the garter..."

"Umm... I like that. You want it naughty or nice?"

With those words, he slid two fingers into her vagina. His thumb found her clit and began a slow and sultry massage.

Cassie's legs spread. "Um... nice and naughty is good..."

"Oh, baby. You're so wet. I do like that."

She moaned. "Eric, if you ever breathe a word of this..."

He moved to the floor between her knees, still rotating his fingers in and out of her. "I never kiss and tell."

“Do you fuck and tell?”

He pulled out, and then pushed her dress up around her waist and grasped her hips to pull her to the edge of the sofa. “Never fuck and tell,” he said softly. “Or suck and tell, either.” He spread her legs wide and smoothed his palms over her mound, moving to her inner thighs. “Oh, baby, you smell so good.” Then he hooked each leg over his shoulders. “Is Santa ever gonna cum tonight...”

He went down on her. Cassie’s head fell back against the sofa as his velvet tongue moved over her pussy lips. He spread her further apart with his fingertips, giving him full access to her center. He tongue-fucked her, the long length rapidly moving in and out. Then he licked, like a cat lapping at milk, from her ass to her clit. Finally, he settled there, circled her swollen nub, flicked and sucked, while her fingers curled into his hair, holding him tight against her.

“Oh, God...” she breathed, heat building beneath his tongue. “Lick me. Harder.”

Laughter went up right outside the door and she jerked with an erotic response, a decadent zinging sensation that crowded her head and brain, and settled in her pelvis. She panted, her excitement building as the voice outside the door grew louder.

Eric grasped her legs and pulled her closer, holding her still against his mouth. She couldn’t move if she tried. And didn’t want to.

Would they be caught?

She convulsed with the anticipation. Eric sucked harder, driving her crazy.

Her thighs quivered.

He lapped and flicked faster.

“Ah!” She tried not to cry out, biting her lip. She jerked forward, curling toward Eric, still latched onto her body and licking ferociously. She groaned and shook, and finally, he slowed. She lay back against the sofa, her body open and exposed like a rag doll as Eric lifted his head, and then gently massaged.

“Dammit,” she whispered.

Eric chuckled and rose to his feet. Leaning over, he kissed her thoroughly. She could taste her juices on his mouth. He took her hand. “C’mon, sweetheart.”

“I can’t stand.”

“Sure you can. I’ll take care of you.”

He pulled her to her feet and straightened her dress around her hips. “Do you have everything you need?”

She nodded. She’d kept her pashmina and purse with her, aiming for that quick getaway. He led her to the door. “I’m taking you home.” Before they opened it, however, he turned to kiss her once more, then whispered in her ear. “Once is not going to be enough.”

Then hastily, he opened the door and brazenly led her through the house and into the cold night. She prayed her face was not flushed. Outside, the crisp air felt heavenly on her hot cheeks, and for some odd reason, only heightened the fact that she had just been thoroughly tongue-fucked.

And she wanted more.

Eric whistled for a cab and one quickly appeared. In no time, he ushered her into the backseat and gave the cabbie her address. Once they were on their way, he pulled her close and warmed his hand, tucking it between her thighs and cupping her pussy. She came again before they reached her condo.

* * * *

“Harder... harder!”

Cassie was on her knees as Eric pumped her from behind. Her hands were tied with silk scarves to her iron headboard as she grasped the bottom rung. He steadied her hips as he plunged into her over and over.

Goddamn. She was all-too-consuming. Too goddamn fucking good.

He reveled in the feel of her velvet insides gripping him. Her squeezing would soon drive him over the edge. His head was dizzy with her scent and the feel of her. He’d known it would be like this... that she would be like this. The headiness of it all was nearly overwhelming, and there was no doubt, she was the perfect one.

Perfect. He was sure of it.

“Eric...” she called out. “Oh God, what are you doing to me?”

What are you doing to me?

He wasn’t sure. But he damn well liked it. In no time, he would be addicted to her. Love her.

He was going to have to rein it in for a while. Give her time. Be patient. It was all part of the plan. He hoped like hell that she would eventually be open-minded and agreeable.

* * * *

“You have to leave soon,” Cassie whispered a couple of hours later. Eric’s arms were folded around her from the back. He enclosed her in a safe cocoon, and she liked it entirely too much. They’d dozed for a while.

“I know.”

“I don’t want a relationship.” Why bring that up again? Was she convincing herself, or him?

“You already said that.”

“Just so you know.”

“I do.”

They lay there in silence for a few minutes more. He was strong and sturdy, warm and secure holding her there. At the same time, he was decadent and wicked. Nice and naughty. She smiled at the contradiction, but it fit him perfectly. She felt safe with him in some insane way, and it conflicted with every other emotion ripping through her. She already loved the way he smelled.

“You’re in a relationship,” she told him, rather than asked.

“Yes.”

“I don’t want to mess that up.”

“You won’t.”

“When you leave, there will not be another time. This is it.”

Eric didn’t respond to that. Instead, he slipped out of her bed and she turned to see him reach for his clothes. “I’ll see you soon,” he told her.

He left before she had a chance to think or talk about it any more.

Perhaps it was done.

Chapter Three

“It’s Christmas Eve. Why the doom and gloom?”

Cassie swirled some hazelnut cream into her coffee. Mesmerized by the buttery spirals, she waited a moment before looking up. “I have a long face?”

Her friend Rebecca sat across from her in the coffee shop. “Uh, yeah. What’s up?”

“Nothing.”

Becca drummed her fingers on the table. “Sure. I believe that.”

Cassie took a sip of her hot caffeine. “If I could inject this, it might work faster.” She looked again at her friend. She and Becca were in the same cohort in their doctoral program, and they’d been friends for years. Difference was, Becca had chosen to get married and have babies, and was happy as a clam. Cassie, on the other hand, had decided to set the world on fire with her brilliant intellect in academia. Unfortunately, that meant there was little time for an actual life.

Or to write the novel that had been brewing in her head for the past decade or so.

Popular fiction. Ha!

She knew that Eric had fought to get the genre fiction course in the school catalog a few years before she came to the college. She had to admire him for that. But in the eyes of the university, a woman of her caliber could not actually write and publish a genre book. At least not until her tenure was good and set, and even then, she’d use a pen name and deny any sort of connection.

But that was a thought for another day.

Eric. Odd that he popped into her head. She’d been avoiding him like the plague.

“I’ve been busy, Becca. I put the grant proposal in the mail early this morning. Thank God. I’ve not slept through the night in weeks.”

Becca reached out and took her hand. “It will be fine.”

She laughed. “The pressure is enormous. I guess I didn’t realize it would be like this.”

Frowning, Becca stared at her. “Maybe you need to get laid.”

Again, she laughed out loud, and then realized other people had looked her way. “Oh, I’m fine in that department. Don’t worry.”

Becca smiled. “I know you Cassie Franklin. If you don’t get fucked regularly, you get all twitchy.”

“Oh, come on, Becca! Why would you say such a thing?”

“Because since you’ve moved here, you’ve been without a man.”

“I’m not twitchy!”

“You are.”

“Really. I don’t need a man. I can take care of myself.

“Sure, Cassie.

“And I’m perfectly fine *without* a man. I have no time for a boyfriend. I’ve told you that. Besides, I get what I need when I need it.”

“No, Cassie. I don’t mean fingering yourself while you’re hiding behind a computer screen. Get laid. Fucked. Good and hard.”

She smiled. Two nights ago, that was exactly what had happened to her, and she’d sent the man packing, hadn’t she? What the hell was wrong with her? “I assure you, my sweet friend, that...”

“Cassie?”

The deep male voice broke through mid-sentence. She glanced up. “Eric?”

He smiled and her stomach did a flip-flop. “Does this mean you’ve emerged from your cave?” His eyes twinkled when he spoke. He was too goddamned good looking. She’d always loved dark brown hair and light blue eyes on a man. He was a dream, actually, and had the body to prove it. She hadn’t realized until now just how blue his eyes were, or how tall he really was. Perhaps it was because she was sitting down, but the man appeared to tower over them.

Images of his body stretched out next to hers flashed before her.

“I mailed the proposal off this morning.”

“Excellent!” He glanced at Becca. “Perhaps you’ll be able to enjoy the holidays now.”

She nodded. “Oh, do you know Rebecca Carlson?”

Eric turned his smile toward her friend but it was Becca who spoke. “Eric and Scott have been friends for years.” Scott was Becca’s husband.

“Oh,” she said. “I guess I’ve been out of the loop.”

“No, just busy.”

Suddenly, it bothered her that Eric knew Scott. Did men talk like women do? Could she confide in Becca and not worry that she would say something to Scott, who in turn would tell Eric? Would Eric tell Scott that they’d fucked like dogs in heat the other night?

