

BODY SHOTS

MECHELE ARMSTRONG

I ♥ THAT CITY

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I HEART THAT CITY:
BODY SHOTS

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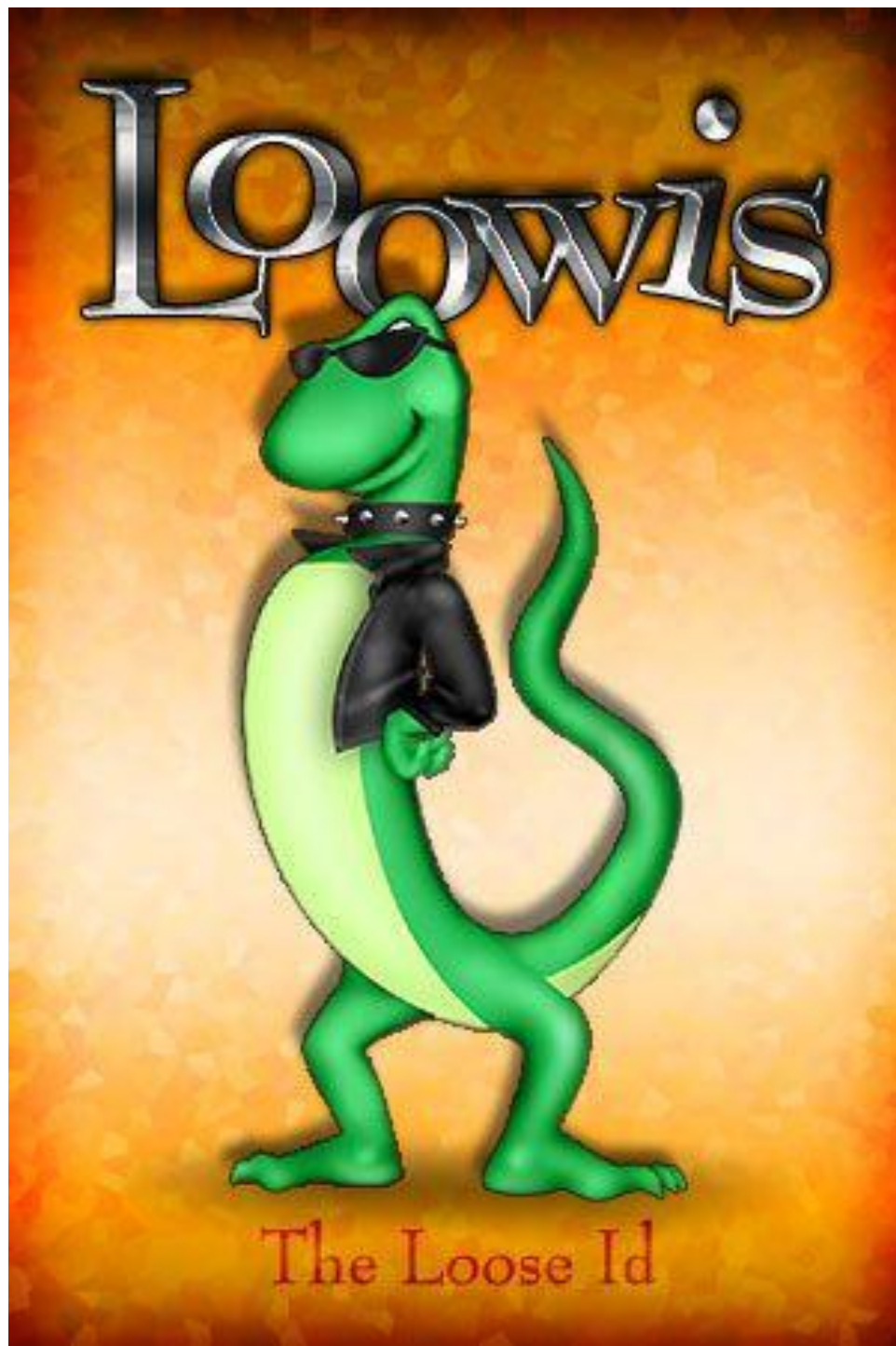
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Chapter One

The glasses clinked together with the *ting* of crystal. Tequila sloshed like waves in an amber-colored snow globe.

“To us,” Joe said with deliberate care. His lip curled up a snazzy smile. The one that Daphne always liked. The one that melted her heart and made butterflies spring to life in her stomach. The one that made the noise from the bar fade away and narrowed her focus on Joe and Joe only.

“To us.” Daphne lowered her glass and looked at him over the rim. Their relationship had made it another week. Thank God. She didn’t know what she would do without him. They’d come so close to disaster, only to pull it out in the end. Each day with him was like a gift. She’d teetered on the edge of losing him and didn’t intend to ever repeat that again.

“Another celebration of being together.” His straight teeth flashed at her, as did the dimple in his chin. His voice softened as he sipped his tequila. “How long are we staying here?” His eyelashes lowered to cover his almond brown eyes. “I mean before we go home?” The bar sign spouting I HEART THAT CITY cast neon shadows across his face. The bar was quieter tonight than it would be over the weekend with only a few regulars arranged around the bar. She and Joe sat at a table in the corner. Away from anyone else. The way they liked it. That’s why Thursday was their special celebration night.

A shiver started down low and worked its way up her body. His voice had always had that effect on her. “Long enough to finish our drinks, I guess.” She slipped her tongue across her top lip, picking up every drop of the potent alcohol.

His eyes narrowed at her action with a groan as he shook his hair back, errant strands flying every which way. Without it back, it always fell forward into his face. But with it down, he reminded her of something wild. Untamed. Different than her usual controlled Joe. He picked up his glass and slung back the liquor with ease before sliding the glass on top of

the coaster. He blew out a breath, reeking of the fiery liquid. "I'm done." His thin lips curved into a smile, daring her to go the distance with him.

She'd missed this while they'd still been together yet apart in so many ways. She reached over to grasp his hand, which rested on the table to the left of her. Her small fingers barely covered his much larger ones. "I do love you, you know."

"Mrs. Thompson, you know I love you too." He lifted his hand and grabbed hers before it could escape. He wrapped her coolness in his warmth. His thumb brushed across her skin.

Holding his hand was like a drifting boat finding a safe harbor. He centered her. In so many ways. "Good thing."

"Yeah, it is." His finger continued to stroke hers in a soothing motion. "Now, why don't you finish that drink?"

She couldn't quite knock it back like he could. But she managed to down most of it in a gulp. The liquid burned her throat and settled in her stomach with a dull roar. The warmth heated her from the inside out. She took another sip as Joel strolled by their table wearing a ratty T-shirt. Joel was the owner of I Heart That City. He was a through and through Yankee but was learning Southern hospitality. Probably why the bar was so popular and had so many regulars.

"Good to see you." Joel gave them a quick smile. His northern accent and fast way of talking stood out among the Richmonders. "Everything going okay?" He stopped briefly for their nods before heading toward the back of the bar.

"You going to win that bet? Should I put my money on you?" Joe's mouth twitched as though he wanted to laugh.

"Hell yeah." Joel didn't even break stride.

"Real reassuring." Joe shook his head and leaned back, amused. Even though it was a long time away, Chaz, who handled the bar's accounting, had bet Joel he'd curse at least a dozen times by the end of close on St. Patrick's Day. Neither of them saw Joel winning.

Daphne slipped her own glass up on the table and shifted her legs closer to Joe's. She almost slid off the low-backed chair trying to brush her leg against his. If only he wasn't sitting on the other side of the table.

He released her hand. "Come on, woman, let's get home." In two fluid strides, he was at her side of the table, tugging on her arm to help her up.

She allowed him to move her as she tumbled off the seat. Yeah, Grace was her middle name. Literally. Daphne Grace Thompson. Yet, it also was her antonym. She was anything but graceful.

As usual, Joe was there to catch her. He pulled her against his lean body, touching her in all the right places. His scent, something spicy and wholly Joe, crept into her senses and drove out the smell of alcohol. His jeans-encased legs slipped closer to her body as he pulled her even tighter against him.

She placed her hands on the front of his black Seether shirt. "You always catch me." Her heart pounded in her chest at his closeness. Long as they'd been together, she still found herself breathless at being close to him.

He brought up a hand and placed his fingers alongside her neck. Warmth met her already-tingling skin. "Always." He leaned forward. His lips pressed gently against her own as her eyes shut. He tasted of liquor and malt as he plundered her lips with his.

Her world spun. Her axis tilted and dropped her off into an abyss that left her struggling for air.

His hand lingered on her neck as he lifted his lips and moved away, leaving her bereft. It was all she could do not to move back into the protective spot next to his body.

She opened her eyes to see they had the attention of the bar. She'd forgotten they were in public. Forgotten everything but the man. Only Joe could do that to her.

"Get a room."

"Leave 'em alone, you numbjob."

They wouldn't stare for long; everyone would go back to gazing into someone else's eyes or down into their glasses. Not her. She had Joe to go home to.

And it was time to go. "Let's go home." Which was anywhere he was. She moved back away from him and motioned for him to go first.

"No. Ladies first." He hung back. The makings of an erection bulged in the front of his jeans. He wanted her body to shield him. There was her careful Joe.

She moved forward as he followed, then stopped, which caused him to bump into her. His hard cock pressed against her rear. She wiggled backward only slightly to rub against him. Her folds dripped, sliding together under her linen pants. If only she'd worn a skirt. He could have gotten her off in a skirt on the way home. Pants made access harder.

His breath sucked in from behind her. He muttered for her ears only, "Gonna pay for that."

"I would hope so." She started walking again, a flair to her step, hips swinging. Trying to get everything out of the aching, slick feeling of her pussy.

Someone watched.

Normally, she wouldn't look back. Didn't care about stares. But nothing was normal these days, was it?

She cocked her head, scanning through the bar. *He* wouldn't come there. Surely not. She didn't see him. A breath broke free, relieving the pressure that had built up in her lungs.

Most of the bar patrons had already gone back to their drinks. But a set of black eyes watched her. A head covered in short, midnight hair stared openly their way.

It wasn't who she'd dreaded it might be.

But who was he?

She teetered, trying to get a better look at the person watching.

"You okay?" Joe's voice rumbled from behind her. Because she'd hesitated at the door a few seconds too long. She wasn't playing with him this time either. His voice took on a suspicious overtone.

She scrambled for the door handle. "Yeah." She flounced onto the sidewalk in a perfect bounce, remembering the step down this time.

Did the dark gaze follow her as she walked away with her husband? And why had he been checking them out so intently to start with?

Joe's hand on her back stilled her. Brought her back to her enjoyment of him. She wouldn't tell him she'd been looking to make sure someone wasn't there. She wouldn't. It would dull the evening and kill the mood. This was a celebration. Not a requiem.

She leaned into his hand, enjoying the circles he made on her back as they walked for the car parked on the street a block away. "You better make me pay. Up the ass for what I did."

His smile made her shiver.

* * * * *

Joe turned the corner away from the bar. He should let it go. Give in to the sexual heat between them. Knew what this might do to that. But he couldn't look the other way. "I didn't see him." His hands tightened on the steering wheel at the admission.

Her breath caught before Daphne answered. "Neither did I."

Admitting it was good. "You were looking." He tried to keep his voice even. Peaceful. Didn't want to start trouble. He wasn't successful. Couldn't find anything else to say to soften what he'd said. After all, it was the truth. But it was better to find out why she'd been looking then to let this fester. He'd learned that back when the trouble began.

"I..." She took a deep breath. In the dim light from the streetlights, he couldn't see her face. But he'd seen the color rise enough times to know what she looked like. "I felt someone staring. I searched for the source. That's all."

The source. How appropriate a term.

"Did you feel it too?" She turned away to look out the window as he turned another corner.

"Yes." And for a brief second, Joe had wondered if it was him too. Instead, he'd gotten a brief glimpse of a man with short, dark hair and even darker eyes. A lithe body. A man who'd stared at them like they were candy and he was a child ready to munch. Before Joe had walked them out the front door.

He stopped at a red light.

“You thought it was Gary.” Her hand moved to his to cover it over the center gearshift. “Why would he come there? He knows it’s our spot.”

Which was exactly why he’d come there. Joe didn’t say it. Daphne could be naive when it came to Gary. “I don’t know.” He sat waiting for the light to turn green. He’d spent a great deal of the past year waiting for so many things, especially the last six months. “But then I didn’t understand a lot of the things he did.”

“I didn’t either.” Her teeth gritted together. “Can we not ruin our perfect evening by talking about him? And the past?” Her hand squeezed his.

And with her action, his heart squeezed too, tapping out beats that threatened to break it apart. It did them no good to talk about the past. They’d made it another week and needed to celebrate that. Focus on their relationship. On the future. Not events that could never be altered.

He relaxed.

Besides, Gary hadn’t even been there. It had been some stranger.

“Did you see who watched us?” Everyone had once they’d kissed. But only one set of eyes had kept watching. As though he couldn’t get enough of watching them. And Joe found himself intrigued. Why would he watch a couple walking out the front door when so much was going on at the bar in front of him?

She nodded, the movement barely imperceptible in the light. “I did.” Stretched her long legs out in the floorboard. Kicked off her shoes.

His gaze drew to her tan pants. What was under the material? Would be fun finding out later. Or maybe even now. “I didn’t know him. Did you?” He slipped his hand up from under her hand to cover it. His thumb stroked across her skin.

