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# *Lucky Charms*

A novella of sensual romance by

MARIE ROCHELLE

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A Phaze Production  
Phaze Books

6470A Glenway Avenue, #109  
Cincinnati, OH 45211-5222

Phaze is an imprint of Mundania Press, LLC.

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Cover art © 2008 Debi Lewis  
Edited by Amanda Faith

eBook ISBN-13: 978-1-60659-132-1

First Edition – March, 2009  
Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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# *Dedication*

To Richard:

Thanks for always taking time out of your day to talk.

Marie

# Chapter One

“I can go over there and talk to her. I’ve done it before,” he muttered to himself. “All I’ve to do is walk about ten steps and I’ll be there.” *Hurry up before someone else beats you to it.* Checking his appearance one last time in the mirror on the wall, Patrick Kaye slowly made his way over to the woman across the room.

He was proud that he made it without losing his nerve. Taking a deep breath, he touched her on the shoulder. “Hello, Jada. I didn’t think you were going to show up.”

A pair of eyes that made him think about steamy nights in the bedroom glanced at him over a smooth brown shoulder. “Hey, Patrick,” Jada Michaels smiled. “I’m surprised to see you here, too. I didn’t think these corporate parties were your thing.”

“Mr. Street told me I had to be here or it wouldn’t look good for the promotion. I would rather be at home,” he answered honestly. Patrick wondered, could Jada see how fast his heart was beating underneath his shirt.

“Well, he is right. You were a big part of everything coming together. We couldn’t have done it without you. I know that I owe you so much. You were so sweet to stay all those last nights here with me.”

“I didn’t mind staying here with you,” Patrick mumbled, pushing up his glasses with his index finger. “I lov—like working with you.” He prayed that Jada didn’t catch his slip of tongue.

“Oh, you’re such a sweetheart,” she grinned, making a deep dimple pop out in her right cheek. “I like working with you, too. You’re such a wonderful guy. I’m really surprised that your girlfriend isn’t here with you.”

*How can I want anyone else when I’m in love with you?* Patrick thought to himself.

“Hmmm...I don’t have a girlfriend,” he retorted.

“Really,” Jada exclaimed and then she pushed his glasses up again when they started slipping on his face. “You’re a cute guy. What’s wrong with these girls out there?”

Patrick moved from one foot to the other, trying to hide the erection Jada’s innocent touch just gave him. “I think most women think of me as a...”

“What?”

“Geek or nerd,” he replied. God, he *knew* that he wasn’t in the same league of guys that Jada dated. In the three months that his office had been across from hers, he never saw one guy that wasn’t model perfect come out of her office. She dated pretty boys and he wasn’t anywhere close to Brad Pitt or George Clooney.

“Let me tell you something. If a girl is too dumb to see how charming and kind you are, then you don’t need her. Don’t waste your time on her,” Jada said. “I’m beginning to think most of my friends have their heads screwed on wrong lately. I swear these past couple of months my friends have set me up with the worst men.”

“You’re not dating anyone? I thought you were seeing that guy named Evan,” Patrick stated. *Could he really be this lucky?* Maybe this was the chance he had been hoping for.

“Evan is a good friend and we go out a lot, but I’m looking for a guy that will romance me,” Jada sighed. “Someone who will think about me first instead of himself, but that will never happen to me. I seem to draw all of the losers.”

“Have you ever thought that your soul mate might be right in front of your face?” Patrick asked, sliding his hands into his pockets so he wouldn’t touch Jada. The warm scent of her perfume was making him *hot*. He wanted to touch her so badly and couldn’t. The main reason was she only thought of him as her co-worker/buddy and nothing else.

“Well, my soul mate better step up his game because I haven’t seen him. All I see in this room are men who enjoy making money and not much else.”

*You’re so wrong about that,* he thought. *I’m thinking about how to get you to notice me as a man and not your dependable old Patrick from across the hall.*

## LUCKY CHARMS

“When I start working on a new project, making money isn’t on my mind. I get pleasure from the work that I do. I really get into the computer programs I’m asked to write virus codes for. I find all of it a lot of fun. I finally have a job that I don’t mind getting up for everyday,” Patrick smiled. Honestly, he thought this job couldn’t get any better until the day Jada Michaels moved into the office across from his and then his whole opinion changed.

She was beautiful in the way a woman should be. Perfect Hershey-brown skin that looked totally mouth-watering in the purple dress she was wearing. That was one thing that he loved about Jada. She wore colors that brought out the richness of her skin. For months after she started working for *Charming Technology*, he always made it a habit to make a personal bet about what color Jada would wear to work.

“Did I tell you how exquisite you look tonight?” Patrick asked. He was so proud that he had enough nerve to voice his thoughts out loud.

Jada’s face lit up as she gave him a huge smile. It brought out the prettiness of her dark brown eyes. “You’re such a sweetheart. I can always count on you to make me feel better.”

“I’m glad that I can,” he smiled. “I like giving you compliments.”

“I’m always happy to get a compliment, but we have to find you a girlfriend to romance and captivate. Surely there’s someone you’re interested in dating?” Jada asked looking up at him.

Patrick glanced away from Jada trying to find a way to answer her question without giving himself away. She didn’t know that he was with the woman he wanted to be with tonight. He was so exultant that none of his co-workers were surrounding Jada like they usually did at these events. This time he had her all to himself and he couldn’t have been happier. Now all he had to do was just get her to look at him like a possible boyfriend material.

“There is someone, but she doesn’t know I have feelings for her. She only sees me as her favorite sidekick or something.” He tried to keep the bitterness out of his voice, but couldn’t. Jada was so perfect for him, but she constantly looked past him. She



probably hadn't even noticed the erection he had been sporting the past twenty minutes because of her.

"Do you really like this girl?"

Why did Jada think he was interested in dating girls? He was a grown man and he only got involved with women. "I'm not interested in dating girls. I want a woman and this particular woman would be my perfect match, but she's oblivious to the fact," Patrick complained.

"I like this side of you Patrick," Jada grinned, displaying that dimple he loved so much again.

"What are you talking about?" he frowned.

"Usually you're really quiet and laid back. Sometimes it's like pulling teeth to get an answer from you. I bet if you showed this woman you're interested in this kind of attention, she would stand up and take notice of you. You're a cute guy."

Patrick tried not to let Jada's words hurt him, but they did. She only thought of him as cute. *Great*. That wasn't going to get him anywhere with her. He had to do something to make her see him the way he hoped she would. It was time for him to go home and think about what he learned tonight. Jada was the woman he desired and he was going to find a way to get her.

"I think I'm going to call it a night."

"Lucky you," Jada sighed. "I'm waiting for Tina to show up. She wants me to go somewhere with her after the party. I hope it isn't another blind date. I'm so fed up with all these creeps who get tossed my way. I miss the kind of man who would send the woman he liked little love notes and made the romance slow and sweet. I guess that sounded old-fashioned, didn't it?"

"No, I think you should be able to get what you yearn for out of life and if that's what you desire, don't settle for a guy who won't give that to you." Patrick could barely stand still. He finally had an idea of the perfect way to make Jada his. Now all he had to do was set his plan in motion.

"Wonderful, Tina is here. I can't wait to see what she wants," Jada groaned looking past him toward the front entrance. "If she wasn't my best friend, I wouldn't have stayed this long and waited for her."

## LUCKY CHARMS

“Do you want to sneak out with me?” he suggested, secretly hoping Jada would agree.

“Sorry, I can’t. She already spotted me, but you have a wonderful night. I’ll see you tomorrow at work.” Jada touched him on the arm and then made her way across the room toward the blonde waving at her.

“Oh, you bet I’m going to see you tomorrow,” Patrick whispered. It was going to start part one of his plan to win over one Ms. Jada Michaels.

## *Chapter Two*

"I saw you last night talking to that sexy Patrick," Tina said as she joined her on the elevator before the doors closed. "He looked really ecstatic to be there with you. I told you he had a crush on you."

"Tina, you think every guy with a pulse is sexy and besides Patrick only sees me as a co-worker," Jada said, shaking her head. "You have too much free time on your hands. I told you stop trying to fix me up all the time. I'm waiting for my perfect match. Aren't you tired of dating losers?"

"I guess I am, but I hate being at home on a Friday night. So, what's wrong with going out with a guy? It's doesn't mean that I'm offering him anything else."

"Why don't you stop tossing the conversation on me and let's get back to you. Patrick Kaye would be a totally hottie if he got rid of those glasses and those clothes. He needs to spend some of his money on being more fashionable."

"Tina, Patrick is fine just the way he is. It's nice to finally be around a guy who isn't trying to be prettier than you are." Jada had lost count of how many guys that she had dated in the past who went to the spa more than her. What was wrong with a little chest hair on a man? Honestly, she thought it was really masculine.

"Are you talking about Evan? It freaked you out when he told you that he had everything shaved, didn't it?" Tina laughed as the elevator stopped on their floor and the doors opened.

"Do you really want to date a guy with a smooth body?" she frowned as she stepped off the elevator. "There just isn't something right about that. A man is a man for a reason and I happen to like the look of a real man."

"I wouldn't be so picky if I was you," Tina complained following behind her as she strolled in the direction of her office.

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The sound of phones ringing echoed in the background and, like usual, she was glad she didn't work on the floor like Tina. She loved having her office way in the back away from the all the chaos.

"Can we not get into this today?" Jada sighed stopping in the middle of the hallway. She turned back around and looked her friend in the eye. "I can't help it if I'm looking for Mr. Right. I've been in two bad relationships with guys who loved themselves more than me. I'm not going down that road again. So, unless you are going to support me, I don't want to hear you."

Holding up her hands, Tina backed away from her. "Hey, I'll leave it alone, but I still think you're missing out by having such high standards when it comes to the opposite sex."

"Okay, I hear you. I'll see you at lunch and try to stay out of trouble until then." Jada walked away from her best friend and into her office closing the door softly behind her.