Eric’s voice broke through her musing. “I have a class in twenty minutes so I need to run. Cassie, how about a drink tonight to celebrate the proposal?”

No. No drinks. No nothing. “Let’s wait until we’ve actually gotten the funding. Wouldn’t want to jinx it.”

He frowned then agreed. “Of course.” He gave them both a small salute. “Ladies.”

They watched him leave the coffee shop and sat in silence for a moment.

“Such a good looking man,” Becca mused.

“Hmm.”

“Like I said, you should get laid. Fast and furious, hard and deep. Repeatedly.”

Cassie stared at her. “What?”

She tipped her head toward the door.

“You mean, Eric?”

“Why not?”

Flustered, Cassie tipped her coffee cup up to her mouth and took a sip. “He’s in a relationship. He told me.”

Becca sighed. “Yes. You’re right. I knew that.”

Neither of them said anything else, and then Cassie stood and picked up her coffee. “I gotta run, Becca.”

Her friend nodded.

For some reason she was antsy, couldn’t sit still any longer. All this talk about fucking was making her hornier than hell.

She gave Becca a peck on the cheek, and then bid her friend goodbye.

* * * *

“You there?” she typed

Kittylicker’s name was not highlighted on her buddy list but that didn’t mean anything. Usually he was invisible, anyway.

Silence.

“Shit.”

She clicked in the box again. “I need to play. Where are you?”

She waited, but there was no typing from him. The box sat empty and silent. Cassie drummed her fingers on her desk. Maybe Becca was right. She was definitely twitchy.

“C’mon,” she typed. “I know you’re there. You’re always there.”

Still nothing.

She stood, paced her office, and lingered by the window, looking out over the campus. It was mid-day. Usually he was around. Where the fuck was he?

He was playing a game. Making her beg. Well, all right.

She raced back to her desk. Still standing, her fingers flew over the keyboard. “I want you to eat my pussy. Now. Please. I need it.”

She waited and then huffed out a breath and sat. No response.

“Shit!

“Something wrong?”

Cassie whirled. Eric stood in the doorway. She had closed the door, hadn’t she? She was sure she had.

“Uh... no.”

He stepped into the room and closed her office door. With a flip of his wrist, he locked it. With slow steps, he strode toward her.

“Eric, what are you doing?”

“Happy holidays, sweetheart. You want it naughty or nice?”

“Excuse me?”

“You want to play, correct?”

“What?” Suddenly, she was very confused.

“You want me to eat your pussy. You like that, don’t you?”

He moved closer until he stood directly in front of her. He placed his hands on her shoulders and guided her to sit in her chair. She pushed back from the desk. “Why in the world would you think...?”

He leaned over her and reached for the computer mouse and shook it. The screensaver went away to reveal her side of the conversation in the instant messenger box. He shifted his gaze to look into her eyes.

“Wh... what? You?” Crap. No. He couldn’t...

Eric dropped to the floor and put his hands on her thighs. “You rang?”

“Shit.”

Smiling, Eric’s hands went to the waistband of her trousers. “I aim to please.”

“It’s not really you, right? Somehow you hacked into my computer and read that.”

Leaning forward, he grasped her zipper in his teeth and slowly lowered it. That simple act made her melt like butter. Next, he pushed his hands into her pants and lifted her hips, pulling her trousers down to her ankles.

“No, sweet. I am your loyal kittylicker, only now I am live and in person. Your wish is my command.”

He urged her to the edge of the desk chair and spread her legs. Then, he reached into his pocket and pulled out a piece of greenery with a red bow. He laid it over her mound.

“What’s that? Mistletoe?”

“I’m feeling very festive.” With one finger, he moved the crotch of her panties to one side. “I believe you said you wanted me to eat your pussy?”

A forefinger toyed with her opening and Cassie’s breath caught in her throat. “Yes.”

“Tell me again.”

“Yes. Eat my pussy.”

“Is that what you want?” He rimmed her outer lips.

“Yes. Yes. That is what I want.”

“Say what you want. I want to hear it.” He licked his finger and slipped inside an inch or so.

“I want you to lick my pussy.”

“Say my name.”

“Eric! Dammit!”

“Say it.” His warm breath tickled her tender bud.

“Eric, I want you to eat my pussy. Now. Please!”

“Of course.”

She watched his head bow to her. It was afternoon, sunlight filled her office, and she decided she liked the angle of him kneeling before her in her desk chair. She could see every flick of his tongue on her clit. God...

“I’m so damned horny.”

He pulled away. “You are ripe for a killer orgasm. You’ve held out for a few days.” Then his tongue found her again.

“Dammit. Hurry.”

He slipped his tongue inside and she watched him slide in and out. “Oh, goddamn... Eric.” Then at once, he covered her entire pussy with his mouth and sucked, his upper lip grinding against her clit.

She gripped the arms of the chair and convulsed in pleasure, her head thrown back while Eric held her close. Slowly, he changed his rhythm to a slow and lazy lick, lapping at her.

“I want every drop on my tongue,” he said.

“Lick away,” she replied.

The door handle on the office door suddenly jiggled, followed by a brisk knock. After a pause, her administrative assistant said, “Dr. Franklin? Your two o’clock has arrived.”

“Shit. Grad student.”

Eric rose and Cassie frantically pulled up her trousers and fastened them. She glanced in the mirror on the wall to check her face, then to Eric who smiled like a Cheshire cat.

“You’re beautiful,” he told her. “I’ll talk with you soon.”

* * * *

A month later, however, Cassie sat at her desk and recalled Eric’s last words. Soon never came, and she’d often wondered what the hell had happened. The day after he had revealed himself, he took a sabbatical from the university. To write, she had been told. Kittylicker never again graced her computer screen, and his tongue never grazed her pussy.

Sad, she knew. He was the best pussy licker she ever had.

But more than that, she held a great affection for Eric, and even though she was just getting to know him, she wondered if there could have been more.

Chapter Four

"I'm worried about you," Becca said, handing Cassie a glass of wine. "You don't even seem twitchy anymore."

Cassie shrugged and took a sip. "I'm over it." She watched as Becca looked up from the salad she was making and rolled her eyes. "Really! I am!"

"You liked Eric."

"I did." Finally, she'd fessed up to her friend a week after Eric left. Becca knew the whole story, but she'd been sworn to secrecy. Cassie had demanded that she not even tell Scott. "And he could fuck like a screaming banshee."

Becca laughed. "Well, Scott says his book is coming along, so maybe he'll be back soon."

She shook her head. "Doesn't matter. I'm not going there again. I swear, Becca, withdrawal from sex is a killer for me. I think I have an addiction."

Becca brought the salad to the counter. "Can you add the tomatoes then toss with this vinaigrette? I'm going to get the meat ready to take out to the grill. Scott will be yelling for it soon."

"Sure."

"I'm so glad it's warm today. I was ready for a barbecue."

Cassie nodded. "Nice thing about the deep south. Occasionally you get these wonderfully warm winter days."

Becca agreed. "Oh, and you're not addicted, Cassie. You have a healthy sex drive. Nothing wrong with that."

Cassie wasn't so sure. She sliced the tomatoes and added them to the salad, then added the dressing and tossed. Scott poked his head in the sliding door.

"Meat?"

"Coming," Becca called out.

“Good. And bring me a beer. Oh, bring two. Ryan is here.” He left and Cassie looked toward her friend, patting out hamburger patties.

“Becca? Who is Ryan?”

She glanced up. “Hmm?”

“I asked you who Ryan is.”

Becca shrugged. “Oh, a friend of Scott’s. I wasn’t sure if he was coming by.”

Cassie picked up a box of plastic wrap and ripped away a piece. “Like hell. This is a set-up.” She covered the salad and put it in the refrigerator.

“Oh, Cassie...”

The sliding glass door opened again. “Hey! Coming with that beer?”

“In a second!” Becca called out. The sliding door slammed and Becca looked to Cassie.

“Do you mind? I’ll be another few minutes with these burgers. The beer is in the fridge.”

Dammit. She walked to the fridge and grabbed two bottles of Sam Adams, then peered at Becca. “You owe me.”

* * * *

Cassie laughed at yet another story Scott told about his and Ryan’s high school escapades. Even if she hadn’t wanted to have a good time this afternoon, she had. The cookout had gone long into the evening, and each of them had consumed more than one too many cocktails. They’d switched from beer and wine to harder stuff after the sun went down. Luckily, Becca and Scott’s kids were staying with his parents this evening.

The enclosed patio was cool and she rubbed her arms to chase away the chill bumps. The day was pleasant enough, but southern winter nights still grew chilly.

“Cold?” Ryan asked her.

“A little.”

“Come here.”

Cassie looked at him and pondered. He sat in a padded lounge chair, all sprawled out. He rose up slightly and straddled either side, then patted the seat between his legs. “There’s plenty of room here for the two of us.”