“Nope.” Her breathing hitched as his fingers and thumb continued to stroke her and dominate her hand. “Didn’t know him.”

The light changed, and he sped off.

He heard the *click* of the seat belt and saw she’d unbuckled herself. He sat up straighter in his seat. His heart thundered in his chest. “What’re you doing?”

“Wouldn’t you like to know?”

Her voice raked across his senses. He watched her from the corner of his eye while keeping his main focus on the road. He’d drive home the long and slow way instead of the direct route. That would give him more reaction time if he got distracted. And from past experience, she intended to get him distracted.

He headed for Monument Avenue, instead of Patterson, the faster way home. Would take this slow. Like they’d taken everything the past six months.

She shifted closer to him. Placed a hand on his chest.

It burned like a brand. Like it always did. Her hands could always heat his skin. Didn't matter where or when they touched him.

Her hands rubbed him as he kept his eyes on the road as they bounced along on the cobblestones. Why didn't they live closer to I Heart That City? He'd asked himself that question a million times. They'd moved out to the west end instead of staying city bound. Least they didn't live in the far west end of the county. Short Pump had started out as a blip on the map. Now it was its own little city. Too many people too close together for him. They lived in a quiet, older neighborhood.

Her hand moved down across his stomach to meet the waistband of his jeans. Slipped the button from the loop and wrenched down the zipper.

He panted, needing her hand on his rock-hard cock. Much like she'd grasped the gearshift earlier, he wanted her to clasp him. To clutch him. To tighten and go up and down around his length.

She splayed his pants open as wide as they would go.

Ran her hand down into the depths of his tightly whities to find his cock. He widened his legs, keeping one foot on the gas pedal.

A light turned red up ahead.

He stopped, looking at the statue in front of him, trying to gain some control. Robert E. Lee, confederate general of the Civil War. The South had lost the war, though a few still wanted them to rise again. Richmond had been the capital of the Confederacy. A legacy that still resided in the sleepy city with monuments and museums.

He was going to lose it with her hand touching him. He always did.

Her hand caressed him with determination and softness. Slid all the way around him with silken touches.

Maybe he shouldn't have taken the slower way home. He could have taken the downtown expressway to I-64. It would have been quicker to get off at Parham and scoot home that way. 'Course he might have ended up sliding into the wall on either side of the train track, which ran down the center of the expressway. Especially when her hand squeezed like that.

His cock throbbed.

Her hands lingered over him. "So hard."

"For you, baby." She was the only one who got him so aroused he never seemed to find words to describe it.

"So...everything."

A smile curved his lips up. That he could bring a writer to the state of not being able to express herself always made him arrogant.

The light turned green.

She lowered her head.

“Fuck.” He thrust his hips up toward her waiting mouth. Shifted his gaze between her head and the road. Sweat beaded on his forehead.

Oh yeah, should live closer to the damn bar.

Her mouth met the tip of his cock. She used her hands to pull him more out of the pants and laved her tongue around him.

His whole body drew up from the contact of her warm mouth on his sensitive skin.

Needed to turn on the air-conditioning despite the still-chilly winter temperatures. Heat rose across his body as he broke out in a sweat.

With each pass of her mouth and tongue around him, he lost himself in sensation.

A car stopped abruptly in front of him.

He pressed on the brakes. “Move it.” He let out a growl and tapped on the horn with two short blasts.

She removed her mouth from him, cooling him down immediately. “Eager for something? Or to get somewhere?”

“Hell, yeah.”

She laughed, a full-out one of pure joy.

His wet cock tightened. How he loved to hear her laugh. Good thing they’d not focused on the past tonight but on the future. And on the loving. An area they’d never had any problems in.

Her mouth returned to him.

He straightened up further in the seat.

She laved around the end of it before sucking him into her mouth. Not once, but several times.

Until he thought he might die from the pleasure of her mouth on him.

In and out, she took him.

His hands tightened on the steering wheel.

Two minutes from home. Two minutes from the bliss of her body. Two minutes from finding out what she had on under those pants.

He could do this.

His hips thrust wildly against her mouth.

She took him in willingly. Excitedly. His heart pounded in his chest until he could barely hear. He drove slowly down Patterson Avenue, carefully turning onto their street, taking time as he neared both the house and extreme pleasure being wrung from his body.

The house was in sight. Front porch light on. Welcoming windows.

Home free.

Until she suckled on him, taking him down as deep as she could get into the heated recesses of her mouth. The car came to a rolling stop on the street, not the driveway. He managed to pull the gearshift up to get the car into park before his climax rocked him.

The blasting orgasm made his hips buck wildly.

His hand gripped the steering wheel so hard it seemed like something should break. His whole body shivered from top to bottom.

Afterward, she lifted her head with her mouth shining. Even in the dim light, he could see her.

His come.

An aftershock racked his body.

She licked her lips, swallowing again like she must have done when he pumped her mouth full. "Yum." She drew out the last sound to hum against him.

He closed his eyes, taking his hands from the wheel. His breath labored in his chest to keep up with his racing heart.

A light brush against his cheek made him look over at her.

Her eyes shone in the light from the dashboard. He couldn't see much of her face. But he saw she smiled. "Happy one more week, Joe."

"Happy one more week, Daphne."

* * * * *

Amos sipped his drink carefully as he continued to stare at the closed front door to I Heart That City. Why? They'd left already. But he couldn't get them out of his mind.

The couple.

Amos's eyes had met the walking woman's gaze. Her green eyes had boiled his blood. She had quickly looked away, but not before he'd seen the curiosity reflected there.

Leggy, bold, brassy, she'd drawn his eye. He couldn't help but watch her. Had watched her since the kiss they'd shared. And the man she was with, he had needed his own air pocket because he drew more oxygen than his share. He'd been the type of man who everyone watched when he walked into a room. Dark, long hair and a body that wouldn't quit.

The man's hand had met the small of her back.

Even from the distance, Amos had seen the sparks fly between them. They'd been tangible. Could almost have spotted the flares sent up in the air. Heat had moved up his spine with the speediness of a sidewinder. He had almost felt the touch on his own skin.

He'd sat up straighter, pulling his thighs together around his suddenly hard cock as they'd walked out of I Heart That City.

The attraction between them had been tangible. Brilliant.

Flaming.

Fireworks couldn't have exploded any brighter.

He closed his eyes against the longing, which still rushed past him in waves of splendor. Tried to tell himself he was only interested in them for pictures. For capturing them on his film. His fingers had itched to push a button on a camera he didn't even have with him.

That was his only interest in the unknown couple that had walked out of the bar after such a public display of affection.

A lie.

He didn't only want to capture their images on film. He wanted to capture them for himself.

Dammit. He could have gone after them. Granted, he would have looked like a stalker, but at least he might have gotten names to go along with such beautiful faces.

It had been a long time since anyone had captured his attention like this. Sure, he'd had subjects through the lens. Had those every day. Couples more beautiful than this one. Only they weren't as alive as these two.

He opened his eyes and looked up at the waitress, who turned toward him. "Hey...Bridget." Took him a minute to remember her name. He'd met her on his first visit to I Heart That City after a few weeks in town. Had found the bar a casual affair with a lot of repeat visitors. Seemed to be the same people in every night. So he'd been back a few times. But he'd not seen this couple in there before tonight. A shame.

"Yeah?" She turned toward him with questioning green eyes. Yet they didn't burn him like the other woman's had.

Only how to ask the question? He didn't want to seem too forward. Not to mention, he didn't want to seem foolish. They were an established couple. He got that. "The couple who just left...who were they?"

She blinked a few times. "Why do you want to know?" She looked down at him only because she was standing and he wasn't. She was a short thing. But he'd seen her bust drunks twice her size. And keep the regulars at the bar in line.

"Look, I'm a photographer. I think they'd make good subjects." And he did. But that wasn't all he wanted to know about them for.

"You're talking about the blonde? With the dark-haired dude?" She pointed toward the door they'd gone out of.

As that was the only public door to the bar, yeah, that had to be the one. "Yes." Amos took a sip of his drink. "That one."

"I don't know their names."

That wasn't helpful. But she knew *them*. She had to. Because she'd noticed when they'd left and knew their descriptions. "Do they come around here often? All I want is maybe to take some pictures. Scout's honor."

A giggle escaped her. "You do not look like a Boy Scout." She looked him up and down again. "No offense."

He joined her in the laughter. "I wasn't. And none taken." He didn't do roughing it activities like camping. Some Native American he was. Only rough stuff he liked was being pinned by a superior male in the bedroom. Or a woman. He wasn't picky.

She looked into his face as he tried to plaster on an innocent expression. Wouldn't help. He hadn't looked innocent since he was a baby. If then.

"In here every week. Same night." She ducked her head to pull a glass from a nearby table. "I think his name is Joe. Can't tell you what her name is." Her red hair bounced as she stepped toward the bar.

"You do photography?" someone else he didn't know asked, who'd overheard the conversation. Nothing was secret in this bar, that was for sure.

"Yeah." Did a lot of art shots and also ran his own studio. Did high school pictures and weddings to pay the bills. But what he loved to do was artistic modeling.

"You ought to talk to Joel about taking pictures here. It's a Richmond tradition." Several others nodded their agreement.

He made a noncommittal noise, and they went back to drinks. Maybe he would have to talk to Joel. The eclectic bar would make a good subject. But he was sure that Chaz, the bar's accountant, took care of the bar's photography, so probably better to talk to him. Chaz taught photography at VCU, a local college. He and Amos had talked shop a few times at the bar when Amos had first arrived in Richmond.

St. Patrick's Day was coming up in about a month and preparations were already under way for the celebration. It was sure to be a wild night.

God, Joe and the mystery woman would take good pictures. He could see the shots in his mind, knowing exactly how he wanted to arrange their bodies.

Around him.

He leaned back in his chair, erection hard and throbbing.

They looked to be the all-American couple. And the all-American couple didn't invite anyone else into their bed. Which would leave him hard and wanting.

He'd found by listening, he could usually learn something, so he sipped his appletini and stayed quiet.

"...Daphne works for a local rag around here. She's a writer."

"And they were into threesomes? I don't believe it."

“Believe it. They used to meet some guy in here. It was obvious the woman and other man were into each other.”

Amos briefly glanced behind him. Two bar regulars. He’d seen them in here every time he’d been. A couple into threesomes? Who’d have thought in such a conservative town?

“How did Joe take that? He looks like a real he-man. I thought he and Daphne were married to each other too?”

Amos sat up straighter. Joe was the definite name of the man from the couple who had left. And the description of he-man fit him to a tee. With that long, dark hair, he looked like a Roman. But there had to be plenty of Joes in town.

“Did you see a third here with them tonight? I’d say not too well. The other guy stopped coming around about six months ago. And they started coming in once a week to do the toasting they do.”

Amos’s heart pounded. Joe and the mystery woman came in once a week. And he vaguely remembered noticing them doing a toast.

Maybe this all-American couple did take someone else into their bed. Intriguing idea. Maybe they could be persuaded to take *him* into their bed.

Sweaty bodies. Pounding heartbeats. Cool sheets. Hot sandwiched lovers intimately showing affection.

Not that he would know. While he’d had lovers of both sexes from time to time, he’d never had both at the same time. Never had a threesome. Never had the best of the worlds he loved so much...men and women.

His breathing grew ragged. His cock hardened even more thinking about what he’d never had.

He kept seeing the man’s hand go across and touch her at the small of her back. Joe’s hand. Mystery woman aka Daphne’s back. The meeting of skin. He shivered.

They came to the bar every week.

He’d have to be in attendance next Thursday.

Chapter Two

Amos settled down in his seat. Looked at the clock for the six-hundredth time since he'd walked in the door.

He didn't know what time the Thompsons showed up each week on Thursdays. He'd tried to time it around seven, like the last time he'd encountered them, but he didn't see them yet.

He slapped back a sip of his rum and Coke. He hadn't had anything to eat since lunch, and the alcohol burned his stomach. Rum was "the black drink," as his grandfather liked to call it.

He tried to watch the front door without looking as if he was watching it. They had to come back. Tonight was their night. His hand clenched on his glass.

On his second drink, the Thompsons rewarded him with their presence.

They hadn't grown moles and warts since last time. They were a gorgeous double package, sauntering in, hands entwined.

Touching.

They were all about touching. That was what he'd capture on film. Maybe the energy between them would show. He itched to put his hands on a camera.

He closed his eyes, dizzy not from the alcohol but from headiness at seeing their attachment again. His cock hardened. Skin buzzed. As did his ears. Or maybe it was the alcohol. Because hadn't he promised himself he wanted them for pictures only?

He'd never seen everything he'd always wanted in other people before. But in them, somehow his own wants and needs reflected back at him.

They settled at a table in the corner and Bridget bustled over, red hair flying, to take their orders. "I should know by now what you want but thought I'd ask."

Low voices murmured their wants. Did their wants include a tall photographer? Maybe not yet, but hopefully they would in time.

Amos took a long sip as Bridget went back over to the bar. The bartender, Zach, took down an easily recognizable bottle of tequila and poured a liberal amount into two glasses with flair. The man looked as though he did everything with flair. His quick movements with the bottles always made Amos think of an acrobat.