Inside her office, Jada froze at the sight of a purple bag in the middle of her desk. "What in the world is that?" It wasn't her birthday, so why was there a present on her desk? She hurried over to her chair and took a seat. Picking up the bag, she noticed a small note attached to the side. She removed it and flipped open the card.

*Every time I see you my heart skips a beat.*

Reaching into the bag, she pulled out a small white box and removed the lid. Jada gasped at the small gold heart charm inside. She picked it up and she held it in the palm of her hand.

*Who sent this to her?* She didn't know of anyone who spent this kind of money on her. There wasn't a doubt in her mind that this one charm was worth a lot of money. She placed the small piece of jewelry back in the box and read the card again. The hand-writing didn't look familiar.

"Hey, what's going on with you? Why are you closed in your office?" Patrick's voice brought her out of her trance.

Jada glanced up and found Patrick standing right in front of her. She quickly shoved all the items back into the bag and slid it underneath her desk. "Sorry, I didn't hear you come in. How are you doing this morning?"

Patrick's bluish-grey eyes stared back at her through his wire-rimmed glasses. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, I'm fine," she answered standing up. Moving around her desk, she stood in front of Patrick and fixed his collar. It almost seemed like he had the hardest time in the morning getting dressed. She found the quality quite adorable. His collar or tie always seemed like it needed to be fixed.

"You look nice today." At least today he wasn't wearing two different patterns together like a striped tie and a printed shirt. The dark blue shirt and black tie brought out the small flecks of blue in his eyes. "Do you have a hot date for lunch or something?"

Patrick fixed his glasses and took a step back from her. "You know the only hot date I have is usually with my keyboard."

A part of her wondered why Patrick didn't have more dates. Sure, he wasn't the most gorgeous guy in the world, but he wasn't ugly either. If he spent a little more time picking out better clothes in the morning and got a decent haircut, he might turn into a nice-looking guy. A woman couldn't even tell if he had a good body or not from the clothes he wore. She would guess they were at least a size too big for his six foot four inch frame.

"Oh, now I know it isn't that bad," Jada laughed as she brushed something off the front of Patrick's shirt. She noticed how Patrick flinched and then quickly removed her hand off his chest.

"Is there something wrong?" she asked as he let go of her hand.

"No. I just don't want you to always fix my clothes for me. I can dress myself," he replied.

Jada tried not to be hurt at Patrick's comment because he was right. She was always redoing his clothes every time he came into her office. It probably has gotten on his nerves by now.

"I apologize," Jada said as she moved around him. "I was only trying to help. If I made you feel uncomfortable, I didn't mean to." She was halfway to the door when Patrick's voice stopped her.

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“Jada, I didn’t mean how it came out.”

Looking over her shoulder, she gave Patrick a quick smile. “Don’t worry about it. I need to see Tina about something. I’ll talk to you later.” With a small wave she was out the door and headed in the opposite direction.

Standing in the middle of the floor, Patrick watched as Jada got further and further away from him. Why in the hell did he open his mouth and scare her off? He had finally built up enough courage to talk to her about something besides work and now he was ruining their friendship.

Jada didn’t know the real reason he took her hand off his body. Anytime she touched him, his cock got hard instantly. It wasn’t right that she had that much sex appeal and wasn’t even aware of it. She just walked around the office like she wasn’t the best looking woman working here.

He heard how some of his male co-workers drooled over Tina because of her strawberry blonde hair. However, Jada was the ideal female in his eyes with her dark beauty. He was amazed that Jada was still single, because she was the total package in his opinion: brains and beauty. She was everything that he had been looking for in a woman.

However, he might have just ruined everything by telling her not to touch him. He loved the feel of her soft hands on his body. “Great. Now Jada is probably going to find a way to stay away from me.”

Patrick shook his head at his own stupidity. He turned to leave the room when Jada walked back through the door with a cup of coffee in her hand. He thought she looked stunning in her yellow shirt and black skirt. He had to swallow a couple of times before he choked on his words.

“Jada, I want to apologize for what I said earlier. I shouldn’t have jumped at you like that.”

“Patrick, you know that I could never stay mad at you. You’re too much of a good friend,” Jada smiled at him as she went past him and then took a seat. “Now, do you want to tell me what had you so upset?”

He couldn’t tell Jada what was really going on with him. She wasn’t ready to hear his true feelings yet. He had to hold out

a little longer. "I was just having a bad morning. You know how it can be sometimes," Patrick lied.

"I sure do. I have those days myself, but realize that I'm always here if you need to talk. That's what friends are for."

"What if I want more than friendship from you?" he mumbled under his breath.

"What did you say?" Jada asked giving him an odd look.

"I said I'll remember that." He knew that Jada would be so surprised if she found out that he craved so much more from her than friendship. He had to move slowly to ease out of the friend category, into the boyfriend, and lastly, lover.

"Have you approached the woman you told me about at the party? Did you ask her out on a date?" Jada asked totally throwing him off guard.

Patrick paused before he answered Jada. He didn't know what to say. If he said too much, he would give his true feelings away. Neither one of them were quite ready for that. He had to make sure that Jada felt the same way first. He was counting the days until she looked at him with love in her eyes.

"No. I haven't told her yet. I'm waiting for the right time. I want everything to be perfect before I let her know. She's so special and I don't want to mess it up. I've liked her for a while now, but she doesn't even know that I'm alive."

Jada folded her hands on the shiny surface of her desk and stared at him. "Is there anything that I can do to help you? Do you want me to talk to her? I can put in a good word for you. You're an amazing guy and any woman would be lucky to have you pay attention to her."

He couldn't believe that Jada was so interested in helping him. A part of him wondered how she would react if he threw caution to the wind and admitted his true feelings. Would she be happy? Or would there be an uncomfortable silence while she tried to find a way to let him down easily?

"No, that's okay. I think I can handle it, but thanks for the offer."

"All right. I only wanted to let you know that I'm here for you," Jada replied.

*Yeah, but not in the way I want,* he thought.

## LUCKY CHARMS

“That’s good to know,” Patrick answered. “Well, I better go. I have a stack of reports that I need to get done in my office. Do you think we can meet up later and do something together? I got a new DVD at home. I was wondering, would you like to watch it with me?”

“I thought our movie night was Tuesday?”

“It is, but I was trying to change things up,” Patrick answered.

“Oh, I can’t. I have plans with Tina,” Jada replied, “but I can change them.”

“No, don’t do that. Have fun with Tina. We can keep our movie night on Tuesday,” he said trying not to be disappointed. How was he ever going to get Jada to see him as more than a friend if they couldn’t spend more time together?

“Hey, what about I bring some food over tomorrow night and we can cook together? We haven’t done that in a long time.”

Patrick couldn’t think of a sexier sight than Jada cooking in his kitchen. He thought it was a wonderful idea. They hadn’t done that in a long time and it would give him a reason to be close to her outside the office environment.

“Sure, I love that idea. However, let me buy the food. I need to stop at the grocery store after work anyway.”

“Are you sure?” Jada inquired. “You’ve already paid for the movie and you brought the meal the last time we went out. I don’t want this friendship to be one-sided.”

“Jada, just say yes. I want to do this.”

He was rewarded with one of Jada’s brilliant smiles that lit up the room. “Okay, I’ll let you do it this time, but next time I’m going to pay for something.”

*Not if I have anything to say about it*, he thought. This was finally his time to shine and make Jada see him as more than an office buddy with this dinner. He was going to take small steps but he was going to get Jada to fall in love with him.



## *Chapter Three*

Jada sat back in her seat and watched Tina out on the dance floor grinding with another man. She was tired of coming out with Tina on her Monday night club-hopping activities. She would rather be out with a man that could appreciate who she was. With all the wonderful qualities that she had to offer, that hasn't happened in such a long time that she had forgotten what a good man was.

She just couldn't be like Tina and date endless loser after endless loser. She wanted and deserved something better. Her mother had constantly told her as a child not to settle for second best and she wasn't. However, she was almost ready to give up hope until she got her gift.

Taking her purse off the back of her chair, Jada dug inside and pulled out the small white box. Opening it, she picked up the small heart charm and held it in the palm of her hand.

"Who in the world gave this to me?" She went over the men she had dated in her head, but none of them were this romantic. Either they wanted to get her into bed as soon as she walked through the door or they spent more time talking about themselves and wouldn't give second thought to buying her a present.

She was touched by the gesture and wondered how the person was able to get into her office without anyone seeing them. *Could it be someone at work?* Jada thought, but she quickly shook the idea from her head. No, it wasn't anyone from her work place. Most of the guys there were old enough to be her father. Secondly, the few that were close to her age weren't the types to dish out money for a present. This was a mystery that had to be solved and she couldn't wait to do it.

Placing everything back into the box, Jada slipped the gift back into her purse. She took one more glance around the club

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then shook her head. This scene wasn't for her anymore. Tina may still love coming here everyday after work, but this was the last day for her. Standing up, Jada tossed some money on the table for her drink.

As she turned to leave, she ran into Tina coming off the dance floor with her date. "Where are you going? It's still early."

"It's getting late for me. I need to leave so I can get up early for work tomorrow. I need to make a stop first. So, I'll see you around eight thirty in my office. We can go over that report one last time."

"Are you sure you don't want to stay? The night is still young. Besides Greg wanted you to meet a friend of his," Tina said pointing to the guy next to her who was a cross between Lil' Wayne and Jay Z.

Jada wasn't in the mood to date or be around one of Tina's blind dates. She was tired and she was going home. "Thanks for the offer, but I really do need to get home. I'll see you at work tomorrow." She gave her friend a quick hug and left before Tina found a way to guilt her into staying.

\* \* \* \*

Grabbing a towel off the shower rack, Patrick wrapped it around his waist and hurried to his bedroom to answer the phone.

"Hello," he said out of breath.

"Patrick, it's me, Jada. Did I catch you at a bad time? You sound out of breath. I can let you go."

His heart leapt in his chest at the sound of Jada's smoky voice. "No, don't hang up. I was just in the shower and I had to run to catch the phone."