“Um,” she contemplated. She’d admired the man all evening. He had a physique to die for; it was obvious he worked out often. His sandy hair was cropped close and his chiseled

features were extremely attractive. His eyes were ocean green, and when they had shared conversation, it seemed he held onto her every word.

She had to admit he was the first man since Eric that she felt any sort of attraction to, sexual or otherwise.

He grinned. “C’mom...”

That grin was very hard to resist. Besides, she was cold and he looked, well, very big and very warm.

Scott rose and took Becca’s hand. “Hey, we’re going inside. I’m beat. You guys are welcome to stay if you want. In fact, I insist. We’ve all had too much to drink. Cassie, you know where the guest rooms are.”

Great. That’s all she needed, encouragement from her friends. Inside her fuzzy brain, warning bells were going off. Funny how Tequila made it so easy to ignore them.

“Sure,” she said and stood and stumbled. Becca tossed her a smiling glance then extinguished the patio light. A subtle glow from the streetlights out front and the neighbor’s houses provided just enough light. Cassie turned toward Ryan.

He patted the seat again between his legs. She practically fell into him.

“Oops. Sorry.”

He laughed and pulled her into his chest. “No problem,” he whispered, his breath warm and moist against her cheek. Wrapping his arms around her, she lay cradled next to his body. “Better?” he asked.

Closing her eyes, she burrowed against him, turning slightly to her side. “Um, yes, better.”

He stroked her hair and tipped her face up to his. “Cassie?” he whispered.

“Yes.”

“I’d love to kiss you.”

She shouldn’t. She was perfectly settled into her life, and didn’t need any kinks in the plan. She had even mastered her sex addiction. But the way he asked her, and the convenient tilt of his head as she lay on his chest, made it all so easy. That and all the alcohol she had consumed.

“All right.”

With the crook of a forefinger, he lifted her chin and claimed her lips. His were warm, moist and inviting. He slid his tongue between her lips and teeth, and she eagerly took him in. Her hands snaked up to his neck and she shifted in the seat, deepening the kiss, hungry for more. Her body moved over his until she straddled his hips. Ryan's big hands moved under her T-shirt, and eased beneath her bra.

She broke the kiss and gasped as he moved the bra up and out of the way and thumbed her nipples. She looked him square in the eyes. "We're drunk," she said.

"I'll stop if you want."

What did she want? He pinched each of her taut nipple buds, which send heat down her body and between her legs. She closed her eyes.

"Will you still respect me in the morning?"

"And the morning after that... and after that..."

"Liar," she teased.

He shook his head. "No, Cassie. I wouldn't lie about something like that."

The mood changed then, and she felt lost in his eyes. He was serious. He liked her. But they didn't really know each other. Could there be more?

He palmed her breasts. "Your call, Cassie. I can wait if you like."

She exhaled long. "I can't," she whispered.

Ryan smiled and raised her shirt up over her breasts. The cool air caused her nipples to harden and pucker, but they weren't cold for long as he took first one, and then the other, into his mouth and sucked.

She could have stayed like that forever, letting him suckle her all night long. She leaned forward and into him, grinding herself against his taut stomach as he pulled and tugged at her breasts.

His hands went to her hips and smoothed down her thighs. The short denim skirt she had on was now riding up around her waist. With a flick of his fingers, he slid her panties down partway.

She leaned back and he gasped, "Let's get rid of some clothes."

She stood and stepped out of her panties. Ryan hastily undid his fly and released a huge cock that she eyed with pleasure. "Oh. My."

His fingers stroked his length. "All yours, sweetheart."

Glancing into his face, she took in his sexy smile. "Mine?"

"Yes."

His legs were spread on the chaise, his cock erect and at attention. Cassie circled the end of the lounge and put one knee, and then the other, on the chair. She crouched between his legs and took the velvet length of him into her hands. She stroked him, contemplating his size and how he would fit inside her.

But first, she wanted a taste.

She pinned his hands back on the chaise. "Keep your hands there," she told him. Her gaze held his and he obeyed. She grasped him firmly at the base of his penis and squeezed, then took him into her mouth.

There was no way she could take all of him, so she chose to swirl her tongue around his tip while she gently sucked. He moaned and his hands came up to her head.

"I'm going to come soon," he rasped. "I want to be inside you."

Hesitant for only a second, Cassie rose above him while he guided his tip to her core. She was wet enough and he was slick.

"Oh, god..."

"You're so damn tight," he moaned.

"You're so damn big," she huffed back.

But she rode him, took every inch inside. He filled and stretched her like no one had done before. The friction between them was almost more than she could bear. The pleasure and heat building inside her would soon send her reeling.

His large hands covered her ass and clutched at her buttocks. He spread her cheeks apart as she rocked over him. His fingers rimmed and pushed at her asshole, and a new kind of sensation trilled up inside her.

"Oh... Ryan..."

Her thighs quivered and her body exploded. He hooked a finger in her hole and she cried out with a newfound pleasure. Clamping her pelvis to his body tight and unmoving, Ryan shouted out and jerked forward in orgasmic pleasure. Her legs spread wide and she felt him pump his hot load into her.

They fell limp against the chaise and tried to catch their breath. Finally, Ryan wrapped his arms around her and held her tight, stroking her hair while her cheek lay against his beating chest.

“Goddamn,” he said. “I could fucking fall in love with you.”

* * * *

They woke slowly amid tangled sheets and sunlight pouring in the window of Becca’s guest room. Rousing slowly, Cassie’s brain eased into awareness of the large and vital man who lay stretched beside her. She snuggled into his side and he shifted to pull her into his cocoon. She felt safe, warm and thoroughly sated.

“Good morning, love.” Ryan’s voice was hoarse and raspy.

“Good morning,” she said quietly.

He hugged her tight. “You are so tiny.”

She laughed. “Um, not really. You’re just large.”

“I don’t know about that,” he replied. “For some crazy reason I want to hold you close and protect you, take care of you.”

Cassie lifted her chin to catch his gaze. He looked at her across the pillow. “You think I need someone to take care of me?”

He shook his head. “Oh, no. I’m sure you take care of yourself quite nicely. It’s how I feel when I’m lying next to you.” He stared into her eyes for a moment. “Does that bother you?”

Honestly, even though it should, it didn’t. “No. Even with all my feminist ways, it doesn’t.”

He grinned and gently pushed a stray lock of hair from her face. “I want to take you home so we can talk more. Cassie, I don’t want this to be a one-night stand.”

Immediately, her thoughts flew to another man, another statement, another time. *Once is not going to be enough.*

Eric.

Caution, Cassie. Proceed with caution.

But avoidance was more her game today. Cassie tilted her head to meet his lips. “Take me home, Ryan. I want to show you my bed.”

Chapter Five

“You and Ryan are still coming tonight, right?”

“Of course. What time do you want us there?” Cassie shifted the phone to her left ear and clicked on a new document on her computer.

“About seven. Scott’s invited a few friends. Amanda’s coming, too. I got some sappy chick flick DVDs to watch, since it’s Valentine’s Day weekend and all. I’m sure the men will end up in the basement playing pool or something. But we’ve got plenty of liquor, and I’m due for a little party. The kids are driving me crazy lately.”

“Um. I warned you about the kid thing,” Cassie said.

Becca laughed. “Yeah, I know you did. Most of the time I love the boogers like crazy, but lately, they’ve been royal pains in the ass. I’m glad Scott’s parents like to take them off our hands once in a while. I long for adult conversation most days.”

“Well,” Cassie began, searching for the word doc that she couldn’t find, “anytime you want adult conversation, I can get you an adjunct professor gig here at the college.”

“Tempting, but no. Maybe in a few years.”

Cassie figured it would never happen. Becca was too grounded in suburbia and soccer mom mentality, even if she did have a PhD in Medieval Literature. “Your call, hon.”

“I know.”

Movement at the bottom of her computer screen caught her eye. Someone had signed on to her messenger. Funny, she hadn’t even realized it was turned on. Becca blabbered while she searched for that damn elusive thesis from one of her grad students, when a white box popped up on her screen.

“U there?”

She sat back and stared at it.

“Cassie?”

She was silent for a moment. "Becca, I gotta go. Call you later." She flipped her cell phone closed and watched the box.

Kittylicker was typing. "I know it's been a while. I can explain."

She resisted the urge to type something flip back. For a moment, she even contemplated what she would say. *Where in the hell have you been? Why did you not say something? Why did you leave? Why did you act like you cared?*

She didn't do any of that. She sat and stared at the screen.

"I'm going to be around. U can't avoid me forever."

Shit!

Not now. Why the fuck now? Things were good with Ryan. She was actually falling for him. For the first time in her life, she felt so damn good about a relationship she was even pondering moving in with him.

Why the fuck did Eric have to come back into her life now?