So they liked tequila. Could make for some interesting times later... Body shots. Salty skin...

He shook his head, making his world twirl. Dammit, he wasn't going down this road. Problem was, he was already going down it. And he couldn't seem to stop himself. Not until he'd at least tried to connect with them.

He watched them from the corner of his eye.

Glasses clinked together. Loving looks were exchanged.

His mind whirled around again. His chest constricted, trapping his breath in his lungs.

The toast had happened. Now was the time to approach. Before they escaped again and he'd have to wait a whole 'nother week before he could be sure they'd come in again.

He was on his feet before he thought about a problem.

What in the hell did he say?

Never a planner, he hadn't worked out how he would approach them. "Do you want to be in pictures?" sounded rather lame.

He hesitated a moment, then trucked on over. He'd never been shy and wasn't about to start acting that way now.

He stopped right between them. Looked from blonde to dark heads. Green and brown eyes looked up at him quizzically when he didn't move away.

He teetered. "Hi."

The woman leaned her head back, hair flowing in free waterfall-style down her back. Her mouth arched up into a sultry smile. Probably wasn't intended to be that way, but she seemed to exude an innate sexuality from within. "Hi."

Amos wanted to bask in her. His nostrils flared, taking in her perfume. Something flowery. Herbal. It suited her.

He looked over at Joe. Joe's mouth had pursed into a frown.

Not good. Abandon ship. Instead, Amos extended his hand to Joe. "I'm Amos Cornsilk."

Joe looked at his hand.

And Amos resisted the urge to hyperventilate as he waited. Joe would either take it or he wouldn't.

He took Amos's hand in his firm grip. His warm, huge hand. A charge moved through his hand up Amos's arm.

Did Joe feel that? Amos tried to look at his face but couldn't tell if he'd felt the same thing Amos did.

They shook for what seemed like only a second. It could have gone on for hours as far as Amos was concerned.

Joe's face pinched. "What can we do for you?" He made a fist with the hand that had shaken Amos's, then relaxed it, as if something had made him tingle and he was forcing the sensation out. Amos had done that dozens of times when his hand had fallen asleep.

Joe had felt the spark. He had to have. "I'm a photographer. And I wanted to talk to the two of you about taking some pictures."

They looked at each other before looking back at him.

"What are you talking about? We didn't ask anyone about taking our pictures. Haven't sought to hire anyone." Daphne took a sip of her drink.

"She's right. We haven't." Joe ran a hand through his hair, pushing it back from his face where it had spilled forward.

"Oh, I know... I mean..." Amos took a deep breath. Usually he was much more professional than this. These two set him off-kilter. His grandfather would probably recommend he take a spiritual journey. 'Course his Cherokee grandfather had inundated his grandson with their heritage. Amos had left North Carolina partly to get away. Gone to a new city. Where the heritage was steeped in Southern traditions. Sometimes he thought he'd traded one locked-in way of life for another. "I'd like to talk to you about modeling for me. In *my* pictures. For *my* gallery."

The woman laughed. "What? Me? Joe's the model."

His gaze turned to Joe, who shifted in his seat. "You've modeled before?" Maybe convincing them would be easier than Amos had thought.

The large shoulders shrugged nonchalantly. "Only a little bit. A few photo shoots. For...a magazine. Some clothes."

"Good." Amos couldn't help but smile. He shifted his weight. "I'd like to talk to you about doing some modeling for me. I'm a photographer. And I'd love to take some shots of you." He saw the curtain descending across the woman's face. "Both of you." Her face opened up again. She had the type of face that showed her every emotion.

The woman leaned forward. Her cowl-necked green sweater gaped away from her neck, exposing some creamy skin. A freckle or two dotted her like sprinkles on a cupcake. A temptation.

Amos's cock hardened again.

"Joe..." She looked back up to Amos, her head swinging around. "You were in here last week, weren't you?"

They'd noticed him.

A roller coaster ran around his intestines and stomach, bottoming out in the area of his belly button. "I come here a lot. You might have seen me around." He hedged about them seeing him like a turtle avoiding a semitruck, not telling them he'd been looking for them since that night. "It's a nice bar."

With beautiful people. Like them.

"Yeah, it's a good place. I'm Daphne by the way." She extended her hand toward him. "Daphne Thompson."

He took her hand in his. Shook it. She didn't grip him like Joe. Her hand was looser. Not as tight. But firecrackers went off along his skin just the same. "May I join you two for a minute? Talk to you about the pictures I have in mind?" He grabbed a chair and pulled it toward the table before they could protest.

Bridget shot him a look as the feet of the chair scraped against the floor. The noise in the bar didn't cover the sound.

He winced apologetically and lifted it the rest of the way to the table instead of sliding it.

The bartender laughed, probably at Amos's expression. Yeah, Bridget kept a tight hold on the bar. Little dominatrix she was. But she couldn't hold a candle to the blonde in front of Amos. Not when it came to picturing her in leather...

Joe cleared his throat as Amos took his seat. "Don't most photographers take on clients who pay *them* for pictures?" He arched a brow, daring Amos to answer.

Amos fumbled in his pocket for his business cards. What was with him tonight? He couldn't seem to do anything smoothly. "We do, Joe. Most of the time I do. But I'm starting out here in Richmond. Trying to make a name for myself in town. And I think the two of you...on film...could help with that. I think your shots in my portfolio could add something." He handed one card to Joe and one card to Daphne.

Both of them surveyed the piece of stock. Not a lot on it. Name, phone number, address, e-mail. A small tagline, *Let Amos Cornsilk explore your new vision.*

Joe palmed his. The white card looked so small in the man's hand. Yes, Joe had large hands. Did that translate over to other things? "Thanks. How did you know my name?"

Amos shifted back in his chair, trying to put thoughts of large hands and large cocks out of his mind. He could see nothing under the table. Maybe one day he'd have personal experience. His thighs trembled. Technically, Amos had known Joe's name from last week. But that was not something he wanted to admit. Both of them were skittish. He didn't want them to bolt. However, he had a ready-made answer. "Daphne called you Joe. I'm assuming Joe Thompson?" His gaze swept to the dual set of wedding rings. Simple gold bands. Daphne's rested behind a several-carat rock that Amos hadn't noticed last week.

Joe nodded without a word. He tapped Amos's card on the table. The *ticktack* sound grated on Amos's nerves. Especially as he didn't know if they would agree yet to letting him take their pictures.

Daphne let her card rest on the table. "We're flattered, Mr. Cornsilk..."

"Call me, Amos." He looked to Joe. "Both of you. Please, call me Amos." The words somehow became directed to Joe. And somehow they launched into something intimate. Maybe because they were moving to a first-name basis. If they would take him up on the offer.

Normally Amos was more careful with his overt flirting. Especially with men. Because you never knew how someone might react to a perceived come-on. In a way, Amos was slowly testing the rumor he'd heard about them. Had to ensure it wouldn't backfire and he'd wind up with a fist in his face. Asking Joe to call him Amos was the lightest thing he could start with.

Joe didn't bat an eye. But he paused tapping the card. Then resumed.

Amos watched the card tap the table. The long fingers holding it. Bitten-off nails. Rough hands.

Daphne's voice brought his attention back to her. "As I said, we're flattered, Amos. But why us?"

Was she kidding? She was any artist's dream. His grandfather might have never understood his modern medium but he'd understood the need to create. To capture in art that which was so in front of one's face that one didn't notice. Amos folded his arms in front of him. "Because if I take your picture, it will pop."

They both looked confused.

"Your...uniqueness will make the photo eye-catching." He watched Bridget pick up the remains of his rum and Coke from the other table. He should have left her a bigger tip. "You two don't even realize how much you have in you. If I can show that in the pictures... Show your spark. Your energy. The pictures will be...delicious."

Joe continued to tap his card. "You think so? That our pictures will 'pop'?" His scent filled Amos. Something spicy. Wholly masculine. Yet beautiful.

"I don't think. I know." Amos leaned his chair back on two legs. "Let me take your pictures. If you don't like them...you can have them strictly for yourselves. I won't display them." The back two legs came down to meet floor again. Somehow he felt like he was back in school. Auditioning for the school newspaper's photographer position. And he had the big zit and the broken camera again.

Daphne and Joe shared a look.

"I can let you talk it over. I don't need an answer today." Amos pushed his chair back, preparing to run.

“No need.” Joe’s drawl slowed down even more. He sounded almost amused. “We’ll do it.”

* * * * *

Amos and Daphne spoke at the same time. “You will?”

“We will?” Daphne blinked at her husband. When Amos had approached them, she’d never seen the conversation going to this ending.

Joe nodded. “I think a photo session with the two of us could be fun. What kinds of pictures do you have in mind? Romantic? Sexy?”

“Both.” Amos pushed his chair legs off the floor again. He might have looked relaxed, but she’d detected his nervousness while he talked to them.

Joe’s eyes snapped fire at her as if daring her to accept the challenge. “If we don’t like them, he says we can control their use.”

Amos licked his upper lip. “You can control anything you like. Anything.” His gaze darted back and forth.

A shiver rushed across Daphne’s body, making the fine hairs sit up and fall back. Somehow, this time, Amos didn’t sound like he was only discussing pictures. There were some vibes underneath what he was saying that provided more of a kick than they should. It had been evident when he’d asked them to call him by his first name. Somehow they’d crossed a threshold of intimacy.

You took a break from threesomes, remember?

That was the other odd thing. Most men who played with them had been clear about staying away from Joe. Had only wanted to be his partner in doing things to her. Somehow, she got the impression that Amos was as interested in Joe as in her.

Something new. It had been a long time since they’d had anything new. A purr rose up along her chest.

“Good.” Joe took a sip of tequila and nodded at Bridget for another as she approached the table.

Daphne nodded to her too. “Amos, you need a refill?” Then she realized what she’d admitted. She’d noticed Amos when they’d first walked in. Couldn’t help it. Something about his eyes had captured her last week. She’d seen him sitting alone at the table drinking when they’d entered the bar. “Or a new glass?” No sense trying to pretend now. She’d already told him something.

Amos’s eyes caught hers. “Thank you. A regular Coke this time.”

He knew.

And his shining eyes said that her notice pleased him.

Bridget darted for the bar.

"Tell us what kinds of pictures you have in mind?" Daphne fingered her glass, not picking it up but holding it.

"I'd like to get some of you together. Capture a few moments centered around you both."

"By some, do you mean you'd like some to be apart?"

Joe sat in silence. Watching. He could be as loud an Italian as anyone in his boisterous family, but most of the time, he was quiet.

Amos leaned the chair back again. "If that's okay. I'd like to get some shots of you alone. Either of you are welcome to come and watch the other's pictures being done."

Daphne still couldn't believe he was asking them to model. "You know, I've never done anything like this. Joe has." He'd enjoyed his modeling days. Didn't get asked as much anymore. Or at least, he didn't take the jobs as much. This could be a fun experience. If Joe was willing to give it a chance.

"You mentioned that." Amos grinned at her. Such a boyish face. With old eyes. "I'm sure you're going to be fine. Stunning in fact." His face spread wider into the expression. "Not that you need help being stunning."

Daphne's thighs clenched together. Such a free compliment. There didn't seem to be an ulterior motive in his offering.

Joe cleared his throat. "It's not hard. You turn this way and that." He had an unreadable expression on his face. Was he angry at Amos's approach?

Daphne's hand fisted while the other one remained unclenched. After what had happened with Gary, she'd have to be careful how she handled this. Didn't want to set Joe off. They'd been through enough as it was. Yet, she couldn't deny her intrigue with Amos. That made the pictures a dangerous affair. The question was, how did Joe feel about Amos?

Amos turned Joe's way as Bridget came back with the drinks, a spring in her Irish step. "Thank you."

Bridget unloaded her drink as Amos said, "You'd be surprised how hard some find it. You have to have a certain...something. A flair." His gaze caressed over Joe like a warm chocolate drink, full of melted butter and sunshine. "Wouldn't be hard at all for you." His eyes briefly closed as if he couldn't take any more.

A pulse ticked in Joe's throat.

Yes, there was a definite sense that Amos's interest, if she was reading it right, didn't only apply to her. It extended to Joe as well. And Joe was aware of the sentiment.

Bridget set down the last drink in front of Joe.

"Joel in tonight?" Joe looked up at her and away from Amos, breaking the moment of scrutiny.

She nodded. "Probably out back. Sneaking a smoke."

"I thought he was giving that up for St. Patrick's Day."

Her laughter was clear. "Isn't St. Patty's yet. Isn't even Valentine's." She went to wait on a new table by the door.

Joe's attention shifted back to her and to Amos. He looked between them both. His hand tightened on the glass as he took a sip.

"The shots I want to take will be...thoughtful. They'll be artistic. And I promise you, they'll be good."

"When do you want to start?"

Amos looked a little too eager. "How about tomorrow? I mean, if you're free and can come."

The word *come* evoked a few too many images. Mostly involving two dark men, some teeth, and a few body parts. She picked up her glass to survey them over it. Two hot men together. She'd never thought about being a male-on-male voyeur before. The two of them together might help her change that. Joe had had sex with both men and women in college. He'd given up men for her when they'd gotten together. She'd only thought about him being with other men in passing before. Now she couldn't get the images out of her mind.

Joe looked over at her. "My afternoon is clear." His eyes dared her to go forward with this.