"Oh," Jada giggled.

"What's so funny?"

"I'm just imagining you standing there, dripping wet trying to talk to me on the phone."

Patrick wasn't happy that the thought of his naked body made Jada laugh. He wasn't a conceited guy, but he knew that he was in damn good shape. He purposely wore clothes that didn't show it off because he wanted a woman to want him for his mind

and not his body. Unless Jada was that woman, then she could drool over his body all her heart desired.

“Jada, did you call for a reason?” he asked trying to keep the anger out of his voice.

Jada must have sensed his mood because she apologized instantly. “Patrick, I’m sorry. I wasn’t laughing at you. My night turned out horrible and I was wondering if could I come over. I need a friend.”

*Friend...* He was counting the days until Jada no longer thought of him as a buddy. Maybe tonight could be the first stop in that direction. “Sure, come on over. You know that you’re always welcome. Grab the spare key and let yourself in.”

“Patrick, you’re the greatest. I don’t know what I would do without you.” Jada hung up before he got a chance to say another word.

“I’m going to work on making her see that I’m more than the fall-to guy after one of her dates goes bad.” Patrick let go of the towel and let it drop to the floor as he headed to his closet for something to wear.

## *Chapter Four*

“Thanks again for letting me come over. I know our dinner plans are tomorrow, but I needed someone and of course I thought of you.” Jada breezed in past him with a pizza and a liter of Pepsi. “I hope you’re hungry.”

*I’m always hungry for you*, Patrick thought as he closed the front door. “Sure, you know how much I love pizza,” he answered following Jada into his kitchen. He couldn’t help but notice how the dark blue jeans cupped her ass. His fingers were itching to touch the fabric. He didn’t doubt Jada’s behind would fit perfectly into his hands.

“Wonderful,” she smiled and then placed the food on the table. “Let me grab some plates, then we can talk.” Going over to the cabinets, Jada reached up to get two plates, but her fingers couldn’t quite reach them.

“Wait, let me help you.” Walking over to Jada, Patrick pressed his chest to her back and reached above her head, then grabbed two plates. “Do you need anything else?” he whispered as he ran his free hand underneath her breasts.

He bit back a grin when Jada shivered. “I’m here to help you anyway I can.”

“No, I’m fine,” Jada answered squirming at his light touch.

“Excellent. How about we eat and you tell me what your problem is?” Patrick stepped away from Jada and finished getting everything ready, but he could feel her eyes on him with every step he took.

\* \* \* \*

Spinning around, Jada watched as Patrick got the table ready for the meal. She couldn’t understand why her body

reacted the way it did to Patrick. He had been close to her a million times, so what was so different about tonight?

Sure, he was actually wearing a t-shirt that wasn't two sizes too big for his body. His hair was still a little damp from his shower and made the angles of his face stand out a little more. However, he was still her best friend Patrick Kaye. God, was she that hard up for a man now that she was looking at Patrick? She couldn't ruin their friendship by doing that. He was the person she leaned on for everything. She *really* needed to stop listening to Tina. Patrick wasn't interested in her that way at all.

"Jada, are you listening to me?" Patrick asked drawing her attention away from her inner thoughts.

"I'm sorry. What did you say?"

"I asked if you were you ready to eat. I love pizza and if you don't hurry up, I might eat it all up," Patrick teased.

"You would never do that to me." Moving away from the counter, Jada joined Patrick at the table.

"How do you know that?"

"You're too much of a gentleman for that. That's why I love being around you so much. You make me believe there are some good guys left in the world."

"Can I ask you something?" He grabbed two slices of pizza and placed them on his plate while he waited for her answer.

"Ask away." Jada took a slice of pizza and took a bite before she placed it on her plate.

"What happened tonight that made you come here? I thought you had plans with Tina."

"I did. We went out to a club. I watched her dance with different guys and knew I didn't want that anymore. She's a superior friend, but we're going down different roads."

"What road do you want to go down?" Patrick inquired.

"I'm looking for my mate. Not a guy for the night. I want someone who will be there for me to talk to. I dated jocks in high school and college, along with the good-looking guys at my previous jobs, but look what they got me—nothing. Now, I'm looking past brawn and looks. I'm searching for someone that has something going on for him; a man with a future."

"What if he doesn't come in the package that you're so fond of? Will you not want to be with him?"

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Jada honestly thought over Patrick's question. Was she so into having an attractive boyfriend that she couldn't date anyone else? "I know that I come off like a looks snob, but I'm not. I've grown a lot in the past couple of months. I'm ready to settle down with a good man. Outer appearances are on the back burner. Now, don't get me wrong. I do want someone who is attractive. However, that isn't the top item on my list anymore."

Leaning back in his chair, Patrick folded his arms over his chest and stared at her. "So, what's the top item on your list now?"

"Love," she replied without hesitation. "None of the guys in the past I dated because I loved them. I went out with them for various reasons and not one of those relationships worked out. I want to be in love now."

"You never know. Love might be right around the corner," Patrick exclaimed.

"I really hope so because I'm tired of being alone," Jada responded before taking another bite of her pizza.

## *Chapter Five*

*If I could, I would spend all of the seven days in a week with you.*

Jada flipped over the card trying to find out a clue about who the gift could be from. When she came into her office this morning, she found another bag waiting for her. But this time it was sitting on a table near her window instead of her desk. After closing her door, she had rushed over and opened it. Inside was a beautiful gold number seven along with a charm bracelet to place it on.

“Am I missing something? There has to be a reason for these gifts. Do I have a secret admirer?”

“Who are you talking to? Do I need to leave?”

Dropping the bracelet into her desk drawer, Jada glanced up and found Tina standing in her doorway looking very perky in a pink outfit. “Sorry, I didn’t hear you,” she apologized. “Come on in.”

“What happened last night? I thought you were going to stay longer than you did,” Tina complained coming into the room.

“I’m getting too old to find men at night clubs. I’m looking for *the* one, not the one for the moment anymore.”

“If I wasn’t so secure, I might take your comment personally,” Tina said taking a seat on the edge of her desk. “I’m not looking for my Prince Charming yet. I still like going out and having a good time.”

“I don’t mind having a good time, but I want to do it with one person,” Jada chimed in.

“I bet I know someone who would love being that special man in your life. He’s already a part of your life. All you have to do is take the next step.”

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“Tina, don’t start on Patrick again,” Jada complained. “He’s my friend and nothing else. Besides he’s interested in a woman and that woman isn’t me.” She didn’t want to think about her lapse in judgment last night. She almost wondered what it would be like to kiss Patrick. Tina was getting in her head and that wasn’t good at all.

“Fine. I’ll let it go, but I still think he could be made into a hottie. He just has to do something about those clothes. God, sometimes he looks like a character from those *Revenge of the Nerds* movies.”

“Stop it. You shouldn’t be so mean,” Jada admonished. “Patrick may not have the best fashion sense, but he’s cute and very sweet.”

Swinging her leg back and forth, Tina picked at her French manicure before glancing in her direction. “You make Patrick sound like a puppy from the pound. I wonder what he would think about that.”

“I never think of him like that. He’s a great guy. Any girl would be lucky to have him in their life.”

“If you say so.” Tina slid off her desk and headed for the door. “I still say he has a crush on you,” her best friend tossed out before she left the room.

Jada waited until she was sure Tina wasn’t coming back before she pulled the white box out of her purse. “I’m going to find out who has been sending me these gifts. Only a man who’s really interested in me would do this. However, I need help with this mystery and I have the perfect person in mind.

\* \* \* \*

Patrick sat in stunned silence as he listened to Jada’s suggestion. Tonight was their weekly dinner and she was asking him to do this. Did she not understand that he couldn’t help her? God, all he could think about was finding a way to strip her out of that canary yellow dress.

“I’m not following you,” he frowned. “What exactly do you want me to do?”

“I need you to keep an eye on my office. I have to find out who is sending me these.”



He watched as Jada opened her purse and pulled out a white box. Opening it, she showed him a gold charm bracelet with two charms on it. "That's a nice bracelet."

"I agree."

"Does that mean you'll help me with this?" Jada couldn't keep the eagerness out of her voice. She couldn't believe how excited she was about this. It was almost like going on a treasure hunt.

"Do you seriously want me to help you find out who this guy is? What if he doesn't come in the package you want? Would you be disappointed?"

Why was Patrick on her case about this unless what Tina had been telling her was true? Did Patrick have a crush on her? If it was true, what was she going to do about it? Could she move Patrick from the friends to the more than friends category? She gave her head a mental shake. No, she wasn't going to think about that. First, she had to find out more about her secret admirer.

"I won't be disappointed if he wasn't in the GQ package that I dated in my past. I told you that I'm changing my ways. So, are you going to help me?"

Moving closer to her on the lounge, Patrick tucked a strand of hair behind her ear. The light touch sent a tingling sensation down her spine. Jada wanted to move, but she was frozen by the look in Patrick's eyes. It was almost like she was getting lost in the dark blue of his. Even behind his brainy glasses they sparkled with a fire that she had never noticed before.

"I'll only help you if you let me do it my way. I know how you are. You can't ask me every day if I've seen this mystery man. When I find out something, I'll let you know. Do we have a deal?" Sticking out his hand, Patrick waited for her to shake it.

"We can do better than a hand shake," Jada laughed. Pushing Patrick's hand away she threw herself against his chest and hugged him. "I'm so glad that I can count on you."

It was a few minutes before Patrick's arms wrapped around her body and pressed her even closer. "Jada, you know that you can always count on me," his deep voice whispered beside her ear.

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As she was about to move away, Jada felt Patrick's fingers skim over her butt and give it a light squeeze. It was so quick that she might have missed it if her nipples hadn't hardened at the caress.

Slowly, easing out of Patrick's arms Jada moved back to her side of the couch. What was wrong with her? Was she so hard up for a man that Patrick's touch was turning her on? Yeah, it had been a while since she had sex, but she wasn't going to get it from her best friend. She *really* needed to get a life and fast.