"Cassie, we need to talk."

Abruptly, she grabbed the mouse and stood. She clicked the X on the messenger box to get it off her screen and signed out of her messenger program. Without another thought, she grabbed her purse and left her office.

Her stomach ached like hell.

* * * *

"You're quiet."

Ryan parked his car on the street outside Becca and Scott's house, and reached for her hand. She looked into his face and realized she could easily get lost in his eyes. It was true. She was falling for him. It was time to shake the gloom that had come over her this afternoon when Eric had invaded her life again.

She smiled. "I'm fine. Let's go party."

He grasped her hand and tugged her closer. With his other one, he smoothed the hair back from her face and caressed her cheek. "Do you know that I love you, Cassie Franklin?"

Tears stung at her eyes and she tried to stop them. "You do?" She breathed the words.

"I do. Never forget that. Okay?"

"I won't."

His lips grazed hers. "Promise?"

“Promise.”

Cassie sighed and he smiled and broke away. “Let’s go party.”

Her heart lighter, she said, “Let’s.”

* * * *

As predicted, the men had retreated to the basement with several six packs of beer, and the women were engrossed in the second season of *Sex and the City* with a pitcher of some potent version of a Bahama Mama punch, when the doorbell rang.

Giddy with laughter, Becca stumbled to the door and opened it. Cassie smiled at her friend, glad she was letting her hair down and having a good time. She deserved it. Frankly, Cassie didn’t know how she did it, putting up with kids all the time. She’d go mad. Although she was certain having children was a wonderfully fulfilling thing, it wasn’t for her.

She heard chatter in the entryway and wondered who had arrived. One voice sounded decidedly lower. A man? Then Becca stepped toward the basement stairs and called out. “Scott!”

Someone followed her into the main room.

Cassie’s breath caught in her throat.

Eric?

She stood and dropped her drink to the floor. It clanked off the coffee table. “Shit!” She jumped back.

About the same time, all the men came rolling up from the basement. While she scrambled for a towel and some soda water in the kitchen, she kept a wary eye on Eric and the men—who incidentally all seemed to be acquainted.

Even Ryan.

Her stomach, which hadn’t been quite right since Eric had sent the instant message earlier this afternoon, quavered with uncertainty. She feared she might become ill.

As she dabbed at the liquid, she looked up to see Ryan and Eric talking. Smiling. Exchanging guy-type conversation.

Shit. *Shit!*

She rose and picked up the towel and bottle of soda water and headed to the kitchen. Tossing both items into the sink, she grasped the edge of the counter and hung her head over it. She did not want to puke in Becca’s sink.

“Fuck!” Then she pounded the counter with her fist.

“Cassie?”

She turned. Becca. “What the fuck is he doing here?”

“Scott invited him.”

“Well, did you tell him not to?” Her voice raised an octave.

Becca edged closer. “How could I, Cassie? You swore me to secrecy about what happened. You told me not to tell Scott. It would seem rather strange if I told him not to invite Eric. They’ve been friends for years.”

Friends for years. Dammit. Then some other nagging thing bit into her thoughts. What about Ryan?

“Ryan, too?”

“What?”

“Ryan and Scott and Eric? Have they all known each other for years?”

Becca paled. “You’ll have to ask Ryan about that.”

What the fuck was happening here?

Nodding, she agreed. “Yes. I’ll do just that.”

“Cassie, wait.”

Barreling past her friend, she headed toward the other room, where couples were mingling and chatting. The television droned in the background and the beer was talking loudly with the men. She marched right up to where Ryan stood talking with Eric.

“Ryan.”

He turned and smiled. “Cassie, love. C’mon here. Meet Scott’s friend Eric.”

She glanced from Eric to Ryan and back again. “Um, hello.” *Scott’s friend?* Maybe Ryan didn’t know him that well after all. That one thought eased her mind greatly.

Eric pushed out his hand, holding steady the gaze between them. “Nice to meet you, Cassie.”

When his warm hand took hold of hers, Cassie tried to ignore the electricity of his touch. Quickly, she dropped it and turned to Ryan. “I’m sorry to be such a party pooper,” she said, “but I was wondering if we could make it an early night. I’m really not feeling so well.”

Ryan turned to fully look at her. “Of course, love.” He placed the backs of his fingers against her face. “You do look pale and your face is hot. Let’s take you home.”

She nodded and then said her quick goodbyes to Becca and Scott and the other guests.
She ignored Eric entirely.

Chapter Six

On panted breath, Cassie lay alongside Ryan's muscled body, his cock in her mouth while she lovingly sucked. Ryan nibbled at her pussy and the passion inside her increased as she pushed him flat on his back and straddled his face. The length of his cock was no match for her small mouth but she had learned to take him deeper into her throat, and he groaned while she scraped her teeth over him.

While she pleased him with her tongue and mouth, he propped his head with a pillow and toyed with her wet cunt. She'd been freshly fucked, and was swollen and hot and wet, but he'd not allowed himself to come yet. She was glad. She wanted this night to last as long as possible. It somehow kept her mind off the un-pleasantries of the day.

She lifted her head and squeezed him tight at the base. "You like my pussy, Ryan?"

"Love it," he gasped.

"I adore your cock."

"It's yours, love."

"Um. Play with me while I take you in my mouth."

His tongue tickled her clit, and then he spread her apart and fingered her hole. Rising up, he pulled her hips closer to his mouth and ran the tip of his tongue from her clit to her asshole, where he lightly rimmed and prodded.

"Oh!" she panted.

"Okay?" he asked.

Bearing back, she said, "Yes."

His cock was slick and swollen in her mouth and she continued to take him deeper while he explored her ass, and pushed a digit in deeper.

"Cassie," he breathed. "Come here."

He practically lifted her off and positioned her on all fours in front of him. He was on his knees behind her, his cock poised at her ass. "I know you're not used to this but I'd like to try... if you're okay with it."

"I..."

"I'll stop when you say."

He grabbed a tube of lubricant from the bedside table and warmed it in his fingers. "Let's try. Put your ass in the air; lay your head on the bed."

She did as he asked and allowed him full access. His fingers played over her. "Relax, sweetheart. Enjoy."

He palmed her pussy with lubed fingers and massaged. Slowly, he worked his way up her ass, and with his thumbs, spread her apart and massaged all around her asshole. Admittedly, it felt good. And she trusted him. He would not hurt her.

He slipped his cock into her pussy, filling her, moving in and out. In rhythm with his movements, he slipped a finger into her ass, sliding it in and out as well. Sensation built, knowing his cock and finger were both inside her was erotic beyond belief. She wanted to come again, felt the heat licking up in her, and his groans of pleasure only spurred her on.

Right before she came, he pulled out, butted his cock against her asshole and pushed. There was a moment's twinge, and then he was inside. Not all the way, but there. At least the tip. He was so large. He reached lower and flicked her clit while he guided himself further. In the next second, he groaned and came, pulling out and shooting his hot essence all over her ass. She fell forward on the bed and he followed, his hand still squeezing her pussy until she came.

After a shower and a change of sheets, they slept, naked and sated, in the middle of his king-sized bed. Cassie went to sleep with only one thought on her mind: She felt safe and loved.

And he loved her, too. "No matter what, always remember that I love you," he whispered right before they drifted to sleep.

* * * *

Sometime later, Cassie woke to the sound of movement. She opened her eyes, her cheeks snug against Ryan's chest. Someone was walking around in his house!

She shook his arm and whispered, "Ryan. Wake up."

He roused slightly. "What?"

"Someone is here."

He opened one eye and raised a brow. "Oh. It's okay."

"Who?"

It was obvious he was still half asleep. "Roommate."

"What? I didn't know you had a roommate. Where has he been all this time?"

"Sabbatical."

Ryan huffed out a breath and rose onto one elbow. After rubbing his hands over his face in an attempt to wake up, he said, "Cassie, there's something I need to tell you."

Alarm coursed through her. Something was wrong. What had felt so right earlier suddenly felt like it was all going to hell in a hand basket.

The door to the bedroom creaked open, and both of them looked that way as Eric walked into the room.

Eric?

"Hi," he said.

Ryan groaned.

All Cassie could do was sit and stare as he peeled out of his clothes and slipped into the bed beside her. Sandwiched between the two men, she looked from side to side. "What in the hell is going on here?"

Eric looked to Ryan. "I take it you haven't told her yet."

Sheepish, Ryan shook his head. "No."

Eric lay down and nuzzled closer to Cassie. "Figures. You always leave the tough stuff to me."

She sat straight up. "What the fuck is going on?" Why were they ignoring her?

Eric rolled and pushed her back against the pillows. "Relax, Cassie. Let's sleep and talk about it in the morning. We're all tired."

She shot back up. "Like hell!"