She had a deadline in the morning but was free after that. It would be a good reward for meeting her obligation. "Mine too. How about two o'clock?"

"That's good with me."

"Great. We can start with a couple of shots."

"What should I wear?" She took a sip of tequila, licking her lips to capture the last drops. And found she had two men watching her tongue's every move. Her eyes shut. It had been a long time since anything had hit her like the hunger in both of their gazes.

"Wear..." Amos hesitated. "Wear something that makes you feel sexy. That makes you feel like a woman as soon as you put it on. That little black dress. Maybe bring some lingerie. Whatever makes you...sensual." His mouth twisted into a wry expression. "Of course, I think that would be everything."

Before she could respond, Amos turned to Joe. "Same for you. Wear something sexy. That makes you feel like a man."

"Damn. I guess the dress and heels are out then."

She couldn't help a short burst of laughter. Joe didn't often make quips, so when he did it caught her off guard.

Amos looked to her before he started laughing, as if gauging if it was okay. "Only if it's a strapless. I love a strapless." He winked, whether at her or Joe it didn't matter, because it came across to both of them. "I'll see you then. Tomorrow." After tossing down his money

for his drink and a tip, he got up and loped away to the door, hurrying as if getting away before they changed their minds.

Daphne knew exactly what she'd bring to change into. And she had ideas for Joe too. Sipping the last of her drink, she had a feeling no matter what happened, tomorrow was going to be an interesting day.

Chapter Three

Joe parked and looked up at the address. He'd gotten lucky and found a parking spot on the street right near Amos's address. He didn't live that far from I Heart That City. The house was in a section of the Fan, an old neighborhood in Richmond. Looked like there were a few other offices around. Maybe the first floor was Amos's studio and the second floor was Amos's living space? Or maybe he had a whole other place to live somewhere else.

Joe pushed open the door on the truck and saw Daphne's car parked on the other side of the street.

He wore jeans and a button-down blue shirt. Daphne had picked it out for him this morning. The shirt was one of his favorites.

He sauntered to the steps and pulled open the heavy wood-framed glass door. He stepped over the threshold onto tile.

Amos's voice echoed from another room. "Joe?"

"Yeah."

The outer room could one day be a receiving area or a lobby. There was an old desk and a couple of wooden chairs. It was obvious that Amos was still getting his office set up.

"Come on back."

Joe picked his way through another room into the back, looking around at the high ceilings and old wood floors. He stopped short as he came to a living room.

There were all sorts of backdrops and props lying in two corners of the room. Velvets and curtains. A few ottomans. A chair. A couple of toys.

But Amos had set up none of these. Instead, there was a lush white rug splayed out on the floor as a contrast to the dark wood. The rug rested in front of a rustic-looking fireplace that looked as though it had been constructed with the house. The whole setup reminded Joe

of a cabin in the woods. In the mountains. Where it would be November outside with crisp air and the leaves turning colors. He and Daphne had gone away once to someplace like that to spend some time alone.

Amos fooled with a tripod. He wore black jeans and a red, long-sleeved shirt. He looked tall. And somehow mysterious in the dark colors.

Joe's cock reared up. Was it because of all he'd been thinking about with Daphne? Or was it because he was seeing Amos? Joe tried to tell himself it was the former, but the nagging truth was he didn't know.

"Do you need to change? Daphne is in the bathroom. It's right through that door." Amos pointed to a beat-up wooden door.

For being so unsure of himself at the bar, now Amos was down to business. He barely looked Joe's way as he made sure things were in working order, which bothered Joe more than it should. "I'm wearing this." He pointed at himself to make it obvious.

Again, no glance his way as Amos fiddled with the other legs on the metal. "Okay. I don't have an assistant working today. So Daphne is handling makeup."

Makeup? Joe hadn't expected that. Yeah, he'd worn some on his modeling gigs, but this was a simple photo shoot with a starting photographer.

Amos finally looked up and started laughing. "Not much, Joe. Some theatrical stuff for being under the lights. A lot of stuff I can take out in retouching."

"I knew that. I just wasn't expecting you to require makeup."

Daphne's voice carried behind him. "I thought I heard you." Her perfume followed her voice.

Joe half turned toward her, and she approached him. Daphne wasn't all delicacy and grace. Someone had once described her as a cowpoke moseying. But she had flair and presence. And was so beautiful.

His cock did his looking for him.

She wore a black cocktail dress. Short yet elegant, and to the point of showing off every curve she had. Her golden hair, so often up, now hung down in a wavy mass. She came up against him and planted a kiss on his lips. Her lips seemed to melt under his. She tasted of mint and coffee. Not a cruel combination.

Amos had told her to go sexy.

Joe should have known it would be this dress. It was the dress she'd seduced him in the first time. Yet she'd picked jeans out for him? "Shouldn't I be more dressed up?" He didn't move away from her but let the heat of her body consume him. Take him down in flames if need be. Her heat infused him.

"You look fine." Daphne stood up on tiptoes to give him another smooch. "Gorgeous in fact." She waggled her eyebrows at him.

Amos adjusted a light and looked at Joe for the first time. "It's exactly how I wanted you."

Somehow that made Joe's cock a little harder. Of course Amos was only talking about the photo shoot.

Dammit, they'd decided to stop threesomes because of all that had happened. Amos shouldn't interest Joe so damn much. Or Daphne. But he could see all the telltale signs that she was interested in Amos, not as a photographer but as a man. Did he want to go down this road again? Why the hell were they there?

Daphne reached into a bag and pulled out a little compact. "Sit down over there, Joe." She pushed back her hair with one hand.

Joe sat in a folding chair as Daphne approached him. He shivered from her approaching closeness as she stepped between his knees.

"This is some foundation. It will even out your skin tone." She put a little on a sponge and spread the tan color over his face with deft, even strokes.

"I've worn it before." Joe enjoyed her touch on his face and leaned his head back to take full advantage. Her warmth reached out to him again and sucked him in like it always did. He reached out to place his hands on Daphne's hips. Pulled her more into his legs. Wanted to wrap himself around her. Her silken touches on his face wove a web around him.

She didn't falter but kept on with the makeup.

"All right." Amos's voice reminded him where he was. "Put the makeup down and stay like that."

"Huh?" Daphne slapped closed the compact and tossed it back behind her. "I thought we were..."

"Stay like that. Do what you were doing before you put away the compact." So unsure before, Amos was bossy when in photographer mode.

Joe looked up into her face. It was easy to get lost with her again. She made it easy. Always had. Even when things had started to get hard.

She swallowed, the movement undulating down her throat. Her pulse sped up and her breathing deepened. She lifted her hands to his face like they'd been before. Touched him. Like she always touched him.

His soul. She held his soul in her small hands.

He couldn't get away from her gaze. So...full of life. He could always tell how she felt from looking into her eyes.

He straightened a little bit to get closer. Needed to be closer to her heat. To her skin. Needed to wrap himself around her.

A floorboard creaked. Joe came back to where he was. Not alone with Daphne, but at a photo shoot.

Amos snapped pictures, moving around to all sides of the couple. When had he started taking photos? Joe hadn't even heard him. He'd been so wrapped up in the woman in front of him.

Daphne stepped closer and her mouth slowly lowered to his, taking his attention away from Amos. Her lips were about to touch his. So close, Joe could almost feel the breath. A millimeter separated them.

"Hold it right there."

They both froze as Amos moved the camera around them, capturing the moment of almost kissing on film.

"Perfect."

She moved her head up from Joe's lips with a grin. "Good." Her whole body shifted away.

Joe caught her hand in his, stopping her movement. "Tease."

Holding her head back with a haughty look, she squeezed his hand. "Always." Her gaze turned back to Amos, who remained behind the camera, still clicking away. "You took our picture just then, didn't you?"

Amos didn't lower the camera. "Yes. Is that a problem?"

Anything they did here was subject to be immortalized. Somehow, that provoked a thrill riding along Joe's spine. Anything they did was going to be watched.

"It's not a problem." Daphne pulled her hand from Joe's and rocked back on her heels. "Is it?" She said the last quietly with a look at him.

"No." However, it was a reality check. Something he couldn't forget again. Not if he didn't want it captured on film. He got to his feet. "Where do you want us next?"

Amos stared, looking around the room.

Joe expected him to say on the rug by the fireplace. That wasn't what he got.

"Over by the window." Amos motioned with his hand. "Joe, there's a rose in a vase over there. I'd like you to present it to Daphne. Don't hand it to her. Present it. However you'd like is fine."

Roses had been Gary's flower of choice. He'd wanted to cover Daphne in them. And had tried. "Like roses, do you?" There was an undercurrent to Joe's voice. He couldn't help it, though it wasn't fair to Amos. There had been fights over roses.

Daphne's lips pursed as she picked up the rose. And things had been going so well. "I like roses." They hadn't been her favorite flower...but had been Gary's. He'd never understood why Gary had depended on them so much.

Amos looked back and forth between them, having sensed the shift in mood. "You can use another flower... If I can find one. And I...I do like roses." He scrambled around, carrying the camera, which had been unhooked from the tripod, in one hand.

"It's fine." Joe grabbed for Daphne's hand and after a moment, she let him take the blossom. "It's fine." He never should have brought it up. But sometimes, the reminders came at him and he didn't know what to do with them. He'd come close to losing his marriage. Losing his true love. Not anything he ever wanted to repeat.

Daphne's eyes looked stormy, unlike the peace he'd seen a few minutes ago. "You sure?" Her voice deepened.

He nodded. The flower was a small thing. She'd demonstrated time and time again that she didn't want to hurt him. And Amos still didn't know why he'd reacted like he had. "Yeah." He grasped her hand in his. Pulled her closer to him.

She moved in, almost gratefully. Pressed her curves against him. He closed his eyes and laid his head on top of hers. Rested like that for a minute. She always felt so right in his arms.

She nuzzled into his chest.

It was the sound of what he didn't hear that made Joe open his eyes and look up.

Amos wasn't clicking with his camera. He stood to the side, watching them. A pulse beat in his throat.

For a moment, Joe's eyes met his. And the look he saw there scorched him. With embers too hot to handle.

Amos cleared his throat and Daphne moved away from Joe. "So, let's do the flower thing and then we'll move on, shall we?" He pointed with his camera, ready to take pictures, his finger on the button.

Amos had covered well. But the longing that Joe had seen in his eyes had been real. Very real.

And Joe had never wanted to be with another man more than he had at that moment.

* * * * *

Amos tried to keep his composure as he moved around taking pictures of them playing with the rose.

They could be so teasing with each other. Tantalizing. So in love.

They'd gotten in a tiff over the rose. He'd seen the irritation spark to life in both of them. Whatever the rose had symbolized had been bad for the couple. He'd regretted putting that flower out immediately after their reaction. It had almost spoiled the mood.

But he'd never seen such tenderness as when Joe had held Daphne. It had been a truth put out there blatantly in front of his face.

Smacked him with the honesty of the moment.

He hadn't been able to put up his camera in defense. All he could do was watch their embrace. And envy them.

He lifted his camera now with heavy hands.

Daphne, beaming like a bride, brushed the rose along Joe's nose.

Click.

Joe reached out to sniff the rose, bringing the bloom up to his nostrils.

Click.

They looked into each other eyes. Deeply.

Click.

Joe brought up his hand to cup Daphne's face. It looked so big against her small features. So dark against her skin.

Amos shot a close-up of Joe's hand on her cheek.

Their bodies wandered closer to each other. Touching. Pleasure went zinging through Amos at the speed of light.

So close to each other.

He shot the moment, froze the second in time.

They stayed close, engrossed in each other as Joe wrapped his arms around her. She put the rose behind his back and held him too.

Several pictures later, Amos fumbled with the buttons and marched toward them. "Perfect. We're done over here." He broke them up, much as he had done when they'd been about to kiss. Despite the fact he wanted the moment to go on. To finish.

Joe blew out a breath as Daphne disentangled herself from him. "Great." His voice sounded strained. His jeans bulged in the front.

The evidence of how much love they had lay before Amos. Ignoring it, he scratched his head with his other hand. "Why don't you lie on the rug, Daphne?" He walked up and helped her arrange the short dress. Swallowed as his hands lingered over her thighs. Her skin was like silk that had been heated up in a microwave. Maybe all of her was that hot. That silken.

Her pussy.

Yes, charging into those molten depths would be...

He shook his head, pulling his hand away. These were *clients*. True, he'd approached them, something he'd never done before, but they still were customers. And they were married to each other.

And maybe into threesomes.

But not necessarily with him.

He backed off and motioned Joe to come forward. Best way to get his mind off what he was feeling was to immerse himself in the pictures. "Come stand over here." It was a few feet away from where Daphne sat.

Joe stuck his hands in his jeans and walked forward.

Daphne rubbed her foot with her hands.

“You okay?” Joe’s solicitous voice was followed by his eyes narrowing.

“Yeah.” She turned her head toward Amos. “My feet are cold.”

Amos frowned. He was going to have to work on the heating system before he did nudes in here. He resisted thinking about them in the nude. Wasn’t going to happen. Not today anyway. “Sorry. It’s drafty in here. Old building.” No matter how high he turned the temperature, it always seemed to stay chilly.

Joe moved forward to the side of his wife, his ring gleaming on his finger. “Here.” He put her feet under his shirt with a flourish. Didn’t wince at her cold toes.