"Hmmm...I think that I better go," she whispered standing up. "Thanks for helping me. She had...no needed to get out of here before the urge to kiss Patrick came over her again.

"Wait. Don't leave yet." Patrick stood up in front of her and ran his fingers through his hair.

Jada knew that when Patrick did that he was nervous about something. She found it so endearing. She had to admit he was kind of sexy in the studious guy sort of way. "What can I do for you?"

"I need a woman," he blurted out.

"WHAT!" Jada uttered, shocked and more than a little taken back. No matter how cute she thought Patrick was, she wasn't going to be his booty call. "Sorry, I misunderstood you. Can you repeat that?"

A blush covered Patrick's face as he removed his glasses and rubbed the bridge of his nose. "I didn't mean it the way it came out. I need your help winning over the woman I want. She's so special in every way, but I don't think I'm good enough for her."

She hated the pang of jealousy that rushed through her body. She should be excited that Patrick was interested in someone, however a part of her wasn't. She couldn't imagine Patrick falling in love with someone and him no longer being her go to person. Yet, she knew that she couldn't keep him to herself forever. He was too much of a good guy for that.

Plastering on a smile, she shoved her uneasiness out of the way. It wasn't right for her to ask Patrick for help and not give it in return. She wanted to be as good a friend to him as he was to her.

“First, you’re good enough for anyone.” Jada exclaimed as she pulled Patrick back down on the love seat. This settee had to be her favorite piece of furniture in his house. It was so comfortable and relaxing.

“Like I have said before, if she can’t see how amazing you are then mark her off your list and move on. There are a lot of women out there that would love to date a guy as wonderful as you.”

Patrick shook his head and placed his glasses back on his face. “I don’t think I can do that. I have liked her for a while now. I really want her to give me a chance.”

Jada realized that she wasn’t going to change Patrick’s mind. So, she was going to help him. “Okay, what can you tell me about her?”

A look of sheer pleasure came over Patrick’s features as he thought about her question. She had never seen it before and was a little jealous that she hadn’t placed it there.

“God, she’s a bundle of perfection,” he sighed. “I have never met anyone like her. She doesn’t fear anything. She dives in feet first and asks questions later. She’s opinionated, funny, and caring. All the qualities I’m looking for in a girlfriend. She possesses them. Yet, anytime I try to ask her out on a real date, I back out at the last minute.”

“You sound like a man in love,” Jada exclaimed.

“I’m not quite there yet, but I think I could fall in love with her. That’s why I need your help. I have to do something about my look. I know I won’t attract her looking like this.” Patrick waved at his hand over his checkered shirt and black pants.

A few new clothes would help everyone else see the man that she already did, but was she truly ready to share her Patrick with the world, especially this woman? “I can help you pick out a few new clothes after work this week. Do you have any special day in mind?”

“I can’t do it tomorrow. I have other plans. How about Wednesday after work? I want to start romancing her as soon as possible. Someone might snatch her up from right under my nose.”

“That might be a good thing,” Jada mumbled under her breath.

## LUCKY CHARMS

“Did you say something?” Patrick asked her.

“No, I was just thinking out loud. Let’s get on to the next topic. Do you want to romance her or just have her notice you? They are two different things.”

Tilting his head to the side, Patrick acted like he was really pondering her question. “Well, I guess I’ll have to get her to notice me so I’ll be able to romance her.”

Jada honestly didn’t want to help Patrick land this woman, because it would change their relationship. However, Patrick was her friend and she would do whatever she could to help him with this.

“Have you sent her flowers, candy, or maybe some chocolate?”

Patrick shook his head. “No, I didn’t do that. I wanted to do something more unique than that. She deserves more than the usual stuff men do to get a woman’s attention.”

“Wow, you’re really into her,” Jada said. “Do I know her?”

\* \* \* \*

Patrick studied Jada and was stunned that she hadn’t figured out she was the woman he was referring to and craved to have in his life. Did she not notice the little hints and come-ons that he had been giving to her lately? He thought for sure when he ran his hands over her perfect ass that she would have figured it out.

When had he ever touched her like that? However, Jada was so good at brushing things off that she probably never gave the touch a second thought. But he was going to change the way she looked at him. If she felt anything for him, it would come out while she was helping him do this. This had to work, or he didn’t know what he was going to do.

“No, you don’t know her,” Patrick lied, hoping Jada wouldn’t question him any further.

“Where did you meet her? Maybe that will help me figure out something you can do for her.”

*Damn it*, he thought. Jada wasn’t going to let this go. She would dig until she got what she wanted. “I was out buying some groceries and I saw her. She shops at the same place that I do. I was instantly attracted to her. In my opinion, she’s better looking

than Angelina Jolie.” Patrick prayed that would give Jada enough information, because he didn’t know what else to tell her without giving himself away.

“She really must be hot for you to say that,” Jada replied with a hint of something in her voice.

Patrick couldn’t quite put his finger on it. With everything in him, he prayed that she was jealous. A part of him felt bad for making up a fictitious woman, but he was desperate now. He was willingly to do anything to get Jada to notice him. “She’s more than hot. She’s perfect with a capital P.”

A strange light flashed in Jada’s eyes before she gave him a small smile. “Okay, I’ll help you land her. I want you to be happy.”

He could barely contain his excitement. Jada was going to help him with his pursuit of her and she was clueless to the fact. He felt a warm glow racing through him. A newly awakened sense of determination filled him.

“Oh, I’ll be the happiest man in the world once I get her. I’ve been admiring her from a far way too long. It’s past time I acted on my emotions.”

“Since I’m going to help you, does this mean you’re going to return the favor?” Jada asked.

A huge grin spread across Patrick’s face as he pushed his glasses. “It would be my pleasure.”

## *Chapter Six*

Patrick glanced at the computer screen and couldn't believe his eyes. God, he couldn't fall in love with Jada more than he already was. She had actually sent him a list of things to do to win over the fake woman he told her about.

Shaking his head, he picked up the charm on the table and held it in the palm of his hand. Four days had past since he gave her the number seven charm and he didn't want to become predictable with his gifts. He was very pleased that Jada was enjoying his game so much.

After talking to her at the office party, he realized that he was going about winning her over the wrong way. She came off as independent and self-sufficient, but a part of her wanted to be showered with gifts and attention. He was willing to pamper her with anything and everything that she desired. He absolutely had the money to do it and he wanted to spend it on her.

God, he lost count of how many times he would be brushing his teeth in the morning and wondered were all the good women were. Sure, he wasn't a virgin. He had sex with women in the past, but he wanted to make love. The second he spotted Jada Michaels, his whole body knew that she was the person he wanted to make love to for the rest of his life.

Without giving himself that kick at the party to approach Jada, he might not be doing this secret admirer thing right now. She knew him as a coworker/buddy, yet he was going to show her that he was the man she could fall in love with.

Jada filled in the areas of his life that he was lacking. Where he liked staying at home and relaxing, she loved going out and having fun. He loved numbers and working with any kind of figures. Yet, he hated endless reports and presentations. Jada was totally the opposite. She loved the report portion and hated working with numbers, so they made the perfect team.

He would never forget the first time it hit him that he was in love with Jada. She had been in the employees' lounge fixing herself something to eat. He had walked in at the same time she turned around.

Jada gave him a huge smile and his stomach got this funny feeling and all he could do was nod at her as she left the room. He felt like such a loser. He knew for sure that she would *never* speak to him again. However, later on that day she came to his office and asked for his help with some numbers.

After getting over being tongue-tied, he had shown her the mistake and they became instant friends. At least in her eyes they were. She was clueless how he already felt about her. He used to laugh when people talked about love at first sight until he saw Jada. Then he became a believer.

So, instead of trying to ask her out on a date and let her know how he felt, he was in pain as she dated loser after loser wondering when she was finally going to notice him. Now, since Jada was single, this was his chance. He sure in the hell wasn't going to lose it. Jada was starting to get attracted to him. He could feel how her eyes were on him the other day when she came over for pizza. It was almost like she wanted him to kiss her.

Patrick went over several things in his mind that could have caused him to fall in love with Jada. Was it her good looks? Maybe it was the scent she wore. No, it was the sexy way she walked into a room. After debating over this for a while he finally figured it out; he just loved Jada for who she was all around and nothing else.

Rubbing the cool charm between his fingers, he thought about how he was going to give this to her. He was glad she asked for his help about her secret admirer instead of Tina. He already thought her best friend was on to his secret. He didn't need her messing this up for him.

Tina wasn't a bad person, but she was forever fixing Jada up with guys who weren't good enough for her. Tina loved dating men without a goal in sight. Jada didn't need that in her life. She deserved a stable and successful man with a future and he was that man.

## *Chapter Seven*

“How in the hell did that get in here?” Jada stared at the small yellow bag inside her briefcase. She hadn’t gotten a gift in five days and now here was something. Did she even want to open it? She had decided to work on some paperwork at the library instead of home.

It was getting really lonely there now. Before she just dealt with it because Patrick usually came over at least twice a week to keep her company and they always had an amazing time. However, now since he was trying to win over his mystery woman, he hadn’t been over. He had called, but she missed it so he left a message asking could they get together later on in the week.

She really wanted to be excited for Patrick, yet secretly she was worried because she wasn’t the most important woman in his life anymore. Was that horrible of her that she wanted someone, but didn’t like thinking about Patrick having the same thing?

*Why don’t you admit that you’re thinking about Patrick in just more than friend mode now?* her mind taunted. No, that wasn’t the reason. She had someone interested in her. She couldn’t think about Patrick in that way. He was her friend and it was going to stay like that forever. It was ludicrous for her the even let the thought enter her mind.

“I’m done thinking about Patrick’s love life,” Jada exclaimed as she picked up the bag. She looked around the semi-empty library to make sure no one was looking at her before pulling out the same white box.

Opening it, she stared at the gorgeous gold elephant charm inside. She couldn’t get over how elegant it was. She laid the box to the side and read the typed note.