"Shit." Eric leaned forward. "Ryan, you're part of this too. Tell her. I've been waiting outside all night to get to sleep, and I'm about to get cranky."

Cassie turned to Ryan. "Tell me. What the fuck is going on?" she repeated.

He exhaled. "All right. Eric and I live together. We're a couple. And we wanted a third. Not like you think. We wanted a woman to love, to be part of our family. We chose you. We

both love you and want you to stay with us. Forever.” He let go of another pent up breath and Cassie sat and looked at him.

“You *chose* me?”

Eric touched her shoulder. “It’s a compliment, even though it didn’t sound like it.”

“Compliment. Huh.”

“We’re both in love with you, Cassie.”

“Both of you.” She glanced to her left. “Eric?”

“Yes,” Eric replied. “Now, can we go to sleep and talk about this tomorrow?”

If she weren’t so weary from exhaustive sex, and the emotional stress of her present situation—not to mention outright shock—she might simply bolt up from there and leave. But as it was, she didn’t possess the energy to put any thought to it, or to move. So, she simply lay back on the pillow and curled into Ryan’s side, while Eric spooned her from behind.

She had to admit, that it felt quite nice to be between them. Odd, but nice.

Tomorrow. She’d think about all this tomorrow.

* * * *

Cassie woke with a sunbeam slanted across her face, her fingers wrapped around Ryan’s erect cock, and Eric’s hand pressed intimately between her thighs. Before moving, she contemplated exactly what she was waking up to. Keep an open mind, she told herself, and consider the possibilities.

They loved her. Or so they said.

Eric tongued like a demon.

Ryan was hung like a horse.

And she had a sex addiction.

What could be wrong with any of that?

Besides, how many women did she know who woke up each morning between two men who adored her and would gladly see to her every need?

Not many.

Uh. Not one.

However, they had deceived her. Where had Eric been the past couple of months? Why had Ryan never mentioned him? They were a couple? What did that mean? And what, pray tell, did they *exactly* want with her?

And what the hell did Becca and Scott know about this?

At once, anger burned inside her.

It seemed she was the only one who had been in the dark about this little *arrangement*.
Dammit. She was nobody's fool.

Untangling herself from limbs and sheets, she pounced from the bed, stepping over legs and torsos on the way to her clothes that were scattered all over the bedroom floor.

The men roused with a series of grunts, groans and "what the hells?" Both specimens—and oh, they were both lovely specimens of male sensuality—sat up and looked at her.

"Cassie, where are you going?" Ryan stood and rounded the bed. She jerked on her pair of jeans, leaving her panties behind.

"Home, Ryan. I'm going home. I need to think."

He reached for her. She backed up. "You don't understand. We should have talked more last night."

She picked up her shirt and drew it over her head. "Yes, Ryan, we should have. In fact, you should have told me about this long ago."

Eric sat up and perched his hands on his knees. "Cassie, don't leave before we've explained."

She straightened her shirt and glanced around for her shoes. Living room. "You're right, Eric. You have a helluva lot of explaining to do. But I'm not interested in hearing it right now."

He rose and stepped her way.

"Stop." She put out her hand, then glanced from one man to the other. "Both of you stop right where you are. I don't want to hear another word. I want to process what I know and then, when I'm ready to talk, I'll let you know." She turned and left the room. "And in the meantime," she threw over her shoulder, "you have each other. Go for it."

"Well, that went well."

"Agreed." Eric angrily stepped into his boxers and stalked out of the room.

Ryan followed him into the living room, still naked. "You said you wouldn't be back until morning! I was going to tell her before then."

Eric twisted back. "Shit, Ryan! I was waiting on the patio for four hours. I didn't come in until after 3 a.m. Do you know how hard it was staying out there when I knew you were fucking the hell out of Cassie in here? I could hear you, for Christ's sake."

He sat on the sofa and glanced away. Ryan settled on the ottoman across from him. "Sorry, Eric. We agreed you would stay away. We wanted her to have time with each of us separately, so she could know us as individuals before she knew us as a couple. I didn't think how my being with her last night would affect you now that you are home."

Eric stared straight ahead. "You have no idea how I've ached for her these past two months."

"And for me?" Ryan reached out and trailed a finger down Eric's cheek.

"For both of you. I... I want you both. I've dreamed of our first time together."

Ryan closed his eyes. "Yes. I know." He sighed and then moved to the sofa beside Eric and draped an arm around his shoulders. Looking into his male lover's eyes, he leaned forward and kissed his lips. "We'll get her back. I promise. We just have to give her a little time."

Chapter Seven

Three days passed before Cassie answered her phone, read her email, or visited her office. She feigned illness and worked from home on Monday, which was easy enough to do since the college was on a mini-winter break. She dared anyone to invade the sanctuary of her home, and was very happy that everyone had, for the most part, left her alone.

Until Monday evening when Becca came rapping on her front door.

"I'm not leaving until you let me in," she yelled.

She sat on her couch and flipped through a magazine.

"I mean it, Cassie. Let me in. We need to talk."

"Damned straight," she muttered. "And about time."

Stomping to the door, she jerked it open while Becca's fist was mid-knock. "Come in. And this better be good."

Becca moved inside and sat in an armchair. Cassie slammed the door and then sat across from her.

"All right. Spill it."

Clearing her throat, Becca started. "Okay, first let me say that I didn't want to be part of this, but after a while, I was convinced it was okay."

Cassie narrowed her gaze. "All right. So you're exonerated. Keep talking."

She took a deep breath and started over. "The boys care for you. Deeply."

"Ha!" Cassie laughed. "The boys."

"Well, men."

"Men. Yeah. Men. Men are scum."

"Cassie, you are not making this easy for me." She kept stretching her fingers in and out and then made a fist. Obviously, Becca was nervous.

"Go on."

“All right. Let me start at the beginning. Scott has been friends with Eric and Ryan for years, since high school. Eric and Ryan have been a couple for about five years now. At first, Scott was kind of freaked about it, but finally he got used to the idea. He realized he didn’t want to lose his friends, so he had to give himself an attitude adjustment.”

“Well, let’s hear it for Scott. I’m glad he’s open-minded. But what does all of this have to do with me?”

Becca sighed. “We want you to talk to Ryan and Eric to get all the details... but about a year ago, both of them were talking one evening at our house, and they shared with us that though they were living as a gay couple, they each had bi-sexual tendencies, and they wondered if there was a woman out there whom they could both love, and who would love them back equally.”

“Oh, so this is where the ‘we chose you’ scenario came from.”

“Basically.”

“Of course.”

“It was Eric’s idea to pursue you.”

Cassie thought about that. “Eric?” Her heart warmed at the thought. She remembered all the times they had chit-chatted at the office, and then later on, the instant messenger thing. Yes, it was Eric who had initiated the online relationship, wasn’t it? Of course, she didn’t know it at the time, but still...

Becca moved to the edge of her seat. “Cassie, they want something permanent. They are not looking for a one night stand; they desire an intimate, trusting, cohabitating relationship.”

“They want me.”

“Yes.”

“Then why all this secrecy?”

“Because they were unsure of how you would react.”

Cassie laughed. “Well, they found out, huh?”

Leaning forward, Becca took Cassie’s hands in hers. “Hon, give yourself some time. Think about it. No one is going to judge you.”

“Oh yeah. No one. Like the straight-laced board at the university? Dr. Cummings, please meet my boyfriend, and my other boyfriend. We’re one big happy family.”

“It doesn’t have to be like that.” Becca stopped talking and peered deep into her eyes.
“You still have feelings for Eric. Admit it. And you told me you were falling in love with Ryan.”

Cassie hung her head. Those were the two things she was avoiding thinking about. “Yes,” she whispered. “I thought I loved Ryan. And I do have strong feelings for Eric.”

“Could you love them both?”

Nearly resigned, Cassie thought that she actually could. “I think I already do.”

Standing, Becca pulled her to her feet and wrapped her arms around her. “My, how lucky could one woman be, to have two gorgeous men to love you and take care of you until the end of your days?”

* * * *

Her brain reeled after Becca had left—so much so that she could no sooner sleep than she could fly to the moon. Lying awake in her bed, she stared at the ceiling and ticked through all the emotions she felt.

No longer angry, she pushed that one aside. Fear, that was there. Uncertainty of the unknown likely brought that on. Excitement, there was a bit of that, too. She thought about how all her adult life, she’d had difficulty attaching herself to one man. She’d date for a while and then could always find fault. No one seemed to stick. Most men couldn’t keep her satisfied for long.

Was she insatiable? Truly addicted? Was her libido out of control and freakish? Maybe she did need two men to take care of her.

And perhaps, they needed her.

Was she enough to satisfy two men at once?