For a second, Amos was so stunned he couldn’t pick up his camera. Was seeing something so raw, he couldn’t put anything between him and what he saw.

That is, until Joe said, “This not sexy enough for your pictures?” His voice was easy but there might have been a bite to it. Did Joe really think that Amos wasn’t taking pictures because they weren’t sexy?

“It is...” Amos grabbed his camera and started shooting. It had been too sexy. Too damn sexy. So much so that he’d forgotten he had an arm, much less a camera. It was real. Sweet. Tender. He’d wanted to get Joe approaching Daphne while she lay on the rug in front of the fireplace. But this was better.

He moved around, capturing the shot from every angle. Tried to get as many takes as he could.

Their loving looks. If he didn’t know they knew he was there, he’d never guess they weren’t alone. They’d become focused on each other each time he’d moved them, almost oblivious to his presence. He envied them for that.

The sheer act of Joe using his body heat to warm her up showed Amos so much about their relationship.

The shadows of her thighs and farther up haunted him. Made him want the dress to hike up a little more.

Amos tried to swallow around a suddenly dry throat. Couldn’t seem to do what should come easily.

She pushed on Joe’s hands with a smile on her face. “That’s better. Thank you.” Her feet dropped from under his shirt as he lowered his hands, then ran them across her calf. She yanked at the hemline to pull her dress back down her thighs, hiding what Amos wanted to see.

The dress shifted over bare skin. How silky would she feel under his fingertips? So warm, especially those inner thighs.

No underwear.

From what he'd seen, there couldn't be anything under that dress. Which meant the shadows had been *her* and nothing but her.

"What now?" Joe stood, looking down at her with a zest in his eyes that Amos had never seen before.

Conquering hero coming back to downed heroine. Somehow, that image transposed over them with a vengeance. And that was what Amos needed to reflect in his pictures. He snapped several in quick succession.

"Hold that pose." Amos snapped several more pictures of him standing over her as he moved around. "Now, Daphne, up on your knees. In front of him." He paused with the camera in one hand. Lowered it, watching intently to see what they'd do.

Shaking her wild mane back, Daphne rose up on her knees in a movement that wasn't fluid. Her knee cracked as she knelt before her husband.

Joe's voice trembled, as did the rest of him. "Like this?" His gaze never shifted away from the woman in front of him.

"Perfect." They were. He'd never had more ideal subjects. 'Course he'd never had subjects he was more interested in.

Daphne straightened, getting comfortable. Upturned her face, looking at Joe. Her mouth twisted into a mischievous little grin that overtook her whole being. The woman didn't have a poker face. Not when she was happy, and from what he'd seen, not when she was irked either.

The look was because she was eye level with the bulge in Joe's jeans. It hadn't gone away. If anything, it had intensified.

What would she do? Amos's breath held in his throat. She had something on her mind. And it looked naughty.

She looked straight ahead at the bulge in Joe's pants. Her tongue came out to softly rub across her upper lip, making it obvious what was on her mind.

Amos quickly moved forward to capture the look on her face. Needed to put something between them and him.

Joe snickered. "Nice position." He waggled his eyebrows and swiveled his hips, letting them know that he was aware of his erection as well.

Neither one of them seemed to mind their own sexuality. Having known so many repressed people, it was refreshing to see them act this way in front of him.

She leaned her head back, projecting her voice toward Amos. "Can we do anything we want to here?"

His heart pounded. Button clicked. Couldn't lower the camera from his face or he'd lose the moment. "Do what you want. This is your photo shoot." He wanted to do what they wanted.

Daphne rose up, pushing her feet underneath her. The curves of her lips moved upward.

What had he given her permission to do? Amos lowered his camera, watching the spectacle unfold. Couldn't snap a picture. Couldn't move anything between what was going to happen next

and his gaze. Had to view it firsthand.

She reached up one hand and put it on Joe's waistband without trembling. Pulled up the other and went to the front snap on Joe's jeans. Hovered in front of it before going in to tug.

Joe's face shifted. "Daphne." His hands went out by his sides. His Adam's apple bobbed up and down. He didn't exactly object, nor did he stop her. His gaze shifted to Amos.

Her giggle was pervasive. Took over everything. Made Amos's stomach churn. "I'm not going to do *that* here. Right now. But...I bet the picture would make people think I was. Come on, Joe. Play fast and loose." Her mouth twisted into a pout. Her voice begged Joe to do what she wanted him to.

How could Joe resist that?

Amos wouldn't have if she'd put that attempt on him. He'd give her anything she wanted and more.

He couldn't relax. Everything on him felt tense, especially his hard cock. He couldn't pull up the camera, despite the fact he should. He should take pictures and record this event. Only he couldn't. Not yet.

Joe's laughter came easily. "Never fast, and loose only for you, baby." He straightened his back. His hair shook out. He was trying to look casual. But nothing on him was. His hands had clenched into fists. He wasn't removed from what was happening to him. Instead, he was invested in the situation.

Daphne undid the snap with sure fingers. Obviously not the first time she'd undone a man's jeans one-handed. Her other hand remained at the top of his waistband.

And Amos came undone himself.

Catching his breath, he pulled up the camera with effort, trying to capture this moment. Only he didn't want to. He wanted to be more than an observer. But this time, that's all he was. Dammit. He played his part. Caught the hands on the snap. Caught her face looking up into Joe's. Tried to catch all he saw before him on film.

Only that was impossible.

For the first time, he didn't feel his pictures would do this affair justice. Only his naked eye could record enough data to make this last.

Amos moved around and caught Joe looking down at her, head back. A pulse thudded. Was it Joe's or his?

Amos couldn't breathe. When had it gotten so warm in the studio? Hadn't it been cool earlier? Now he might never be cool again.

Daphne put a pink, manicured fingertip on top of the zipper. Slipped it down millimeter by millimeter. Each tab that the zipper caressed made Amos's breath catch. They crunched as it went down tooth by tooth.

Amos focused on the slight sound, trying to concentrate on getting a shot. Tried to focus on capturing the event as much as he could.

Impossible.

She reached the bottom of the teeth with the zipper pull. The sides hung for a moment, then flopped over loosely.

Joe stood there with his pants undone and open at the top.

What would she do now? Daphne was the wild card in this relationship. And that was obvious from the pictures Amos was taking. Her face took on this mischievous glint.

Amos could see the swell of Joe's cock concealed by his underwear in the open V of his pants.

He swallowed. Joe's large hands were a sign if that shadow was any indication.

Daphne ran her hands up Joe's chest.

Amos almost didn't get the camera up in time but managed to catch a couple of shots of her hands on Joe.

Joe kept his gaze on Daphne, almost as if there were no one else in the room with them. This must be what they looked like at home.

What love looked like.

Amos's stomach churned.

What love looked like.

She ran her hands up to the top of Joe's shirt and stroked his neck with long fingers. Her fingers lingered over every inch of him.

He leaned his head back to further take advantage of her hands on him.

Amos couldn't watch. He turned and cleared his throat. Interrupted them. Again. "Maybe we should move by the fireplace." Dammit. He'd had to stop them. How was he ever going to finish this shoot?

Chapter Four

Daphne stretched out by the fireplace as Joe approached her.

His jeans remained undone. A smatter of white peeked. She also could see the end of the bulge of his erection.

Click.

Several *snap* sounds told her that Amos was snapping pictures. She turned her head to look, and he was taking shots of Joe as he walked.

Smart man.

Joe always looked like a god walking. Unlike her, with her lack of grace, Joe had it in spades. His movements were always fluid. Muscles together. Feet sure of their steps. Confidence thrashed through his every move.

She brought her thighs together. Her pussy felt slick. Wet. Hot. Swollen. She ached for something to fill her.

She was really turned on by this whole experience.

Was watching Joe the cause? Seeing him through another's eyes? Or was it the fact that Amos watched them both? He studied their every move and captured them on film.

Only she'd seen that camera drop a few times.

Why?

She wanted to find out.

Joe reached her side and looked down at her. His brown eyes danced as he stared at her with hunger evident on his face. His cock poked up in the open V of his jeans.

She wasn't the only one who was turned on. And seeing Joe turned on always revved her motor even more.

More clicking from the camera.

She didn't even have to see Amos to know he was there, capturing them.

Joe squared his shoulders. He straightened his body. "You always did like the watching."

A shiver raced across her. The truth of his words made her body shake as if she were in a windstorm.

She liked to be watched. To know a man's eyes centered on her every move as she took another lover.

Amos was a built-in voyeur with his camera.

"I do." Joe's statement hadn't needed a response, but she gave one anyway. Joe knew her so well she didn't have to reply to most things.

Amos's voice reminded them of where they were. "What?" He probably hadn't heard Joe's comment. Hers had been louder.

It was an intrusion into their intimacy. Brought them away from being together. Only it wasn't unwelcome. And from the reaction in Joe's eyes, it wasn't unpleasant for him either to be reminded of Amos's presence.

Joe shrugged his shoulders. "Nothing." He half turned toward Amos, who did several more clicks. "Should I kneel before her?" She'd never seen him ask another man what he should do next. He'd always taken the lead in their encounters. This was a new side of him.

How would Amos answer?

Amos's breath wheezed. It was only for an instant before he gained control of himself, but Daphne caught the sound. "Sure." The hiss whistled through his teeth. "I mean, do whatever you want."

They weren't the only ones turned on.

Her gaze crept down to Amos's waist. The black jeans he wore were tight, all the better to see a bulge. He wasn't removed from this situation. He was as turned on as they were. Good.

She looked back to Joe when he moved.

Joe slowly began to come down on his knees. He changed direction and came up over her body.

She lay back farther, letting his body push her down. Her back met the rug. Her bones went to jelly. Couldn't see anything but Joe. Couldn't feel anything but Joe.

Click.

She turned her head to look at Amos.

He was behind the camera again. Hiding. Was that it? When the camera was up, he could rally behind it, removing himself from the situation? When the camera had come down, what had it been like for him?

The heat of Joe's body called to her, making her lose the caboose of her thoughts. Made her shiver in its wake. Funny how something so hot could make her react the same as if she were too cold. His scent overwhelmed her. Marked her as his.

She turned her head back to Joe. Looked up into his eyes. Focused on the lover in front of her. But couldn't quite get the man traipsing around them out of her psyche either.

Maybe they could make Amos lower his camera. Bring him into their world a sliver. A touch.

Only she hadn't discussed this action with Joe. Which was how they'd gotten into trouble before. She gazed into Joe's eyes. If only she could say what she was feeling. With Joe's ears alone to hear her.

He nodded at her.

Her eyes widened. He knew. Joe knew what she'd been asking with her face. Like he did most of the time. Sometimes, they needed nothing spoken to know what the other was thinking.

He mouthed. "Camera. Down."

Her eyes closed briefly. Joe understood her like no one else ever had. And she'd never let him go. No matter what. They would make that camera drop. Make Amos come out from behind the lens. There'd never been anything they couldn't accomplish together.

Resounding clicks sounded behind them, again and again. If Amos had seen them speaking, he didn't ask what they said this time. He probably didn't want to know.

They'd have to try harder than this, though, to get him to put down his obstruction. To lower the object he hid behind.

Daphne licked her lips. One thing she and Joe were good at. Being bad. She reached up to press her hands along his shoulders. Raked fingers through his fine, straight hair. She mouthed, "Stay with me."

Joe nodded to show he'd heard her. That he would play along. He knew what she wanted. And she'd bet he wanted the same thing.

She leaned her head back into the rug and wrapped her legs around Joe's body. Stroked her calf on top of the back of his legs. His muscles clenched under her roaming touch.

The position made him scrape nicely across her. Made his cock rub deliciously along her parts. Only not the right part. Not exactly. She shifted up, trying to get him across her and got a nice rub square across the part that ached. That wanted.

Her skirt rode up. Air dazzled along her newly bared skin. A few goose pimples rose with the material. Only she didn't feel chilly. Hot would be a better term.

She continued to rub herself against him.

The clicks sounded like the beating of the telltale heart from Edgar Allen Poe's short story. They told her she hadn't gone far enough, unlike the murderer who kept hearing the

heartbeat of the victim from under the floorboards. She hadn't yet knocked Amos from his comfort zone. It was a challenge. And she always rose to a challenge.

She lifted her head. Sought a measure of calm to focus her energies. Not only would she get Amos to lower his camera, but she'd have fun with Joe. What could be better?

Heard rustling as Amos moved closer to them. More clicks. A floorboard creaked as he moved around them.

She brushed her lips across Joe's. A mere slip of hers across his lips. Nothing deep. But she felt the kiss down to her toes. They curled up, and her body lifted.

She nipped his lips with hers to make them open. Warm breath rushed into her. She ran her tongue along the seam before plunging in to meet his. She sucked his into her mouth. Played a game of hide-and-seek and touched hers to his.

Joe shuddered against her. His body shook before he took over the kiss. Made the kiss his by stealing all her breath. He dominated her mouth with his. Punishing kisses that made her gasp. His hands tightened on her.

His hips bucked against her, spearing her with his cock through her small dress and his jeans. She lifted up against him, his cock slicing across her in a manner that had her wanting it all.

Her dress rode up more from their actions. If only she could rip it off. But she'd never done a nude picture before.