*An elephant never forgets and I'll never forget the first time I saw you.*

"Who in the world is this?" Jada whispered touching the elephant charm inside the box. This person was finding a way to romance her that none of her self-centered boyfriends ever thought about in her previous relationship. It was so charming.

Taking the charm bracelet off her wrist, Jada added the new elephant charm to the other two. She loved how they looked on her arm. At first, she was a little worried about wearing the bracelet since she didn't have a clue who was sending them to her. However, none of the notes were threatening or making her nervous in anyway. So, she decided to throw caution to the wind and wear them.

All these little presents were starting to make her feel pretty special. She couldn't remember the last time she couldn't wait for something to happen. Now, with these charms, she constantly was looking around her office for a brightly colored bag. However, her admirer surprised her this time and placed it in her satchel. She really needed to talk to Patrick about this and see if he had found anything.

She had been so swamped with work that she wasn't able to talk with Patrick too much this week. She even had to reschedule their shopping date. Jada didn't want to let the thought enter her mind that she did it for a different reason.

*Admit that your jealous Patrick has another woman in his life.* "I don't care if he's interested in someone else," she muttered to herself and then stopped when the librarian at the front desk tossed her a strange look. She was thrilled Patrick had found someone to be interested in. It put to rest the suggestion Tina had about Patrick having a crush on her and she was overjoyed. Because the other day Patrick had been in his office, she went in there to ask him some questions and almost stumbled in her tracks.

The air conditioner had been messed up for the past couple of hours, so everyone was doing everything they could to stay cool while the repairman worked on it. The top two buttons on Patrick's shirt had been unbuttoned and she caught a glimpse of thick black chest hair. In addition, his glasses had been off as he

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read something on the computer. Patrick had looked so *damn* hot that she almost drenched her panties.

Jada still didn't know how she made it through the entire conversation looking straight into his eyes when all she was dying to do was run her fingers through all of that yummy, thick chest hair. God, she was lusting after her co-worker when he was interested in another woman. Plus, she had totally forgotten about her secret admirer when she spotted Patrick.

Why did he let himself look like a computer geek when he could be made into a fine ass hottie? Maybe that's why he was asking for her help. This woman he was crazy about wanted that kind of guy. For some reason, it upset her that Patrick would change himself for someone. Sure, she had been drooling over the sexy image he presented today, but she still liked the sweet, caring guy Patrick was.

What if this mini make over made him into a person she didn't want to be around anymore? She was fed up with the materialistic guys from her past. Patrick was such a breath of fresh air. Could she really help him change the part of him she liked the most?

"I need to think about this some more. I'm not sure if I can go through with this or not. I love Patrick the way he is," Jada said to herself ignoring the odd looks the librarian gave her again. "I'll talk about this tomorrow with him at work. Surely, I can talk some sense into him."

Fingering the charm bracelet on her wrist, Jada let her mind wander back to her mystery man. Was she really being a good friend? She was making Patrick help with finding out who was sending her all of this wonderful presents, but she was thinking of a way to back out on him.

One thing was for sure. She had to get over this sudden attraction she was feeling toward Patrick or she was going to lose his friendship if she wasn't going to destroy it after she told him he shouldn't change his looks.

## *Chapter Eight*

“Let me kiss you.”

Jada slowly turned her head away from the television and stared at Patrick sitting next to her on the couch. She was still trying to find a way to tell him he shouldn't change his image for a woman. It wasn't as easy as it seemed in her plan at the library. Today at work she had strolled into his office several times to tell him and for some reason the words just wouldn't come out. So, instead of blurting out the truth, she invited him over for dinner and a movie. Now, out of the clear blue, Patrick wanted to kiss her. What in the hell was going on here?

“Excuse me?” she exclaimed. “Did I hear you correctly?” Of course, Patrick was going to say no and she could go back to watching the horror marathon.

“I said let me kiss you,” he answered looking her directly in the eye.

“WHAT!” Jada sputtered. “Why do you want to kiss me when you're interested in another woman?”

“See...that's the problem. I'm beginning to think the reason I can't keep a girlfriend is because I'm a horrible kisser. Since you're like my best friend, I wanted to kiss you to see if what I thought is true. Kissing is one of those pastimes that couples love to do. I can't expect to be in a relationship if I can't keep up my end. So, will you let me kiss you? I know that you'll give me an honest answer.”

“Are you saying this is like an experiment and I'm your guinea pig?” Jada wasn't sure if she liked the sound of that.

“No,” Patrick answered instantly. “I would never think of you as a guinea pig or a lab rat. But what I lov...like about you the most is your honesty. I know that you'll give it to me like it is. Since you're going to help me with my clothing style, I

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thought I should work on the other aspects of myself too. Will you do it?"

Completely facing Patrick, Jada noticed how dark blue his eyes looked behind his glasses. Was it her imagination or did his shirt seem to stretch more across his wide chest. Why hadn't she noticed how good Patrick smelled? All of a sudden the thought of kissing Patrick didn't seem half bad at all. He was a good guy and she had kissed worse men in her lifetime.

"Sure, I'll let you kiss me. Yet, remember; I'm going to give you an honest answer."

"I wouldn't think anything less of you Jada," Patrick whispered as he took off his glasses and tossed them down on the table. A second later, Patrick wrapped his large hands around her upper arms and pulled her hard against his chest.

The contact made her nipples harden instantly and she wondered could Patrick feel it, but he wasn't acting like he did. Instead, he was staring at her mouth like it was the most expensive piece of chocolate in the world.

The pad of his thumb brushed over her bottom lip making tiny shivers race through her body. It wasn't right that Patrick was making her start to look at him in a different light. He was going to be untouchable pretty soon, so she had to keep her head about this. She was only helping out her friend and nothing more.

"Do you think women like to be kiss fast and hard? Or slow and tenderly then let the build up happen?" Patrick asked moving his thumb so it stroked the side of her face. "I need to make sure I have this down perfectly."

Jada didn't understand what was going on with her. For some reason, Patrick's nearness was making her head spin. She was feeling a wave of excitement coursing through her at the thought of his mouth of hers.

"I think most women like a mixture of both. We don't want a guy who is going to shove his tongue instantly into our mouths. We like a little build up."

"I believe I understand what you're saying," Patrick exclaimed as he leaned closer and gently nibbled at her bottom lip.

Jada felt a moan coming and tried to swallow it back down, but failed miserably. She couldn't believe how good and right Patrick's mouth felt teasing her. Great, how was she going to be able to only see him as a friend now?

Raising his mouth from her, he gazed into her eyes. "Was that good?"

"Yes, I think we can stop now." She tried to move back, but Patrick wouldn't loosen his grip.

"I'm not done yet. I think I need more practice." Patrick slowly moved his mouth to her earlobe and gently pulled it into his moist mouth.

The flicker of his tongue sent a burst of longing straight to her kitty kat. Closing her eyes, Jada leaned closer to Patrick and allowed herself to get lost in the feeling. God, she didn't know the last time a guy found her spot. It was unbelievable that she was feeling like this with Patrick out of all people.

"How are you feeling?" he breathed against her neck the second he let go of her ear.

"Good," she whimpered, turning, allowing him better access.

"That's what I wanted to hear," Patrick growled then recaptured her mouth. The touch of his lips was a delicious sensation that she was loving every second of.

Jada lost all thought as Patrick pulled her between his thighs and traced her back with the tips of his fingers. She was so into the kiss that she didn't realize his tongue was in her mouth until it licked at hers.

Little by little, her common sense started coming back to her and what she was doing. Peeking at Patrick from underneath her lashes, Jada saw that his eyes were completely closed with a look of pure bliss on his face.

The sight of his thick lashes framing his cheek and the scent of his cologne made her want to get lost in the kiss, but she couldn't. It had been a huge mistake starting this in the first place.

Without warning, Patrick's eyes popped open and the smoldering flame she saw there startled her. A tingling awareness started in the pit of her stomach and slid its way through her limbs. Jada quickly ended the kiss and scooted back

from Patrick. Placing her hand over her racing heart, she took several deep breaths. While she was desperately trying to get her body under control, she noticed that Patrick was doing some hard breathing of his own. What in the hell was she doing allowing the kiss to go that far? She could only guess what Patrick was thinking about her now.

"I need to go," Jada said stumbling as she got up from the couch. She snatched up her purse and then made a beeline for the door. She was about to open it when Patrick's hand shot out stopping her.

"Jada, don't leave. We need to talk. There's something I have to tell you."

No, she didn't want to hear this. Patrick wouldn't let her take the blame for the kiss getting out of hand. So, he would find a way to pretend she hadn't just acted like a sex-deprived manic. Lord, how could she ever look at him in the eye again?

"Please let me leave," she retorted trying to keep her feelings at bay. "I'm already embarrassed enough."

"There's nothing to be ashamed of or humiliated about. I wanted that kiss as much as you did. Shit, I probably wanted it more. Stay and let's talk through this," he suggested, softly by her ear.

"I can't. You're interested in another woman and I'm trying to find out who my secret admirer is. So, we haven't got anything to discuss."

Added to her sense of disappointment in herself was a feeling of guilt. She was always thinking about how Tina's behavior bothered her, but tonight she acted worst. Tina never went after a man who was interested in someone else. All her one-night stands were single and available to want the same crazy things she did. Now, she was the hypocrite and she wasn't able to tell Tina what happened here.

"I'm not letting you leave like this. You're upset and I want to help you with that," Patrick said moving closer to her body.

The warmth of his nearness was starting to seep into her body and it was driving her crazy. She needed to leave before she did something crazy. Like beg Patrick to kiss her again when she knew it was wrong.

“Patrick, if you value our friendship, please move back and allow me to leave.”

Minutes seemed to tick past and Jada thought Patrick wasn't going to do as she requested, but his hand finally left the door and he took a step back.

Jada breathed out a sigh of relief. Patrick wasn't going to push her. “Thank you.” She opened the door quickly and stepped outside.

“Jada, wait,” Patrick's voice called after her.