Suddenly, her heart ached as she missed both of them. She swiped away the tears brimming in her eyes. They each touched her in ways that she needed. Eric tapped into that naughty, bad girl side of her that she needed to explore. Ryan, even though he offered her deliciously decadent sex, provided her with a sense of contentment and security that she had longed for. He was nice and polite and she felt safe in his arms. Eric, no doubt, would be a worthy lover and protector as well.

Dammit. She missed them. Needed them.

Tossing back the covers, she rose from her bed and ripped off her nightgown.

* * * *

“Damn storm.”

Cassie kicked at the flat tire on her Sebring and cursed loud. “Why the fuck do you do this to me now?”

A bolt of lightening lit the sky, and with a clap of thunder, the night broke open, releasing a torrent of wind and rain. Hair streaming in her face, clothes plastered to her body, she raced back to the driver’s seat of her car and got in. With the slam of her door, another clap of thunder rolled across the night.

She reached for her purse. Her cell phone was missing. “Stupid. Stupid. Stupid.” In her haste to get to Ryan and Eric, she’d lit out of her house like her tail was on fire. Not good. Particularly now.

No jacket. No umbrella. No cell.

Now what?

She looked ahead on the road. The men lived in a small subdivision located in a rural area outside of town. Estimating the walk to be about a half mile to their house, she debated waiting until the rain died down or going now. She glanced into the rearview mirror behind her. She was a sitting duck on this country road. Reaching to the dash, she activated the flashers.

There. That was a little better.

Still, could she wait? And, there was lightning, right? And all these trees...

“Shit.”

The wind died down somewhat and the rain slacked after about twenty minutes. She glanced at her dashboard clock. Just before midnight. Sighing, she made a quick decision, knowing she couldn’t stay here all night. There appeared to be a break in the storm. Perhaps she could make it to their house.

Taking her purse and keys, she set out walking.

* * * *

“It was a nice gesture, Eric, but the movie really did nothing to take my mind off the situation.”

Eric knew exactly what he meant. “I wonder how long it will be before she talks to us again.”

Shrugging, Ryan shook his head and stared ahead while he drove. “I don’t know. It was nice of Becca to talk to her, but I keep thinking that we need to see her soon ourselves. To

explain and tell her how we feel. Why we did what we did.” He swerved for a limb in the road.
“Damn storm. Must have been some high winds through here.”

Drumming his fingers on the arm rest, Eric agreed. “I can’t sit around any longer and do nothing. She didn’t come into work today.”

Ryan glanced his way. “What if she leaves? Runs away?”

Eric thought about that. “No, I don’t think she will. She worked too long and hard to earn the department chair, although sometimes I wonder if she is really happy with it.”

“Could be an excuse for her to pick up roots and head somewhere else. She could probably land a job in one of other state universities...”

Ryan slowed and Eric watched as he carefully moved around a car with flashers parked on the side of the road. “Flat tire,” he said.

“Anybody in the car?”

“Couldn’t see anyone.”

Ryan braked and started to back up. “We should stop and make sure.” When the car was parallel to the parked one, Eric stared hard at the vehicle. “Shit. Is that Cassie’s car?” He jumped out, a light rain coming down now, peppering his face. Ryan shoved the car into park and joined him. Eric rapped on the window and tried to peer inside. “I don’t think she’s in there.”

He straightened, then, and looked down the road. “Did she walk?”

“Shit. Get in the car.”

* * * *

A half a mile was a lot longer walking than driving, Cassie decided. Perhaps it was the storm, however, that made it seem so long. Shivering now, she called herself every kind of fool for making her way in the rain. Why the hell hadn’t she stayed in her car and waited for help?

“Because you are a damned impatient, woman,” she told herself.

Crossing her arms over her chest, she hung her head against the rain, now slicing sideways into her face. Her eyes blurred with water, and she was sure her entire body would soon turn into a prune. Not exactly the way she pictured presenting herself to Ryan and Eric.

Perhaps she should get to the first house and call Becca to come get her... try again with the boys in the morning.

The boys. She laughed. Her boys?

Lights flashed behind her as a car made the turn in the road she'd just taken. Great. A car. Should she accept a ride if offered? Hitchhiking was not exactly a safe sport these days. Maybe it would depend upon who it was. She was damn cold and uncomfortable.

The vehicle slowed and she stepped further onto the shoulder and waited. She turned as it stopped and the passenger side door swung open. A man stepped out. Wonderful. How fast could she run?

"Cassie?"

At the sound of his voice, she melted. "Eric?"

He rushed to her and swept her up in his arms. "Oh my God, you're okay."

"Yes."

She clung to him and he picked her up in his arms and carried her toward the car. "We're taking you home."

Nuzzling close, she placed her cheek in the crook of his neck and inhaled deeply. "Yes, Eric. Take me home."

Chapter Eight

“I’m drawing her a bath.”

“She’ll want something hot to drink first. Perhaps hot tea.”

“No, first she’ll need to get out of those wet clothes.”

“All right. So how about you take her to the master bath, get her out of the clothes, and draw the water. I’ll make the tea.”

“Actually,” Cassie interjected, “I’d prefer some bourbon, if you don’t mind. Unless you plan on putting a little in that tea.”

Ryan shook his head. “Of course. Tea with honey and bourbon. Perfect. I’ll bring it to the tub.”

“I’ll carry you in there,” Eric said.

“I’m perfectly capable of walking by myself,” Cassie replied. She glanced between the two men. “You two are wearing me out. Relax.”

Ryan busied himself with the tea and Eric slumped into a kitchen chair. “We have been so worried,” they said simultaneously.

Cassie’s shoulders dropped. “I’m sure. I…”

Eric rose again. “Wait. We can talk in a while. We do need to get you out of those clothes. Come with me.”

He led her to the bathroom, and while she peeled out of her wet things, he drew a bath in the huge tub. “Bubbles?” he asked and she nodded.

“Wow, is that a man-sized tub or what?” she exclaimed.

“We had it made special.”

It made her wonder if they had always planned for three.

Still standing naked in the middle of the large bathroom, she shivered. Eric glanced up. “Oh, here.” He stood and grabbed a robe and she slipped it on, inhaling deeply. It smelled like one of them. She wasn’t sure which. Perhaps both?

The water ran and the bubbles grew. He dipped in a hand to test the warmth. “Good. Not too hot, not too warm.”

“Very warm is fine by me.”

He righted and looked her way. “Cassie, I’m sorry about how all this played out. I...” He lowered his gaze and stepped closer. When he was positioned directly in front of her, he lifted his chin and peered into her eyes. With a forefinger, he brushed back a lock of wet hair. “I love you,” he whispered. “I—we—never wanted to hurt you.”

With that, he leaned in for a kiss, threading his fingers into the nape of her hair to hold her to him. Cassie closed her eyes and let his lips play over hers as warmth began to pool through her body. He stopped the kiss and she opened her eyes. “I love you, too, Eric,” she whispered.

He grinned and his hands went to the belt of her robe. “Get in the tub and start getting warm. I’ll be right back.”

He left her and Cassie dropped the robe to the floor. As she slipped in the tub, she sighed deeply. She’d never felt anything so warm and soothing in her life.

“She’s sleeping.”

Cassie lay back in the huge tub, obviously made large enough for the two men—now for three?—and relished in the decadence of it all. Bubbles tickled her chin and the hot water with gentle jets soothed away any kinks in her cold and stiff muscles.

She was awake, but barely. And she knew they were standing over her watching. She kind of liked the thought of them watching her in the tub. Overprotective rascals. Could she deal with this? It kind of felt like she was their pet. Interesting.

“Do you think she’ll stay the night?” Ryan whispered.

There was a second’s pause before Eric answered. “I hope so.”

“We have to talk.”

“Yes.”

Cassie opened her eyes and looked at the two of them. “Would you two quit talking about me like I’m not here, and get in this tub with me?”

The men exchanged glances then quickly removed their clothes. Ryan stepped in first, and then Eric.

“Is this thing big enough for the three of us?”

“Definitely,” Ryan answered, “Scoot up a bit.”

She did and he slipped in behind her, then pulled her back against him, wrapping his arms about her. Eric sat on the other end, his legs straddle them both. He grasped her feet in his hands and laid them on his chest.

“There.”

They all three breathed a heavy sigh.

Cassie was almost too tired to talk about this but she had to. “Ground rules.”

“What?” the men both chimed.

“We need to talk about ground rules. But first, I want to know the answer to one question: Why me?”

Eric massaged one of her feet. “Why not you? Cassie, you’re beautiful and vivacious and open. From the moment I met you on campus, I knew there was something special about you. Make no mistake: I love Ryan with all my heart. But you... you are the only woman who I can honestly say I love as much as I love Ryan.”

Cassie stared at him. “Dammit. Do not make me cry.”

He leaned closer and swiped a tear from her eyes. “Besides,” he added, “I love to lick your pussy.”