She concentrated on the kiss. On Joe's mouth. Pushed herself up against him to meet his every downturn, taking him all against her. Wanted to feel his cock inside, heavier thrusts. If only material didn't separate them.

She nipped at his lips again before opening fully for him, letting him in. Her hands bunched in his hair, pulling on the strands before moving down his back. His strong back. Moved down to his ass. Muscular. It clenched under her wandering fingers. How she loved the feel of him. Would never tire of him against her.

And she realized what she didn't hear.

No more clicks.

She wasn't even sure when she'd stopped hearing them, but except for heavy breathing and the pulse pounding in her ears, the room was silent.

Amos had stopped taking pictures.

She didn't open her eyes to look at him, though she desperately wanted to, but continued to kiss Joe. Finally, when the clicks didn't resume, she couldn't help herself and broke off the kiss and turned to look.

Amos had lowered the camera in one hand. Was looking at them with an unreadable expression. His breath sighed from his lungs with effort.

Joe kissed her again to get her attention back to him. His warm lips sought inroads into hers. There was a jubilation in his kiss. From the fact they'd won.

Amos's shaky voice came low. "Hold on, guys. Stop. I have to get batteries. I'll be right back." And he took off for another room beyond this one at a gait that was almost a gallop. He almost hit the door but it opened for him and he sped through. "Don't move."

Joe shifted back on his elbows to look at her. He'd obeyed Amos and stopped kissing her. Didn't move from her. Instead, he created a slow, steady circular grinding of his hips against her.

"Think his batteries are really dead?" She plowed herself against him, trying to get in as close to him as she could get.

He chuckled. Brushed a soft kiss on her nose. Didn't answer the question. "Did you get what you wanted? You made him stop taking pictures."

She hesitated. "You did know my intention." She shouldn't be this nervous. Only she couldn't help her feelings. Last time they'd played, there'd been a horrible cost. She didn't want to go through that again.

"You're not that hard to figure out." He shifted his weight to ease from her a little. She wanted to pull him back down fully on top of her.

She lowered her legs from him to accommodate his new position. "I thought I was a woman of mystery. Intrigue."

Joe leaned down to kiss her again. "Not to me."

She never knew if she liked that Joe knew her that well or she didn't. But he always had seemed to anticipate her. Not even Gary had gotten to know her as well or as quickly as Joe, though he'd tried to become "her Joe." There was no one else for her but the original, though. She curled up her lip into a pout. "I had no idea I was *predictable*."

He laughed. The reverberations shook his chest and smooshed him against her. "I wouldn't call you that. Ever."

"I don't think he had low batteries."

"I don't think he did either." He moved his weight to the other side. "Wonder if he's jerking off?"

She tapped on his back with a gasp. "Joe!" Giggles broke free from her. She'd not be able to look Amos in the eye now. She'd be wondering if he had been jerking off while he'd been in the back.

Joe's eyes twinkled at her as he winked. "It's what I'd do. Especially if you'd been looking all sexy like you have been all afternoon. And making out" -- his face sobered -- "with someone else."

Hell and beans. The reminders came up at the most unexpected times. This one caught them both off guard and changed the mood.

Before she had a chance to answer, Amos charged back in the room. "Sorry about that. I'm all ready to go now."

* * * * *

Daphne broke out in a full laugh. "Are you now?" She looked way too impish to not be up to something.

Amos held the camera in a trembling hand. "Yes. I'm ready." He was. As ready as he'd ever be to continue with them. He took another deep breath. He'd taken so many outside the door, he thought he might hyperventilate.

The batteries had been fine in his camera. But he hadn't been. He'd been anything but. His cock was so hard it felt like it might explode. Still did. He'd contemplated a quick handjob. A few tight fists around his erection, and he'd have spilled. But he'd obtained a measure of his self-control out there without masturbating. Despite the fact he might regret it later, that action seemed wrong to do with clients here. That's how he had to keep thinking of them.

Clients.

Otherwise, he might toss aside the camera and join them on the rug. Take part in the glorious scene unfolding before him.

That had never happened before with any of his subjects. He'd never lowered a camera and stopped taking pictures, much less contemplated getting in the scene with anyone. And he'd taken some shots of beautiful, naked women...and breathtaking, naked men. Never once had he lost his photographer's discipline.

But Daphne and Joe were different.

He surveyed them exchanging a look. Yes, different from anyone he'd met. So free. It was hard to believe they weren't professional models. Except for the fact they were so open. "What?"

"Nothing." Daphne stared up at him and her face became serious. "Should we continue where we left off? Or try something new." She pushed to semisitting but was still underneath Joe.

Someone new would be a good thing. Like him. "I think some *thing* new." Because that position might cause him to spontaneously combust if they continued. Maybe something new would break up his libido, but they probably would have to be across the room from each other to do that.

"What do you have in mind?" Joe lifted from Daphne and slid to his feet in one graceful arc of his body. He had a tiger's movements. Sure-footed. Ready to pounce. His agility showed in everything he did, every time he moved. His pants remained undone and hung low on his hips, seeming held up only by a miracle. If only it would fail...

Amos made his eyes lift away from the miracle as Joe held down a hand to Daphne. Did Amos detect a slight quiver? Yes, there was. Joe wasn't unaffected by this photo shoot either.

She pulled up and fell against Joe in a rather undignified move. Body slammed might be a better characterization, rather than brushed against him. "Oof." A breath escaped her when her body made impact.

Joe grunted when her body hurtled against him but managed to stay on his feet with a sidestep. His hand grasped hers tightly as he kept their bodies steady and on their feet. A lesser man might have lost his balance. But not the tiger.

"Sorry." A flush rose up her neck. First unsure move Amos had seen her make since they'd met. "You know me." Her head hung low as a wince moved across her face. She tried to move back but Joe held on to her.

The hair rose on Amos's arms as he watched her unfold herself.

Joe stared down into her face with an expression only someone in love gave to another person. The look wasn't sweetness and light but passion and longing. "That I do." He moved away. "How about her on my lap? On that chair?" Joe pointed to an easy chair that sat near the fireplace.

Amos hadn't lifted his camera and had missed an opportunity. Not once since he'd run out to change the batteries had he taken a picture. He'd missed that entire exchange. The shot would have been perfect. If he could have captured that look on Joe's face...it would have been priceless. Dammit, what was wrong with him? He'd not been a novice photographer in a long time. Missing fundamental shots wasn't like him. His hand tightened on the camera. "Yeah. That'd be a great shot."

And one he'd raise his camera to take. He would not miss any more money shots. He would get what he'd come here to do and not get lost in spending time with the couple. He'd been sucked in so easily. Hard to believe.

Joe sat down first in the chair. He spread his legs apart. The V in his jeans was clearly open. White poked out from beyond blue. He held out his hand to Daphne. "Climb on board, baby." His deep voice rumbled in his chest as his grin managed to be sultry and make him look like a little boy at the same time.

Amos held up the camera. Readied himself to snap pictures. The instant their skin touched, he was on, clicking and shooting. Looking from behind his lens. Keeping his distance. Only he didn't want to stay at a distance. Not hardly. He wanted to jump in and play with them.

She moved around getting herself in a position to straddle Joe's lap and did a look back over her shoulder.

Joe looked at Amos around her body, peeking over her other shoulder. His eyes twinkled and an eyebrow rose.

Amos swallowed so hard, he thought that everyone would surely hear it. God, what an invitation. They were only pandering to the camera but he could almost think they were trying to entice him. The look on their faces spoke to him. Said they wanted him. To join in their fun. And nothing had ever excited him more. His heart pounded.

Her ruby lips would open. *Come join us, Amos.* Her sultry voice would haunt his dreams.

Joe would nod that all-American head in agreement with his wife. *Yes, climb on board, man.*

And Joe would take her from the front, and Amos would put his cock in her back opening and it would be one big fucking all around. They'd take her together, moving as one entity. He'd never double penetrated anyone. But he was all for trying.

Joe's lips twitched as he ducked his head behind Daphne again so that Amos could no longer see him.

What had he seen? Had he seen the look in Amos's eyes? Joe had to have. But he wasn't punching Amos out. Maybe he wasn't objecting.

Daphne turned back to Joe, facing him. One hand crept over his shoulder, stroking along his shirt with a long fingernail.

Amos had again lowered the camera in his reverie. He lifted it into the air and started snapping. Wouldn't let himself get distracted again by thinking about what they could do together. This was a photo shoot and nothing more.

He moved around beside them and went behind Joe. Good thing the chair wasn't against a wall. He could walk around their position in a perfect circle. All he could see from this angle was the back of Joe's head and her face. What shots could he get back here? His finger paused on the button as he contemplated.

Joe leaned his head back on the back of the chair. He let out a soft sigh. Did his eyes close?

The position gave Amos more of a view of Daphne as she rose up a bit on Joe's lap. Her head came over him like a siren at sea.

She smiled at Amos and slowly let her lips drift in next to Joe's head. She reached out to turn his head to the side and proceeded to nip at an earlobe.

Nip at an earlobe.

His body felt like lightning had zapped him the instant that her lips touched Joe's ear. Throbbing began in Amos's temple. His cock couldn't get any harder, yet it always seemed to find a place that was harder than he'd ever been before. An electric zing shot up his spine, making his movements jerky.

She pulled the lobe between her teeth as Amos circled around to the side of her to get a good shot.

Joe's body twitched as she continued with her mouth on his ear. His hands gripped the side of the chair with such force, would the fabric rip into pieces? His knuckles had whitened from the tightness of his hands.

Amos snapped a few pictures from that angle, then moved off in a different direction. What would they do next?

"Do you do a big Valentine's business?" Daphne paused by Joe's ear as she spoke. Then, Amos saw her tongue come out to place a tiny lick on Joe's earlobe.

Another zing darted up Amos's spine.

The abrupt question combined with seeing what he did threw Amos off-kilter. One minute, he was taking shots of passionate people. The next, he was the kid at the mailbox who didn't get a Valentine or a party invitation. "Huh?" He hesitated before taking a number of shots.

"People giving their honey pictures? Do you do a big business for Valentine's?" Daphne stroked through Joe's hair, tousling it. Her fingers massaged his scalp with a slow intensity. Each touch seemed to go deeper and get stronger.

"I haven't been here that long, but in North Carolina, yes, I did quite a business on Valentine's." Everyone had wanted to look sexy for their lover. Some of them couldn't even if he wrote sexy on their body in permanent marker. But he'd done what he could for them. And they'd all walked away happy.

These two had no trouble with sexy. The song "I'm Too Sexy" could be their theme. Yet, they didn't seem aware how much arousal they caused in him.

"I bet." Joe's voice rumbled. His eyes narrowed to slits. He looked thoroughly pleased. He tilted his head to give Daphne better access to him.

She took advantage of the new angle to lick up the side of his throat. "I know you said you wanted to take pictures of us together and separately...for you." Daphne pulled her mouth away from Joe's skin. "I want pictures of me alone. For Joe. And pictures of him alone. For me. I'll pay your going rate."

Amos's breathing shuddered to a close. He'd expected to take these pictures, maybe one more round, then no more, despite all the pictures he'd proposed when he'd approached them. He'd never expected them to hire him. "Okay." Like he'd turn *that* down. "We'll start as soon as possible." After all, Valentine's wasn't too long away. His mind clicked with possibilities. And with the knowledge he'd get to see them on a regular basis.

* * * * *

Daphne hadn't said a word the whole way home from Amos's. She'd stared out of the window.

Was she mad? Upset? Had they gone too far in front of a stranger?

Joe frowned as they walked in the front door. He didn't believe that they had. But maybe she'd gotten uncomfortable.

Kip greeted them with his usual flurry of activity. White hair went flying from the Great Pyrenees in fluffy rounds. He needed to be brushed. A constant, though he mostly lost his entire coat twice a year. Then they had enough hair in their house to make a whole new dog. Not that they minded. He'd been a rescue from Henrico Humane Society, and they'd fallen in love with him as soon as they'd seen him.

Daphne stroked Kip's big head as his tongue crept out to sneak a lick or two. She patted harder as he shook with excitement.

Joe could see a lot of human in that dog. After all, he too shook like that when Daphne touched him.

She turned away from Kip and faced Joe. Her green orbs stared into his face as if memorizing each line.

She was upset.

Only she wasn't.

It turned out something entirely different was working her up.

Because instead of letting loose on him with words, she let loose with something else. She almost jumped into his arms. Plastered her body against him. Her kiss was frantic. Needing. Wanting. Thrusting her tongue into his mouth again and again.

He pulled her against him, running his hands over her back. His hand crept up to tangle in her hair.

Kip soon realized he wasn't getting anything more right now and lumbered away to his favorite spot by the bay window in the living room.

And Joe's focus shifted to Daphne...and Daphne alone.

He pulled on the waist of the black dress and slid it up. Tight, it was hard to pull. But it would go. He'd had experience with the material before.

Lots of experience.

His hand pulled the material up to the middle of her back. His lips wrestled with hers, tongues dueling.

She pulled away, panting. "Fuck me."

He didn't need to be told twice. He pushed her slightly away and then shoved down her underwear to her ankles.

She stretched and pulled the dress over her head. Tossed it to the side.

Her favorite dress.

That told him how horny she was. His Daphne was anal about hanging up her clothes. About keeping them neat.