Pausing on the sidewalk, Jada waited to hear what he had to say. She was so torn. All she wanted to do was go home and crawl into bed. Tonight turned out totally different than she had planned it. She had wanted to talk to Patrick about not changing his appearance and she ended up going at it with him on the couch instead. For some reason, that kiss brought out her inner sexpot.

“Are we still friends?” he asked.

“I honestly don't know.” Hurrying down the sidewalk, Jada got into her car and drove off.

## *Chapter Nine*

*What the fuck was wrong with him?* Patrick thought as he slammed his front door closed. Everything was going so well with Jada until he slipped his tongue in her hot little mouth. But he couldn't help it. He had been dying to taste her for a while. God, he wouldn't be able to push the warm, sweet taste of her out of his mind.

"Why didn't I leave well-enough alone?"

Patrick knew why. His body was at a slow ache all the time when he was within touching distance of her tight body. The pleasure of kissing her was pure and explosive. His impatience with waiting for Jada to come around was growing more explosive each day.

He took everything he had in him not to skim his hands down those perfect legs of hers. All he wanted to do was confess his true feelings, but Jada still wasn't ready for that. Despite the fact he was her secret admirer, he was getting jealous at Jada's reactions to all of the gifts.

All she talked about tonight before the movie started was the elephant charm. Hell, he was pleased that he knew her so well. But it was hard not to stake his claim and tell her she was his everything.

Jada was the perfect piece that he had been missing from his life. His cock grew even harder as he remembered how responsive she had been with him. He really thought the kiss would show Jada how he felt, but he was beginning to think it only shoved her further away from him.

Jada needed to open her eyes when it came to him. Didn't she see that he could give her all the romance, love, sensuality, and passion she desired in the past from all of her bad relationships? Usually he was a pretty laid back guy, but since he met her all he thought about doing was staking his claim on her.



Running his hands down his face, Patrick paced around his living room and thought about Jada and how she was turning him inside out. Everything about her had him tied up in knots. The flawless perfection of her smooth mahogany skin, the cute way her mouth turned up at the corners when she smiled. Even the adorable way her nose wrinkled up when she laughed at one of his dumb jokes.

“You can do this. Just stay focused and get back on the right path.” First thing tomorrow he would come clean about his pretend crush with Jada. Once she knew that he was trying to impress her and that was all out in the open, he would reveal he was the one sending her the charms. Hopefully, she would forgive him and all the misunderstandings will be shoved in the past.

\* \* \* \*

Sneaking around the desk, Patrick dropped the bag inside of Jada’s oversized purse. He had to get out of here before she came back from her meeting. After sleeping on it last night, he decided not to tell Jada yet that he was her secret charm giver. He loved how good getting the gifts made Jada feel. He wasn’t going to take that away from her. He’d find a way to work things out, because he only had one essential goal in mind—to have Jada in his life forever.

Patrick was halfway to the door when it swung open and Jada walked inside her office looking gorgeous in a purple shirt and matching skirt. God, he couldn’t get how good she tasted and felt in his arms out of his mind. It was going to be hard to keep pretending he didn’t want to ravish her every second of the day.

“Patrick, what are you doing in my office?” Jada asked coming in closing the door behind her.

He didn’t have an answer until he noticed several files in her hands. “I came by to get the Smithson file. There are some codes that I need to check over. You know how the computer geek in me needs to make sure everything is accurate.”

“Oh, I took it to the meeting with me. Let me get it for you,” she replied going to her work area.

## LUCKY CHARMS

Moving past him, he noticed that Jada peeked at him from the corner of her eye. He knew she was wondering if he was going to bring up the kiss from last night. He wanted to but he was debating on how he should say it. The kiss was hot and something he truly wouldn't mind doing again and again.

Jada searched through the files and found the one he mentioned. "Here you go," she said handing him the thick manila folder.

Patrick hated how the easy banter he had with Jada was now suffering by what happened between them last night. He had to fix it and fast. He grabbed the report and tossed it down. "Jada, we can't pretend that the kiss never happened," he said moving closer to her until not an inch separated them.

"Yes, we can," Jada retorted stepping back until the back of her legs hit her chair. "I shouldn't have let you kiss me. It was wrong. You're interested in someone else and I'm not like that."

"Like what?" he frowned.

"I don't flirt with men who are interested in another woman. I think it's wrong."

*Shit*, he was totally messing things up with Jada. Now, she thought he was trying to make her the other woman and that was so far from the truth. He absolutely had to fix things now or his future with her would be ruined.

"Jada, there isn't another woman," Patrick confessed.

"What...you told me about her?"

"Yeah, I thought she might be, but it turned out she wasn't the one for me. I learned that last night."

"No. Please don't tell me that our kiss had something to do with that."

Reaching out, he traced her bottom lip with his finger. Patrick noticed how Jada's breathing changed becoming a little faster. It made his cock twitch and grow harder. She was attracted to him. She just was having a hard time admitting to it.

"Didn't you enjoy our kiss last night?" he asked boxing her in the small area with his body. He couldn't let this day go on with kissing her again. It would be on his mind all day and none of his work would get done.

"We can't do this."

“Do what? Friends kiss all the time.” Bending down, Patrick brushed his mouth over Jada’s. The sweet taste of her made his cock throb, begging for a release.

“Friends don’t kiss the way we did last night,” she breathed against his lips.

“With all that raw sexual need,” he asked then nibbled at her bottom lip. “Maybe our bodies are trying to tell us something our minds don’t want to accept.”

“This is so wrong.” Jada said stepping back from him.

“See, we have a difference in opinion. I never felt something so right in my life.” Patrick wanted to reach for Jada again, but the look on her face stopped him. She was scared about taking them to the next level. So, he was going to back off for now, however, he wasn’t giving up on making her his.

“Okay, I’m going to leave, but I want you to think about our kiss. It wasn’t as horrible as you’re making it out to be.” Patrick strolled back around the desk, picked up the file, and left. He didn’t have to look back at Jada to know she was looking at him.

## *Chapter Ten*

“Man, I have never seen you this upset before over a woman. You’re totally ruining our poker night.”

Patrick tossed his cards down on the poker table and glared at Adam. They had been friends since Adam started working in the accounting department about two years ago.

“You know that I have been in love with Jada for a while. However, she keeps tossing me into the friends category,” Patrick complained thinking about how Jada found a way to avoid him for the rest of the day. He was hoping she would come to him about the newest charm he left for her, but she didn’t and it had him a little worried.

“Are you willing to risk the excellent friendship you have with Jada?” Adam questioned.

“I’m not risking my friendship with Jada. I only want to make it better,” he corrected. Adam was such a ladies man that he didn’t understand his feelings for Jada.

“Oh, you want a friend’s with benefits thing. I get you now. Those are the best kind of relationships, especially when the woman agrees with you. I had a couple in my life and I have to say I enjoyed them immensely.”

“Hell...no, I don’t want a friend’s with benefits with Jada. She’s the woman I want to marry. However, after the kiss I planted on her, I think she’s trying to hide from me and I’m pissed about it.”

Adam gawked at him for a minute or two like he didn’t believe him. “You finally kissed Jada? How was it? She’s one of the hottest women at work. I can’t figure out if I love her ass or dimples more.”

Patrick knew his friend as very outspoken, but he couldn’t let Adam disrespect Jada like that. She was the woman he

wanted to marry, not a woman he picked up at a bar for a quickie lay.

“Adam, if you don’t want me to toss your ass out of here, you’ll watch your mouth when it comes to Jada.” The angry retort hardened Patrick’s handsome features.

Waving a hand in his direction, Adam shook his head. “Calm down. I wasn’t trying to disrespect your woman. I was only joking around,” his friend apologized.

“I’m glad you apologized because it wasn’t funny at all. I’m warning you not to do it again.” Patrick knew he was overreacting a little, but he couldn’t help it. He was in love with Jada and he wasn’t about to stand for anyone talking bad about her. “I’m serious...I wouldn’t want to have to hurt you.”

His friend stared at him and then burst out laughing. “You aren’t going to do anything to me.”

“Why won’t I?”

“I’m the only person that you can call and complain about Jada to. Besides, I know you aren’t going to get rid of me. We have too good of a friendship. Plus, I’m the only person who can give you a run for your money when it comes to poker.”

Gathering up the chips, Patrick placed them back into their container. He hated that Adam was right. He couldn’t confide in anyone else how he felt about Jada. In addition, Adam was more like a brother to him than a best friend.

“I have a question for you,” Adam tossed at him. Gathering up the cards, he shoved them back into the box.

“What?” Patrick asked. There was no telling what was about to come from his friend’s mouth.

“Why don’t you drop this entire pretense and let Jada know you want her? Does she even know you really don’t need those horrible glasses? It’s not like if you take them off you’re going to look like Mister Magoo or anything. Step up to the plate. Take matters into your own hands. If you really need fashion advice, I can nominate you for an episode of What Not To Wear.”

Patrick let Adam’s flippant comments go right over his head. His friend’s sense of humor was on a totally different scale than his. However, he couldn’t stop himself from wondering what would happen if he did as Adam suggested. Would she like him being more forceful—not in a bad way—but a good way?

## LUCKY CHARMS

Sure, he was now more confident in his ability to bring Jada's attraction out for him. But she had already been through so many bad relationships. He didn't want to be another male that caused her any kind of heart ache or pain.

Yet, the question did hammer at him. How would Jada take it if he truly came on to her and left nothing out? The harder he tried to ignore the truth, the more it persisted. It was time to do something drastic so Jada would move him from the best friend category to lover.

"Are you thinking about what I said?" Adam asked him. "Patrick, you have to stop playing the bosom buddy. It's working against your ultimate goal. Don't you know the saying that good guys finish last? Do you honestly want to chance some other man taking Jada away from you?"

"You're saying I'm being counter-productive?"

"YES!" Adam practically yelled at him. "Show Jada a different side and I bet she'll look at you in a whole new light."