She slapped the water, and he grinned, leaning back. Then she tipped her head toward Ryan. “What about you?”

He held her tight against him, his hands smoothing up and down over her arms. “Eric adored you. When I knew how much he cared for you, we decided to see if there would be chemistry between you and me, as well. It was an important step for us. We had hoped... we had wanted for a long time... to have an intimate relationship with a woman. We knew she would be a rare being, putting up with and loving the two of us, but we wanted to try. Eric was convinced that you were the one. I needed some time to figure that out myself. That’s why we decided it was best for Eric to go away for a while, so you and I could get to know each other.”

Cassie looked to Eric. “Your leaving was hard for me.”

“It was even more difficult for me. But it was necessary. Without me going, you wouldn’t have felt free enough to explore something with Ryan.”

“Scott and Becca were in on this?”

“Some. Becca wants you to be happy. She knows us and trusts us. It’s unconventional, we know. But we don’t care how others view our life. We hope you won’t, either.”

She closed her eyes and snuggled into Ryan. “I don’t care what anyone thinks.” She stayed silent for a moment, then added. “You’ll have to be patient with me. I’m not sure how this being with two men thing—I mean, sexually—is supposed to work. Of course, I have ideas, but...”

“We’ve never done this either, Cassie,” Ryan said. “But I know we’ll figure it out.”

“Which brings me back to ground rules.” She bit her lip and then went on. “There will be none of this jealousy thing, you hear me? I don’t need that. I love you both equally and there is no keeping score on who kissed who last, or how, or whatever. So, no jealousy is tops on the list.”

“Agreed.”

“And I don’t do that dominant/submissive stuff. I don’t get off on that.”

Ryan nodded. “We would never do something you found degrading.”

“Thank you. I’m glad we agree there.”

Eric chuckled. “You really don’t have to worry about that, sweetheart. We’re not into the power and control thing, either. We just want to love you.”

She thought some more. “And no other partners. I mean, my God, the two of you are probably going to wear me out as it is... I won’t have the energy to think about anyone else, but I want to make sure that is your intent as well. Bottom line, I want the two of you to myself.”

This time Ryan laughed. “Love, between you and Eric, I cannot imagine...”

“Say it, you two. We are a threesome. There is no one else. And I mean that.”

Again, Eric’s soothing voice calmed her. “Cassie, perhaps you don’t fully understand. We’re not talking about a short-term thing here. Ryan and I have been monogamous for five years—until you, that is. We want to add you to our family. Long-term. As in, forever. We have no plans to ever bring anyone else into the mix, or ruin what we have with each other.”

“That’s it?”

“Promise.”

She grasped Ryan’s arm. “You too?”

“Absolutely.”

She thought for a minute. “Okay.”

She watched Eric's eyes as he looked to meet Ryan's gaze over her head. "Okay?" he repeated.

"Yes. I'm in."

A broad grin spread over Eric's face and Ryan about squeezed her to death. "But," she added, sitting straight up in the tub, "you cannot dote on me too much. I mean, a little doting is fine but if it gets overboard, I will have to tell you to knock it off."

Eric grasped her face and pulled her toward him. "I'll dote on you as much as I want, and you'll love every minute of it," he said. With a sloshing of water, he pulled her fully on top of him. Thank God the tub was huge. Her knees straddle his hips, and instantly, his erect cock found her pussy. Behind her, Ryan moved forward in the tub.

"Fuck me," Eric whispered.

She slid over his cock with ease; she loved the feel of him inside her. He moaned and she knew she was pleasing him. She rocked over Eric and felt Ryan's hands on her back. They trailed down, smoothing the warm water and bubbles over her down her ass. His palms lovingly spread over her buttocks, massaging. She arched her back, breaking the kiss, and Eric thumbed and pinched her nipples. From behind, she felt Ryan's hands move lower, to stroke Eric as he moved in and out of her, his fingers grazing her hole, and then moving up to thumb and play with her ass.

She shivered and shook as the anticipation of making love with these two men overtook her.

"Let's move to the bed."

Ryan stood and lifted her out of the tub. Still wet, he carried her to the bed. Eric followed. She lay there, waiting, looking forward to what would happen next. Then the two of them lay down beside her, one on each side. She didn't know what to do first.

"Let me eat your pussy," Eric said. "I know you love that."

He rolled over her, his face looking down at her pussy, his cock angled over her mouth. He stayed on all fours and she reached up to stroke him, pulling him closer. Lower, his tongue darted downward to slide between her outer lips and tickle her clit. Cassie spread her legs and lifted her pelvis higher.

Ryan joined them, kneeling behind her head. As she sucked on Eric's cock, she watched him smooth his hands over Eric's ass and thighs. She reached up to grasp Ryan's cock in her

hand, too, and stroked him as she knew he liked to be stroked. His head tipped back as he took a minute to feel her hand on him.

For a moment, she lay there, hot sensation stirring up inside her, while Eric ate and devoured her, and she sucked and stroked, alternating between both of their cocks. Ryan continued to play with Eric's ass. Then, adding some lubrication to his cock, as she watched above her head, he penetrated Eric.

She was fascinated, watching him slide in and out of Eric. Their moans of pleasure echoed through the bedroom. She loved Ryan's huge cock, and watching him fuck Eric only excited her more. As Ryan pumped harder, Eric's tongue thrusts against her clit grew faster. She held Eric's cock firm and sucked just as hard. Then slipped her hand up, where she could feel Ryan's cock sliding into Eric.

At once, she exploded with a shout and an incredible convulsion of pleasure. Her body jerked and Eric fought to keep his mouth on her pussy. Then with a shout of his own, he erupted in her mouth, and even though she attempted to swallow, it wasn't possible. He pumped a large load on her face, and onto her breasts, then braced himself so he wouldn't fully collapse over her. Ryan simultaneously shuddered, pulling Eric's hips back to him, and with one last thrust, moaned his own release.

They fell into a tangled tumble of bodies and limbs and wadded up sheets. Cassie marveled that this would be how she'd spend the rest of her life.

Chapter Nine

“Dr. Franklin, President Cummings is on line two.”

Cassie looked up from the dissertation she was editing and glanced at her phone. What the hell did the president of the university want with her today?

“Thanks, Carol. I’ll take it.”

She pushed line two and lifted the phone. “Cassie Franklin.”

“Dr. Franklin, we need to discuss the research grant you failed to acquire.”

Immediately, he got her attention. “Failed to acquire? I haven’t received any notification. When did you find out?”

“The announcements were made early this morning. I received a call a few minutes ago. Our proposal was—substandard.”

Cassie gulped. She never did anything substandard and she refused to believe that. “When would you like to discuss this?” She asked, gritting her teeth.

“Sooner the better. It’s almost noon. Come by my office at two o’clock. Today.”

“Yes. I’ll be there.”

He hung up the phone before she did and Cassie slowly returned the receiver. Immediately, she raced to Eric’s office.

* * * *

“Cassie, calm down. You are an excellent writer, and the proposal was definitely not substandard. You had input from the entire department, and several of us wrote different sections. There is nothing more you could have done. You did your best.”

She agreed with every word Eric said. “Yes,” she added, “but we didn’t get the grant.”

“The competition was very stiff. We knew that from the get-go. And our department has been fortunate the past few years with funding. Perhaps they thought we didn’t need it, or there was another school with greater need.”

With her fist under her chin, she wondered. “Maybe.”

“Meet with Cummings and listen to what he says.”

“I don’t know, Eric. Why do I have the feeling that there’s more to this?”

He shrugged. “What could it be? Don’t worry. You’re a competent professional. You’ll get through this afternoon, and next year, that grant is ours.”

She hoped so. Smiling, she looked at Eric and silently thanked whatever gods had brought him to her. The last two weeks since she’d moved in with Eric and Ryan had been pure heaven. She owed those gods big time. “You’re right. It will work out.”

He leaned into her and placed a kiss on her forehead. “Go get ‘em, tiger. I love you.”

* * * *

The red leather chair in the university president’s private office was cold, probably because the air conditioner was set at a terribly low temperature. So cold, in fact, that the old leather was stiff and crackly, as well as icy against her ass. She wondered if this tack was intentional, so guests would not linger.

President Cummings stared down at a document on his desk, his large frame equal to the massive desk he sat behind, and the very comfortable soft leather chair he sat in. He cleared his throat and looked up at her over his glasses.

“We depend on this funding. We’ve acquired it each funding cycle for the past ten years. I’m very disappointed.”

“Sir, I am rather disappointed myself. It was a good proposal.”

“Not good enough.”

“I look forward to receiving the comments from the reviewers when they are ready.”

He cocked his head. “I’m sure you would. However, Dr. Franklin, that will be none of your concern.”

That was the precise moment when something panged deep in her gut. Shit. “None of my concern?”