She wasn't the only one ready for this. His cock had never gone fully back down. Been hard since before the photo shoot.

He shrugged off his shirt as quickly as he could.

Her swollen lips trembled. Her hand shook as she reached down for the snap on his jeans. She ripped it open and the zipper down. Helped him pull down his pants and briefs. She was so eager, she didn't give him any room to do it himself; instead, she kept helping with her hands, which weren't gentle as they tried to pull off his clothes. Finally, his jeans reached his ankles and he kicked them off.

As soon as his pants were on the floor, he grabbed her and pulled her against him. Needed to feel her against him. Shoved her back against the wall without gentleness. Kissed her with lips that needed to be one with her, no matter how that happened. Took in her breath before he spoke. "I don't think I can make it." He didn't continue. Couldn't explain what he meant. His breath wouldn't come fast enough. Felt as though he were drowning. In her. Her soft skin. Her familiar scent.

"Don't." She was breathing as fast as he was. Matched him pant for pant. Shook about as much. "Don't wait. Need you now. Here."

She'd known what he was talking about even as he couldn't get out all of the words. Shit but he loved this woman. Inside and out.

He grabbed her again, moved slightly back from her to pick her up. She tried to climb up him in her eagerness. Her legs wrapped around his hips.

"Slow down." But as he lifted her, he moved toward her and his cock went against her pussy. Accidental but good aim. Lavalike heat flowed over his cock.

She sucked in a breath. "No." She groaned and rubbed herself against him, stroking his cock across her pussy several times. "I don't want to slow down."

And if she kept doing that, he wouldn't be able to. He could barely think now with her scents driving him wild. He could smell her musk and her cream. And he wanted to be covered in her.

He wiggled against her, gaining purchase for his feet for what was to come. Which was him inside of her.

Her legs lifted to wrap more fully around him. It had been the same way at the studio, only they'd been on the floor.

The studio. Amos.

His tip found the right spot. The sweet spot. The spot that dripped her honey and was ready for him to enter. So inviting. So warm.

He moaned as the tip entered her.

Amos...

She gasped and leaned back against the wall. She poked her body out so that he'd rub all against her.

He moved his hips forward to go even deeper within her. Her heat and her wetness coated him. Raised his temperature. His heart rate spasmed into triple time. He needed this like he needed to breathe. To blink.

Her legs clutched at him as tightly as they could wrap around him.

He thrust back against her, wildly. Forcefully. Without preamble, he went inside her to the hilt. Seated himself in her satiny depths.

Amos was like homespun satin...

"Yes." She screamed as her body tensed. And then her body jerked several times in an uncontrolled manner. Rocked against him, seeking to get him as deeply as he could go.

She'd climaxed.

And he still wanted to go deeper within her.

He continued to buck against her wildly. Going fully in but not coming all the way out before he went down again. She enclosed his cock with sensation. His hips wouldn't stay still but kept moving against her.

He rubbed his hand against her skin where he held on. Lowered his mouth and stole a kiss from the woman he was inside of. She tasted better than ambrosia. Opened her mouth for him. Like she'd opened her pussy for him. Her life for him.

His thrusts grew faster. Wilder. More spasms. Up and down. He clunked her against the wall with every downward move of his body.

Another shriek. "Joe..."

More in and out. More wetness surrounding him. He bit his teeth together. Concentrated on the moving of his body within hers. His body against hers. The way she felt in his arms.

His woman.

The orgasm grew to full-blown in seconds. He couldn't get deep enough inside of her. Couldn't get close enough to her heat. He wanted to be fully inside of her. So there was not even breath between them. His come spurted from him in jets as she tried to rock herself against him as best she could.

He swallowed, throat dry and scratchy.

She slumped against him, spent.

It had been a while since they'd been this out of control. This spontaneous. And only one thing could have caused it.

Amos.

Chapter Five

Daphne lay in Joe's arms.

Kip got up, marched around, and then sank back down on his huge fleece pillow. He let out a sigh.

"He's looking to be walked."

"I know." She rubbed a hand over Joe's bare chest. Teased the light sprinkling of hair, flexing her hand. "I'll get up in a minute." Spent and tired, she didn't look forward to getting up or moving away from Joe's warm body.

They'd traipsed upstairs after their tryst. Had another round of lovemaking in the bed. It had been a while since they'd done it twice like that.

"You were thinking about Amos."

Joe's voice didn't carry any hint of emotion. Nor was it flat. She stilled her hand. What did he mean? And how would he react? "You mean now?"

"No. Before."

As the only before was having sex...the question was loaded. She picked her words as carefully as she could choose them. She didn't want to upset him. But they'd always been honest with each other. It was the only thing that had saved their relationship after Gary. She didn't intend to lie to him now. That wouldn't save her anything. "Yes. I did think about him."

"So did I."

Her hand resumed stroking his chest. "We had an exciting day. He's a sexy man. No wonder we can't stop thinking about him."

"It's more than that."

Her hand stilled again. "It is?"

She felt Joe's nod rather than saw the action. Didn't dare look up at his face. "Why is it more than that?"

Joe's hand started making circles on her arm. "Because you want him. You want a threesome with him."

Not at the expense of her marriage. "Not enough. We agreed about no more threesomes." They hadn't set a time limit or said if they'd go back to doing what they'd been doing at any point. Everything had been fluid. "Because of what happened."

"Doesn't mean you don't want him."

"No. It doesn't. But like I said, not enough." She'd fought too hard for Joe to lose him now. Over someone they barely knew. They thought they'd known Gary. He'd been their off-and-on lover for five years. It hadn't been exclusive until the last year. They'd been thinking about making a life with him as a working triad. And then he'd started undermining Joe. Started trying to get her to do things without Joe or even telling him. She swallowed. All were no-no's in a threesome. Jealousy was a normal problem and could be worked out, but not when it was justified.

Joe whispered, "I want him too."

A fire brimmed under her skin. "You do?"

That was something different.

None of the men they'd dated had been bisexual. They'd wanted to love on her. Not Joe. She'd gotten a different vibe from Amos today. Maybe he was bisexual. She'd always known Joe was, but because he'd been with her, he hadn't acted on his impulses. What was it about Amos that had gotten to him? She frowned. Shouldn't be jealous over this. She had no right. After all, she was attracted to Amos too.

"Yeah, I do." He moved his hand up and down her arm. "I do. I'm not sure why, but he..."

"He's hungry." For both of them. He was young and didn't hide that fact well. She'd seen the rawness in his gaze. Especially when he'd put the damn camera down.

"Yeah."

"Joe, I don't want to cause trouble for us." She blew out an even breath. Lifted up so she could look into his face.

Kip paced again at her movement, then lay back down. Another heavy sigh.

They needed to finish this conversation soon. "It feels like we just got back to us."

"I know."

"We had agreed no more threesomes."

He nodded. "I know that too. But we had decided before things went wonky with Gary what we wanted. A triad. I don't think that's changed."

They had. Decided they wanted consistency and had pared down to a single lover. They'd been making plans for the future as a three-party affair when things had started down the wrong road. Her heart leaped. Joe didn't think their desires had changed. For a long time, she hadn't been sure of that. "I know."

"Amos... He could...be what we've been waiting for."

She bit her lip and looked into his eyes. "But he could also be another Gary. You were jealous of what he had with me." Joe couldn't be serious about this action. But he looked as if he was. Her heart pounded in her chest. She had to be honest instead of stepping up and taking what she wanted. Better they talked now rather than later.

"I don't think he is. And besides, if we let Gary dictate what we do, he won because we won't be the couple we were meant to be. The people we were meant to be."

Her eyes closed. "You want Amos?" Joe was right. They'd always been explorative in their relationship. Had a different feel for themselves than anyone else. Gary had wanted to change that. Change her. And Joe. If he changed them in life without him, then he would win. He'd already made them wary.

"I do. I think we should...try a threesome with him."

Her heart tripled its rate. She could barely hear. They were words she'd never expected to hear from Joe again. "You sure about this?"

His laugh was the first wary thing she'd heard from him today. "Yes. And no." He looked up at the ceiling rather than her eyes. "I worry that if we don't try things with Amos, we'll regret it one day. After the pictures are over, he'll fall from our lives."

Unsaid was that neither of them wanted him to go away. Heat spread through her chest. "Why don't we do this? I'll do the first round of single pictures. Feel him out. Then, you do a round of single pictures. Then, we'll talk about where we want to go from there." That way, they both still had an out. If either of the single shots didn't go as planned, then they could walk away. Amos would never be the wiser.

Joe smiled. The one that always melted her heart into a giant wad of goo. "That sounds like a good plan. We should be careful how much personal stuff we tell him. How far will you go with him? So I don't go any further."

She lowered her face. "Not too far. Nothing...overtly sexual." She'd hold herself to that no matter how Amos reacted. "And no intimate details of our lives...either jobs or personal stuff. Yet. I'll feel him out. Maybe let him know what he's in for if things go right."

He reached out to stroke her face. "I love you."

His fingers warmed her. Made the heat rise up again in other parts of hers. "I love you too."

They had little warning before Kip jumped into the bed with them. He drooled and jumped around on the mattress. He wasn't allowed on the bed but sometimes couldn't seem to help himself.

She grabbed the big behemoth's head. He licked her right in the mouth. "Oh. Bleck." She wiped her hand across it. "Chill, dog. I'll take you out. I promise."

And when she returned from the walk, she'd make the call to Amos to set up her first photo session.

* * * * *

Amos snapped pictures of the beauty displayed in front of him. She had her head back on a huge ottoman, hair hanging down, legs splayed. The little lingerie she wore wasn't as little as some that he'd seen people wearing and left something to the imagination. Amos had a fertile imagination.

Daphne.

Big, beautiful breasts and a curvaceous body. She wasn't Kate Moss. More Marilyn in her shape. And Amos wanted the camera to love her. Hell, it already did. He'd previewed some of the pictures from the last shoot. They'd turned out well.

She'd called about setting up her appointment first. Her voice had been light and airy. Like a weight had been lifted.

Now she was beautifully displayed in front of him while he took tons of shots. "Lift your head a little." He didn't often have to give her direction. She seemed to know the angles she looked best at and used them to her full advantage.

She did what he'd asked, bringing it up slightly off the ottoman. Her smile curved her face in the most attractive way.

His cock grew harder. Hands shaky. He licked his lips. No, he wasn't going to lose control of this photo shoot as he had the last one. "Good job." That was an understatement. For a nonmodel, she did an excellent job at conducting herself.

Her eyes twinkled at him. "Thanks." Her husky voice raised the hair on his arms. She affected him like few other women had.

He was having problems seeing her as simply a subject for his camera. Which was a problem. Maybe he never should have taken this job.

Her nipples poked out through the material. Maybe she was chilly? Of course, he was about to burn up with his own desires raging through him. Ice would melt if it touched his skin. "Are you cold?"

"Nothing I can't handle." She turned her head to the side. Her eyes gleamed like emerald jewels in the sunlight.

Amos quickly moved to the nearby bench and picked up a dark pink, fuzzy robe. He held it out in one hand, camera in the other. "Put this on and warm up for a couple of minutes." He should have lit a fire in the fireplace. Although, he hadn't checked the chimney so was anybody's guess as to whether it was unclogged.

She went to sit up on the ottoman, overshot, and almost fell off on her butt. "Heh. Okay." She grabbed the robe from his hand as she stood. A flush moved up her neck. She didn't have an inner grace. She covered well. This was the first time he'd seen her flustered at this shoot. "Thanks." She had trouble getting the robe on. It didn't want to slide up her arms. She wrestled with it but had no luck.

He set down the camera. His hands fumbled, as if he'd lost an appendage when he lost his equipment. "Here, let me help."

"Thanks." She waited for him to get the robe straight so she could get it on. It slid over her skin, settling around her and swallowing her in the fuzzy depths. "Ahhh." Her face changed expression. "It's so soft."

"Better?" He swallowed, looking down at her. She looked positively pleased. Pleasured. Happy. It was a look he wanted to see more than once. "I'm sorry it's so chilly in here. I'm trying to do something..."

She reached up and placed her pointer finger on his lips before he could finish talking. "It's fine."

Her. Finger. Seared. Him. He'd never had anything burn so much. He couldn't even get out any words past the one finger on his lips. The touch shook him all the way down to his toes, making him rock back on them.

She pulled down her finger, looking at it suspiciously. Had it burned her as much as it had him? She pulled the robe tighter around her but not before he spotted that her nipples were still elongated.

Maybe she hadn't been cold at all...

He breathed through his mouth, trying to take in enough air to his deflated lungs. His fingers rolled around as if they wanted to pinch them. Maybe she'd been turned on by acting sexy in front of him.

Why would she? She had Joe to do that for on a regular basis. And Joe was a force all on his own.

She pulled the robe up and rubbed her chin along the soft material. Seemed to want to rub her entire self around in the fuzziness.

"Like?" She looked catlike with the green eyes and rubbing her chin all over the soft material.

"Oh, yeah." Her eyes met his. This was a woman who didn't hold anything back. Brassy had been his first thought. Like a trumpet that wanted to be played and stand out. That was her.

He backed away from the intensity of her look and picked up his camera. Time to go back to work.

An instant of a frown broke across her mouth, then was gone as quickly as it came. She lowered her head and deliberately rubbed her cheek against the robe. Her mouth pouted up in a sexy grin.