Patrick wasn't dense. He understood what Adam was telling him. "Okay, I have a couple of ideas. I'm going to try some of them at work next week." He had waited too long to come this far to lose Jada. He may not be smooth as some of the guys she had been with in the past. However, he was confident and knew now that part of Jada enjoyed kissing him. He wasn't going to let that juicy piece of information go to waste.

"First, don't wait that long. Find a way to have a date with her tomorrow. The sooner you get her into you, the better. Also, are you going to share the details with me? I was the one who told you to go after Jada in the first place? You only wanted to admire her from a far," Adam exclaimed.

Hell, he wasn't a damn boy. He was an adult. He knew his way around a woman even if Adam didn't believe it. He hadn't been a virgin for a very very long time. He wasn't at all worried about his abilities in the bedroom. Jada was in for an excellent surprise. Patrick couldn't keep the smile off his lips. No...Jada would be begging for him not to stop once he finally got to make love to her.

"No, I'm not telling you a thing. I don't want to mess anything up. If all turns out the way I want it to, you'll see a difference in me."

\* \* \* \*

Sitting up in bed, Jada held the white box in her hands and debated what to do with it. She wanted to open it, but a tiny part of her was screaming not to. She had been shocked as hell to find it tucked inside her purse at work. This guy was lucky as hell she didn't walk in on him. She was very picky about people touching her personal stuff, and for sure her purse was off limits. But she was thrilled at seeing the box until reality set in.

Her mystery man was still giving her presents and she was starting to have little dirty thoughts about Patrick. Like how he would look without his shirt or how it would feel to kiss him for longer than a few minutes. Did he know how to use that thick tongue of his that well anywhere else on her body?

How could she still want to know who this man was? She couldn't deny that another part of her was secretly becoming more attracted to Patrick each and every day. Today, at work all she was craving his lips on hers again. God, her mind was beginning to hurt going back and forth like this.

She shouldn't think about Patrick in any other capacity but her buddy. She couldn't chance their friendship with a romance. *What if something went horrible wrong?* Then there would be those awkward exchanges between them, making it hard to deal with each other at work. No, she wasn't willing to risk that not at all.

"Okay, charm giver here I come." Jada picked up the note beside her leg and read it.

*You're my lucky charm.*

Opening up the box, Jada's mouth fell open at the horseshoe charm on the inside. It was almost too beautiful for words. "I have to find out who this is. I can't rely on Patrick for help. He's dealing with his own personal problems and things have changed so much since I first asked his help."

Reaching across the bed, she took the bracelet off the nightstand and added her latest gift. She admired it for a while before she laid it back on the stand. Turning off the light, she snuggled between the sheets, trying not to think about her off-the-chart kiss with Patrick as she drifted off to sleep.

## *Chapter Eleven*

With a cup of tea in her hand, Jada made her way from the stove over to the kitchen table. As she was about to sit down, the doorbell rung. After a long work week, she just wanted to relax at home today with a good book and get lost in a world of romance, but it didn't seem like it was going to happen.

"I thought I might be able to get some peace on a Saturday," she complained leaving her tea on the table and heading for the front door.

Opening it, her eyes froze on the muscular, tall form standing on her porch. Patrick stood there with a whole new image. His thick black hair gleamed in the sunlight; a piece of it fell causally across his forehead. A dark t-shirt covered his wide chest and he was wearing a pair of khaki shorts.

His bare arms were dusted with silky looking black hairs. She took in his tempting, attractive male physique and tried not to drool. The muscles rippling under his shirt made her pulse race. Patrick had always been cute in her eyes, but now he was *fine as hell*.

"Patrick, you look amazing," Jada gushed. "What brought on this change?" She watched as Patrick pushed up his sunglasses and gazed down at her. Why didn't she ever notice how compelling his blue eyes were, the way his full bottom lip made his mouth more sensual?

Patrick's lips parted showcasing a display of straight white teeth. Hell...she was really in need of a man because his teeth were making her hot. "I thought it was time for a change. So, what do you think? Do I look good?"

*You look good enough to strip naked and let me have my way with for hours and hours.*

Jada licked her lips and tried not to let Patrick know what she was really thinking. Hell, she wanted him more than a



compulsive gambler wanted to place a bet. Shit, she had been dreaming about having her way with him before the make over and now this sudden change had only made it worse.

"You look very handsome, but I thought you were cute before," Jada retorted leaning against the door so she wouldn't attack Patrick. Did he always smell this masculine? Or was her body overacting to his new found sex appeal?

"I think I'd rather you think of me as handsome instead of cute," he smiled.

"Both are a compliment," she frowned.

"I know, but you call a child cute not a grown man," Patrick corrected.

She wondered what Patrick was up to. This wasn't their usual line of conversation. She wasn't going to read more into it than there was. "So, what are you doing here on a Saturday?"

"I want to take you on a picnic at the beach."

*Picnic? Was Patrick serious?* She was already trying to hide her new found attraction to him. Now here he was looking double sexy on her porch and he wanted to take her on a picnic?

"Isn't that an awfully romantic date for two friends to have?" *Girl, quit grasping at straws and go out with that hunk,* her mind tossed back at her.

Patrick shrugged his shoulder making his already snug shirt stretch across his muscles. A flash of his gorgeous hairy chest flashed before her eyes. She had a quick fantasy on what it would feel like to run her fingers through it. Her body got moist just thinking about it and her breath kicked up another notch.

Damn, she needed to get her kitty kat in check or it would have her doing something crazy like begging Patrick to take her right now in front of the whole neighborhood.

"Jada, are you listening to me?"

Hating to leave her fantasy, Jada let her eyes connect with the man who was slowly starting to make her body turn to mush. "Hmmm...what did you say?"

"Are you going to take me up on my offer? I have the picnic basket in my car. We can go find a private place on the beach, eat, talk, and have a little fun."

Jada shook her head. "I can't."

"Why not?"

## LUCKY CHARMS

"I look horrible. I was going to stay home and relax today. I hadn't planned on going outside at all today." She knew she was tossing any reason she would think of out there, but she couldn't help it. Her being alone with Patrick on a desert part of the beach wasn't a good idea. He looked too damn good for her not to kiss him.

Tilting his head to the left, then to the right, Patrick eyed the white halter dress and sandals she was wearing. "You look breathtaking and you know it. Come on. Spend the day with me. I bet I can make it worth your while if you give me the chance."

"It's supposed to rain," Jada said tossing her last excuse out there.

"When has getting a little wet ever hurt anyone?" Patrick asked, softly making her think he meant something entirely different.

"Okay...you win." Jada finally gave in to what she really wanted to do all along. "Let me grab my purse and I'll meet you at the car." She turned to leave, but Patrick placed his hand on her arm stopping her.

"Thank you," he whispered right before he placed a slow, wet lingering kiss on her mouth. When their lips eventually separated, all Jada could do was stare at Patrick with her mouth slightly open.

"Don't keep me waiting long," Patrick told her, winked and then spun on his heel going back to his black Mercedes parked at the curb.

What in the hell was she getting herself in to? This wasn't like her to be interested in two different men at the same time. Jada thought as she went back into the house for her purse.

## *Chapter Twelve*

“You have been staring at me for the past ten minutes. Is the change in my appearance really that shocking?” Patrick asked Jada. He thought she might be taken back, but not like this.

Jada let her eyes travel over the planes of Patrick’s face. How could he not think she wouldn’t be staggered by his new look? He just jumped from being a six to a twelve like overnight. He had to give her a chance to get used to his new appearance and her sudden new and unexpected feelings for him.

“I’m just taking it all in. I wasn’t expecting to see you on my porch today. We haven’t talked to each other much lately at work. I thought maybe you were upset with me.” She was trying to toss the blame on him, but she knew it was her fault. Somehow she had fallen in love with Patrick over these past few weeks and now she didn’t have a clue what to do about it.

Pushing the empty containers out of the way, Patrick eased closer to her making her heart skip a beat. He ran the back of his hand against the side of her cheek. “Jada, you know that I could never get upset with you. I care about you too much for that. I’m really glad you came with me today. We got lucky that no one else is on the beach today.”

A light breeze blew around them as Jada tried not to stare at Patrick’s mouth. Her whole being seemed to be filled with waiting as she wondered if he was going to kiss her. Everything else was blocked out as Patrick’s head moved closer and closer. It would be only a matter of seconds before he kissed her again.

His mouth covered hers hungrily and Jada didn’t fight it this time. She gave herself freely to the passion of the kiss. The strong, firmness of his lips were hard and searching hers like she had all the answers to his questions. She didn’t even protest when Patrick eased her down on the blanket and slipped one of his hard thighs between her legs.

## LUCKY CHARMS

The caress of his lips on hers and the feel of his hands on her body were making her feel alive. It had been such a long time since she had gotten this lost in a kiss and it felt damn *good*. Raising his mouth from her, Patrick gazed into her eyes. She was scared of the desire mingled with something else she saw there. It only made her crazier with need.

“Jada, you’re so damn beautiful. I’ve been dreaming about being with you like this for such a long time.” Slowly, his dark blue eyes slid seductively downward until they came to rest at the swell of her breasts.

Raising his hand, Patrick let his finger hover inched from her heated skin. She tried to calm down the dizzying emotions racing through her body, but it wasn’t working at all. She was dying for him to look at her.

“Can I?” he finally asked putting her out of her misery.

“Please,” she begged. “The waiting is driving me crazy.” Seconds later, Patrick pulled down the top of her halter dress baring her breasts. Her nipples puckered ever harder as the wind blew over them, Jada bit the inside of her cheek to keep from moaning.

“You’re so unbelievable,” Patrick whispered before tugging her nipple into his hot mouth.

“Oh, that feels so good,” she moaned running her hand through Patrick’s hair. “God, I need more.”

Jada barely had time to react before Patrick was stripping her dress and underwear off her body. She didn’t have a clue where he tossed them and right at the moment they could have been in the ocean and she wouldn’t have cared. Letting go of her nipple, Patrick kissed and licked his way down her body until he was positioned between her legs.

“You smell so good. Should I see if you taste as good as you smell?”