He stood. “Yes. I’m moving Dr. Caldwell into the department head position, Dr. Franklin. I’m not sure you have the experience or the professionalism to handle this position. Losing the grant was critical. Dr. Caldwell would have gone the length to have made sure we secured the funds.”

Dr. Caldwell would suck his dick, obviously, Cassie thought. “Oh? And what could she have done that I didn’t do?”

He rounded the desk and leaned into it, towering over her. “Aside from the grant, I don’t believe you can cut the mustard.”

“I’ll always do what I feel best for the university, sir.”

“At any cost?”

She narrowed her gaze. What the hell was he talking about? Abruptly, she stood and backed away from him, allowing her distance. “Cut to the chase, Dr. Cummings. What is it that you feel I cannot do?”

“Get rid of Eric Marsh. He’s a pain-in-the-ass pansy who is making too much noise about how successful his genre fiction writing classes are. Piece of trash, those classes. The students need to learn literature. Besides, I hear he’s gay.”

She could not believe what she was hearing. “Sir, this is the twenty-first century. You cannot fire Eric Marsh because he is gay.”

He arched a brow. “Oh? Did I say gay? I’m sure you misunderstood. If a rumor like that ever got started, Dr. Franklin, that I said such a thing, I believe there could be some sort of lawsuit. However, I do want Marsh gone. And if you can’t do it, then Dr. Campbell will.”

Crossing her arms over her chest, she paced several steps to her left. There was more. He was getting rid of her and Eric all in one fell swoop.

He knew. Somehow he knew that she and Eric and Ryan were living together. Did she care?

Turning, she lifted her chin. There was no use beating a dead horse here. She could fight him, for Eric and for herself. Or she could give in.

Well, she was already out the door...

“Dr. Cummings? You sir, are a royal asshole. A classic son-of-a-bitch. A homophobe. And pretty much of a jerk-off. Please give my condolences to Dr. Caldwell on her new position. My letter of resignation will be on your desk this afternoon. I will be gone in two weeks.”

She didn’t look back as she exited his office and slammed the thick oak door behind her.

Once she was in her car heading home, however, Cassie wasn’t so confident of her actions. She had defended herself and Eric, and that was good, but now she was without a job and where would that leave her? She certainly couldn’t support herself and contribute to the family without some sort of income.

She pulled into the drive and sat there for a moment. She had to tell them. Had to tell Eric, too. He needed to be prepared to protect himself. Hell, she'd only been with them for two weeks and already she was going to become a burden.

Shit.

Grasping her briefcase, she left the car and made her way to the house. Ryan came out of the kitchen and smiled at her, then frowned. Eric looked up from the computer. She collapsed on the couch, her bag tumbling to the floor. Her head suddenly pounded.

"You don't look so good," Ryan said.

"I need a drink."

Eric turned. "Are you okay?"

"No. We need to talk."

Both men exchanged glances. "Let's all get a drink," Eric said. "This doesn't sound good."

"Nice idea. It's not," she told them. "Make it something hard. And make it quick."

She lay back and threw her arm over her eyes. "Will someone make this headache go away?"

In no time, both men were doting.

"Here is some extra-strength pain reliever."

"Thanks," she told Ryan, "but not with the bourbon. You did bring bourbon, right?"

"Coming."

"How about a pillow for your head. Here." Eric crouched beside her and scooted a down pillow under her head. "Let me massage your temples." She closed her eyes and Eric started a slow and gentle rub.

"One bourbon on the rocks."

"Okay." She sat up and Eric moved back on his heels. Ryan handed her the drink and she took a hefty sip. "Okay." She sighed, the liquid burning a path down to her tummy. "That's better."

Ryan lifted her legs from the couch and he sat, placing them over his lap. "Don't tell us you're leaving."

She looked from one to the other. "I'm not planning to go anywhere. However, you may want me to after I tell you what I've done."

Eric grasped her hand. "Short of sleeping with someone other than us, I can't think of anything you could do that would make me want you to leave."

Sweet, sweet Eric. She palmed his cheek and smiled. "No, I've not slept with anyone else. I gave you both my promise." She cleared her throat. "I quit my job."

Ryan arched a brow. "That's it?"

Eric, however, looked a little more concerned. "What happened?"

She didn't want to tell him but felt she had no choice. He needed to know that Cummings was after him. So, she told them everything.

"Sonofabitch!" Eric shot up off the floor and paced. "How could he do that to you? I could punch that bastard in the face."

"Eric! You'll do no such thing."

"He's blowing steam," Ryan assured her.

"What will you do, Eric?" she asked. "He's going to get you fired. I didn't know what to do. I could have stood up for both of us more than I did, but I wimped out and quit."

He went to her and took her hands in his. "Cassie, sweetheart, you did the right thing. Don't worry about defending me. I was thinking of leaving anyway. I got a lot of work done on my crime novel while I was on sabbatical, and I think I have a publisher."

Her eyes widened. "That's fantastic! Why didn't you tell me?"

"Because it's not a done deal yet. I wanted to surprise you." He paused and peered into her eyes. "I'm more worried about you. How do you feel about losing your job?"

She shook her head and that's when the tears started falling. "I'm not as worried about losing that particular job as I am being a burden on the two of you. We're a family. I should have consulted you before I did something that stupid." She glanced back and forth between them. "I don't want you to be my keeper. I want to pull my weight. I have no clue how I will support myself and..."

This time it was Ryan who leaned closer and took her hands. "Love, honestly, you are not a burden, financially or in any other way."

"I should have talked with the two of your first. If you want me to leave..."

Ryan pulled her to him and kissed her lips. "Silly woman. We'll take care of you. Always."

"But the income. I've always taken care of myself."

He laughed again. "Darling, I'm independently wealthy. I own a couple of International companies, and let's just say I've made good business decisions. You'll be no burden on anyone. In fact, stay home and work on your book, too. Eric tells me you secretly want to write fiction."

She swallowed and looked at both of them. "Seriously?"

His mouth turned up in a smile. "Seriously."

* * * *

Cassie stirred the next morning, waking a little earlier than normal. She had found in the past two weeks that she, Ryan and Eric had settled into favorite sleeping positions. Ryan took the far side of the bed, she the middle, and Eric to her left. Usually, she was snuggled into one of their chests, while the other spooned her from behind.

This morning, Ryan lay on his back and she was draped over him. Eric's hands were slowly moving over her backside, probably the thing that had stirred her awake. She lay still, allowing his hands to roam, his cock resting against her ass. Slowly, he spooned closer and eased himself inside her. The sensation and emotion of that simple movement urged her body to awareness.

He began a slow gyration and she pushed backward to meet him. Ryan moved slightly now and turned into her. She caressed his chest and slipped her hands up to his neck, pulling his face closer. He kissed her tenderly, lovingly, while Eric pressed more urgently into her from behind. She was sandwiched between them, exactly where she wanted to be, and loving them both.

Eric's hand skimmed her hips and she lifted her leg to move it over Ryan. Reaching between them, Eric stroked Ryan's cock. But Cassie wanted more, so she moved fully over Ryan and straddled him, while Eric pulled out. In no time, she switched cocks to impale herself with Ryan's huge one. She rode him with slow and easy strokes, while watching his sleepy and pleasure-filled face.

Eric moved behind her and as easily as he had slipped into her pussy a few minutes earlier, he slid into her ass, filling her with both of her men.

She breathed deep, let the sensation overcome her, as she lay fully over Ryan. His large body was her anchor and she held onto him while his cock was firmly embedded inside her. Eric leaned over her and gently rocked in the same rhythm. She didn't dare break it, savored how it felt to make love to two men at once.

She was between them, safe, secure, content, and loved.

Nice and naughty.

What more could a girl want?

THE END

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To Rub, Honor and Obey by Melinda Barron

Moreen McGee is a perfect example of how poor decisions made in youthful rebellion can haunt someone for life. Now on probation for ten years, she serves her court-ordered community service at a center for troubled teens, in the hopes of stopping other kids from taking the wrong path.

But when one of her young charges pickpockets a wallet from her high school nemesis, Aliya Baban, Moreen decides to put the illicit skills she learned as a teenager to good use... by breaking into Aliya's apartment to return the stolen wallet, thus keeping the kid who stole it out of trouble and out of jail.

However, once she's in the opulent Manhattan flat, Moreen can't resist the urge to take one small token from the woman she still blames for her own downfall-an old, neglected oil lamp that she's sure Aliya will never miss.

Moreen accidentally summons a gorgeous demon-turned-pleasure djinni named Paran... and he's not too thrilled with the theft of his property. Moreen has rubbed his lamp, the contract is sealed. For the next thirty days, she belongs to him. And Paran intends to use this time to help his little felon learn some important lessons, including the true meaning of the words honor and obey.

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