She couldn’t believe that she was lying naked on the beach during the middle of the day with Patrick talking about how good she smelled. She had to stop this before it went any further.

“Patrick...” the rest of Jada’s words lodged in her throat as Patrick leaned forward and started licking her like a lollipop.

All of the reasons why this was so wrong flew out of her head as she did nothing but lay there as Patrick spread her legs as

wide as they would go and made a snack out of her. She thought he would be full after the huge lunch they just had, but she was wrong.

A delicious shudder heated her body as the first brush of her orgasm started to hit her. Jada was vaguely aware of Patrick getting undressed and rejoining her on the soft blanket. His hands traced the soft lines of her body starting at her breasts and working their way down to her hips.

She was trying to fight off the growing web of hot arousal that Patrick was weaving around them, but she couldn't. She was eager to have him inside of her.

"Jada, are you ready?" Patrick asked as he paused at her wet entrance. "I need you so badly."

She could feel the tip of his cock brushing against her and it was killing her to know how good Patrick would feel inside of her. *Why was he talking so much?* "I'm ready," Jada panted, squirming on the blanket.

Patrick gave her a smug grin and slipped the tip of his erection inside of her then stopped. Jada practically screamed at the top of her lungs. What in the hell was his *damn* problem?

"Now, are you really sure? I can stop if you want me to." He was about to pull out until she placed her hand on his waist stopping him.

"Don't you dare," she threatened. "I'll kill you if you leave me like this." How could he even think about not finishing what he was doing?

"Baby, don't worry. I won't leave you on edge like this," Patrick promised before he thrust completely into her.

Jada closed her eyes in ecstasy as Patrick completely filled her with his wonderful cock. God, she didn't know where she began and he ended. "Oh, you're so thick and big. I never had a clue you were keeping this a secret."

Wrapping her legs around his waist, Patrick linked their hands together on either side of her head and moved in and out of her at a leisurely pace. "You weren't supposed to," he replied then dropped his head running his tongue along her shoulder.

The feel of something wet dropping in the middle of her forehead caused Jada's eyes to pop open. "Patrick, it's raining," she moaned as he sped up his thrusts.

## LUCKY CHARMS

“So what? It’s not going to make us melt. I know you’re deliciously sweet, but we’ll be okay,” he exclaimed right before he kissed her.

Jada got lost in the feeling of making love with Patrick as the sound of the rain pounded down around them. The rain should have been cold, but it wasn’t since it was a hot summer day outside.

Instead of being scared, her whole body seemed more alive. It felt like every sense she owned was awoken and ready to get out. The rain droplets pushed her to keep up with Patrick along with the pace he was setting for them.

All of her nerve endings were more sensitive as bare flesh slid against bare flesh. The touch of holding Patrick’s hand made her never want to let it go. Even the feel of her hair soaking wet plastered to her head was turning her on.

Patrick was loving her body like she wished for in the past. This was the most amazing sexual experience she ever had in her adult life and she knew nothing in the future would ever compare to it. She gasped as Patrick let go of her hands and grabbed her hips. His thrusts became faster, more powerful and her body responded to it.

Tossing her head back, Jada screamed at the top of her lungs as her orgasm hit her and a loud pop of thunder exploded in the background. Patrick screamed his release as his body flooded hers with his seed. A split second later, his body was on top of hers and despite the pouring rain she could feel the heat from his body.

A deep contentment entered her body as Patrick kissed the corner of her mouth. If she doubted her feelings before, it was quite clear now that she was totally in love with Patrick. However, the burning question was what was she going to do if he didn’t feel the same way about her?

“Baby, are you okay?” She heard the concern in his voice and it touched her. She wasn’t going to worry about anything at the moment. She just made love with her best friend outside during a rain storm on a public beach. It was one the craziest and sexiest things she had ever done in her life.

“I’m fine,” Jada replied, running her fingers down Patrick’s damp back. “But I think we need to get dressed and get out of the rain.”

“I think I agree with you.” Patrick gave her a quick kiss and then separated their bodies.

Getting up off the blanket Jada quickly got dressed in her wet clothes and peeked at Patrick from underneath her lashes. She still couldn’t get over how good Patrick’s body looked without his clothes. He had muscles that he had kept well-hidden under a lot of ill-fitting clothes. Who would have thought her best friend could have rocked her world like that? This event was going to put a new light on their relationship. How could she look at Patrick the same way now?

“I think we need to go back to my house and get out of these wet clothes.” Patrick suggested. Taking her by the hand, they ran back to his car through the pouring rain.

## *Chapter Thirteen*

The hot water poured down over her body as she washed the sand from her hair and body. Closing her eyes, Jada allowed the suds to run down her face and into the drain underneath her feet. Wiping the excess water off her face, she opened her eyes and let her mind wander back to what happened less than an hour ago.

How could she get so hot and wild with Patrick like that? Sure, she had always thought he was cute, but she never thought she would fall head over heels in love with him. Her attraction had grown more and more for him over the past couple of weeks and formed into something she had never known before. She feared that she wouldn't be able to keep her feelings hidden much longer. Plus, she had to deal with the person sending her all those beautiful charms. Her life was a total mess now and she honestly wasn't prepared to deal with any of it.

"How could I have let this happen?" she mumbled to herself.

"Should I be concerned that you're talking to yourself?" Patrick asked as he stepped into the shower closing the door behind him.

Glancing down, she noticed Patrick's erection and tried to keep her treacherous body from responding. However, it was waiting for Patrick's to make love to her again. "What are you doing?" she gasped as Patrick pulled her against his rock hard chest.

"I couldn't resist. I was watching you through the glass door and I needed to be with you again. Do you mind?" Patrick asked as his large hands skimmed down and cupped her ass. He gave her body a long, hot lingering look as he waited for her answer.

As much as Jada wanted to, she was powerless to stop the intense flame of enticement that Patrick had racing through her



soul. He was the perfect match that she had been waiting for all of her life and she couldn't wait until she had the chance to tell him.

"I don't mind at all Mr. Kaye. Give it to me." Jada barely got the words out of her mouth before Patrick entered her with one powerful thrust.

\* \* \* \*

"I have to tell her. If I don't confess now, she might not forgive me later on." Patrick ran his finger over the four-leaf clover charm in his hand and thought about a way to break the news to Jada he was her secret admirer. He was positive she felt something for him now after the mind blowing time they just spent together.

He was going to come clean on their picnic but once he started kissing her all other thought left his mind. God, he was so torn. He wanted to tell her the truth, yet if he lost her because of it he wouldn't be able to deal with it.

"What's that in your hand?"

Patrick quickly closed his hand over the charm and glanced over his shoulder. Jada was standing directly behind him wearing his t-shirt looking too hot for words. He opened and closed his mouth a couple of times but no words would come out. He couldn't let her find out the truth like this.

"Nothing," he lied.

Jada gave him a skeptical look like she didn't believe him. "Yes, it's something or you wouldn't be trying to hide it in your hand." She quickly closed the short distance between them and held out her hand. "Let me see it."

Icy fear twisted around Patrick's heart as he opened his hand and allowed Jada to see what he was trying to hide. A tense silence filled the room as she picked up the charm and looked at it then back at him.

"I don't understand. What are you doing with this?"

He heard the confusion in her voice and desperately wanted a way to take it away without ruining what he just found with her. The unwelcome tension stretched even tighter between them as Jada continued to stare at him.

## LUCKY CHARMS

"I can explain," Patrick said. He pushed his chair back and stood up, but Jada moved away from him and looked down at the card on the table. Picking it up, she read it out loud.

*The first leaf is for hope.*

*The second leaf is for faith.*

*The third is for love and the fourth is for luck.*

*Legend also holds that if a woman hangs the four-leaf clover on her door, the next man to come in will become her husband.*

"I can't believe you have been the one giving these charms to me all this time. No wonder you wanted to help me find out who my mystery admirer was," Jada retorted. "You didn't need to look very far."

"Jada, I did it for you," Patrick chimed in.

"For me?" she questioned. "How was this game for me?"

Patrick took a step closer to Jada and was pleased when she didn't move away from him. "I remembered at the party you said you would love for a man to romance you. That's what I was doing with the charms. I was bringing some romance back into your life."

"Do you know how bad I felt for falling in love with you while I had another man into me? I was thinking of a way to get rid of him so I could tell you how I felt," Jada replied.

"You love me?" Patrick couldn't stop from pulling Jada into his arms. This was the day he had been waiting for. She was finally going to be his.

"I think I always had a special place for you in my heart. I was devastated when you got that crush on that other woman, but it was me you were talking about. Wasn't it?"

"Yes," Patrick admitted. "I had been in love with you for so long. I was tired of keeping my feelings to myself. That's why I made up that secret admirer, then you started to fall for him instead of me. So, I had to do something to make you notice me."

"Is that why you changed your appearance?" Jada frowned. "I fell in love with the Patrick with the glasses and bad clothes."

"That's good to know," he smiled, "but I think I also wanted a change for myself. I let myself get comfortable with the computer geek image, so I let it stay. I wasn't concerned about

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drawing any attention to myself at work. Well, not until you got hired there and then I was dying for you to notice me.”

“I noticed you. You were...are my best friend in the world,” Jada corrected him.

“See, I wasn’t too fond of being your friend. Friends don’t think about making out with their friends in the break room. I had to change your opinion of me, so I did all of this to see if you could love me the way I loved you.”

“Well...I’m glad that I don’t have to dump my secret admirer now.”

“I hope this means you aren’t mad at me,” Patrick smiled, finally glad to have Jada in his life as more than a friend.

“No, I think I can overlook your little game.”

“Does this mean you’re going to marry me?” he asked, hopefully.

“How can I say no to the man who brought romance back into my life?” Jada grinned.

~THE END~

## *About the Author*

Marie Rochelle is an award-winning author of erotic, interracial romance, including the Phaze titles *All the Fixin'*, *My Deepest Love: Zack*, and *Caught*. Visit her online at <http://www.freewebs.com/irwriter/>.