He snapped a couple of shots. "Nice." Yeah, he was so hot he might combust. He needed air-conditioning with her looking like this.

She winked at him.

He tried to capture the motion but missed. She was too fast for him. He not only wanted the wink but the look on her face surrounding the action.

"What's your deal?" She stepped back to the ottoman and settled down in the robe. Crossed her legs in front of her. The dark rose material brought out her creamy skin. There was a freckle right in the divot where the robe met at the top. How many more freckles hid under the material?

With the robe tightly cinched, she looked as if she had nothing on underneath. Of course, she was wearing lingerie. But the camera would give the illusion she wasn't wearing anything under the robe.

"Gap the robe away a bit from your top."

She did so with sure fingers, furthering the illusion. The more skin showed, the more it conveyed a sense of nudity, despite the robe.

He snapped a few shots, then responded to her question. "What do you mean?"

"I mean what's your deal? You're new to the city. You see Joe and me. Seek us out for pictures. How come?"

Somehow the truth wasn't going to set him free here. It would probably get him pinned as a stalker. Why had he sought them out? It had been an impulse. And sometimes, despite his careful upbringing, he acted on pure impulse. "I...thought you'd make good subjects. And the camera is showing I'm right."

She pulled her legs up under her. It created a shadow between her thighs. One he itched to explore. "Why?"

The hundred-thousand-dollar question. "Because your relationship shows up in everything you do. And I wanted to show that. On film." He always had things he wanted to take pictures of. Things he saw in his mind's eye that he wanted to tell the world. Sometimes, he was successful, like now with the Thompsons and with the shots he'd taken of the farmer's market downtown. Other times, not so much, like a picture he'd tried to take of a plane in midair flight.

Her lips quirked up, not in a frown but an expression that said she was puzzled. "I thought maybe it was because you were attracted to me." Her head cocked to the side as she waited for him to respond.

The blood rushed from Amos's face and into his ears. He could barely hear. He lowered the camera. Stumbled as he backed away from her. He didn't know how to answer that. No one had ever called him out like this.

"Are you?" She got up. Followed Amos. Narrowed the distance between them. "Are you attracted to me?"

He swallowed. Put his camera up between them as though he'd take pictures. His tongue stuttered as if a weight were on it, dragging down the words. "I-I-I... You're married." Like married people couldn't be attractive.

She came closer to him. "Married people can't be attractive?" She repeated his thought as though he'd said it out loud. Her voice lowered to even huskier than before. "Are you attracted to me, Amos?"

He backed away again quickly. "You're married. To Joe. And you're my client. Wouldn't matter if I was..." Which was the truth. It didn't matter how much he was attracted to either of them. They were married. It made them off-limits, unless they wanted to be put back into play. And so far, they hadn't said that directly to him.

"I think you are." She purred the words out through full lips. "And I think you're attracted to Joe."

His eyes flew to hers. Joe had said something. He'd been uncomfortable. Amos never should have flirted with him. Now, they would run from him. Not only would he never see them again, they'd tell their friends. His rep would be ruined before he even started. He'd been so careful about his sexual preferences. Done all the good heterosexual things because it was expected. Now, he'd been busted. And would either be outed as a homosexual, or less likely, bisexual. People seemed to want to categorize attraction. And those like him, who couldn't be boxed in that easily, didn't fit in anywhere. "That's ludicrous. I..." How much could he deny this?

"Hardly ludicrous." She came up in front of him, close enough to touch him. He was against the wall; there was nowhere else to go. "I have eyes. I see you. And I think you're attracted to us both." Her face softened. "It's okay."

No, it wasn't okay. She'd seen something in him she never should have seen. He'd never hung himself out like this. "I'm not." He shook his head.

She moved so close he could feel her body heat. With one hand, she reached out and took the camera. Set it down on a nearby table. "It's okay."

"What? That I'm attracted to both you and your husband? Most people would not be okay with that." Was that an admission? Not exactly. But it wasn't a denial either. He'd have to be more careful in how he replied.

"I'm not most people."

He had to give her that. She wasn't. Not even close. Her body so close to his made everything on him stand up. "I've noticed that."

She brought her hand up to stroke his face. "Good. I aim to make everyone know that about me." Her fingers teased his face. "It's because you're attracted to us that you asked about us modeling for you. Say it."

He didn't dare close his eyes like he wanted to, met her gaze dead-on with open eyes. "If I say yes?"

She shrugged. "You say yes. I'm not going to get mad if that's what you mean. I'm attracted to Joe too. And he's attracted to me."

"But generally married people don't like others finding their spouses attractive." In fact, it broke up marriages. Like Amos's own parents.

"With some, yes, it does. But Joe and I...have an understanding. We both...are open-minded."

Did that mean open-married? "What do you mean by that?" He pushed forward a little. "And what's your deal? Why aren't you more...upset?"

Her fingers stilled on his neck.

Had he gone too far?

* * * * *

Daphne raked her fingers over Amos's soft skin. He'd asked a good question. "Because I'm not like other girls. Like I said before." She smiled. She never had been. Joe had brought more of that quality out from inside of her, but it had always existed. Joe had just made her feel normal for wanting what she did.

"You and Joe are into threesomes?" A tic formed. He wasn't sure about asking that question.

She hesitated. How to answer? Despite the fact they'd agreed to see where this went, it wasn't a sure thing. They could back out if it wasn't going where they wanted it to. The last thing she wanted to do was lead Amos on.

"Never mind. I shouldn't have said that." He reached out his hand to grab for his camera but missed because he wasn't looking. He brought his hand back to his body and Daphne caught it before moving away.

She then stroked her hand across his cheek. "We were."

"Were? Past tense?"

She blew out a breath and nodded. "Were."

He nodded. "Okay then." He moved away from her hands, brushing past her to get away from the wall.

She wrapped her arms around herself with the robe clutched close. "We had a threesome go bad. The other man...wanted me only. Not Joe. He manipulated me and tried to do things with only me. He wanted me all to himself. He tried to cut Joe out of our lives."

It had resulted in a fight that had gotten both men asked to leave I Heart That City. And Joe and Daphne had had to change their locks. It had taken a while before Joe believed she hadn't been privy to the fact he hadn't known, or she wouldn't have done things with Gary. Gary had believed she would choose him over Joe. Like that would happen.

"Who wouldn't want Joe?" Amos turned to face her. His nose had scrunched up in a delightful expression of confusion. He looked puzzled that anyone would not entertain the idea.

"That's what I said. Who wouldn't want Joe?" She'd never understood how they always picked guys who weren't into male-on-male sex. It hadn't given her much to watch, but she'd enjoyed being the object of their attention. "We swore off threesomes for a while."

"Hey, it's okay. You don't have to tell me anything."

He seemed sincere, but for him to even think about being with them, he needed to know. "Oh, but I do. Because...we might be ready to try it again." Yes, she'd never been the mull around type. Best to get this out of the way now.

"Oh?" His Adam's apple bobbed as he swallowed.

"Have you ever had a threesome, Amos?" She watched as he moved side to side in a nervous pitch.

"Me? Ummm. Well. Not exactly. No. I haven't."

A threesomes virgin. How quaint. *Do you want to?* almost rolled from her tongue. But that wouldn't be fair as things weren't concrete. "You like both men and women. Right?" She watched those dark eyes for the answer that would precede his words.

"Yeah. Yeah, I do."

Not an easy thing for a man to admit. "So does Joe."

Amos's breathing sped up. His neck moved in a shiver.

"We've never had a man as interested in him as they were me." She rubbed her arms. Whereas before she'd been aroused, now she was getting chilled.

Amos still didn't say anything.

"After what's happened, we're....gun-shy. But we've agreed to see what happens. To take steps toward a threesome."

Still no words. A dark look and an unreadable expression.

Her hands balled into fists, then unclenched. This silence was maddening. Suppose he wasn't interested in what they had to offer? Or not interested in a threesome? Because he liked men and women didn't mean he wanted them at the same time. Threesomes weren't easy. And committed triads were even harder. There were always feelings and jealousies to overcome.

But they'd thought the payoff would be worth the effort. "A threesome with you." There. She'd put the sentiment out there. He could do what he wanted to with the

information. How disappointed would she be if he didn't act? She searched way down inside herself. Probably a lot, which surprised her.

He took a breath as if it were his last. Moved forward with the grace of a wolf. Pulled her into his strong arms and planted a heavy kiss on her lips. One that had her reeling. His entire body harpooned her with his warm and lanky muscles against her. She couldn't pull away. Couldn't say anything. Only could react to his lips on hers.

His mouth mastered her. His hand came up to grasp her chin. His warm fingers made her skin heat. No more chills for her.

She felt small in his embrace. Almost dainty. Not something she'd felt with too many other men. Even Joe was not quite as tall as this man, but they weren't that much different in height.

Amos tasted like a sweet combination of coffee and hazelnut. His lips plundered hers, digging in deeply and sweeping her away.

She could smell him. His scent clung to her like the ivy on a fence. He smelled musky. Something familiar. Like Joe. They must use the same cologne.

His hands roamed her back before centering in her hair. He kissed like a man should. Bold. Wild. Exotic.

His lips plundered hers, driving her wild. Made her hips buck back and forth. She wanted to be near him. Wanted to be against him.

And then, he pulled her where she wanted to be.

She went against his muscular body. Wanted to hiss as his warmth slid alongside her, tempting her.

One hand left her hair to touch along her cheek. Caressed her. Stroked along her jawline. Then the hand ran down her neck and plunged inside the front of the robe.

Found her breast and rubbed against it, first gently and then more roughly. Kept rubbing the palm against her nipple. Then he took the tip between his fingers and squeezed.

Molten heat ran down her body. She almost collapsed from the weight of her own desires. They pushed against her. Made her want. Want more than she could even admit. Giddiness filled her flushed body.

His knee came up to wedge his thigh between her legs.

She rocked against him. Wanted more than that contact. Wanted all he would allow. This was supposed to be a feeling-out mission. Instead, he was feeling her up. And she liked what he was doing.

His hand on the back of her head held her steady, and he continued to kiss her senseless while rubbing against her pussy and stroking her breasts.

When he released her, she was achy and wanting. She licked her swollen lips. They had been thoroughly kissed. Her nipples ached from even the light material that touched

them. Her pussy felt like electric sparks had burned her. “I guess you like that idea.” Her voice was hoarse. Mouth dry.

He didn’t answer but nodded with a furious motion.

“It’s not a sure thing.” She fiddled with the tie to her robe. “Joe was put off with what happened with that other man. It...cost him a lot.”

“In other words, I have to win him over.” The succinctly put words assessing the situation made her smile. Amos wasn’t dumb.

“Yes. Yes, you do.”

His white smile flashed quickly and easily. “That’ll be fun.”

She could almost pity Joe. If that kiss was any indication, to come under Amos’s focus when he didn’t have his camera was an intensity like that of an erupting volcano. If only she could be a fly on the wall at the next photography session.

Chapter Six

Daphne skipped out of work and to her car in the crowded parking deck. She was going to pick up Joe and drop him off at his session with Amos. His truck was hard to parallel park when things were busy. She wasn't staying. She didn't want to interfere with any male bonding the two did.

But oh, if only she could watch. It was going to be interesting.

After a minute of searching because she'd forgotten where she parked again, she found her car. She'd backed into the space, unusual for her, so she hadn't been looking for the front of her car. She was the kind of person who lost her vehicle in parking lots all the time. Would get help searching for it, only to realize she'd driven Joe's truck.

She shook her head at her own folly. Came up to the driver's side and froze. Looked all around the deck.

A single red rose lay across the windshield.

She picked the flower up and brought it closer, being careful not to touch any thorns. A small note hung from the stem. *Until we meet again* was written on it in bold black writing.

It was unsigned.

She looked around the garage.

Joe wouldn't leave her a rose. That had been Gary's flower of choice. Gary had tried to shower her in them to show up Joe.

Who could have left the long-stemmed reminder?

Amos had had roses both times she'd been to his studio.

She looked around the deck again. A chill rose up her spine. A car door slamming made her jump.

The message left would seem to implicate Amos too.

Why hadn't he signed the note?

Only there was an issue with him leaving her this flower beyond semantics.

She'd talked about a great many things with Mr. Photographer. Threesomes. Trying things again. Joe. But never, not once in any of her meetings, had she told Amos what she did or where she worked.

Now, it wasn't that hard to figure out. She used her name for her byline. She worked at a local magazine.

But that Amos had taken it upon himself to leave something like this bothered her. She'd told him a little about the problems with Gary. It had been mentioned to Amos that Gary had used roses.

Maybe he'd left Joe one too?

Well, that would make more sense than a single present.

She gripped the rose and walked to the trunk. Started to put the flower in there. Out of the way and out of sight.

Only that would be like hiding the damn thing. And she had nothing to hide. She wasn't going to start keeping things from Joe now. Maybe he'd gotten a flower too, so putting it in the trunk would seem like she was trying to hide what had been left for her. The only problem would be if he hadn't. Because he would not react well to someone trying to co-opt her again.

On the other hand, finding the flower in his car would taint the photo session for him. It was a little flower. Maybe she should tuck it away.

She stood another long moment, holding the flower. Then she slammed the lid down on the trunk. Damn Amos for making her have to make this decision. She marched to the driver's door, opened it, sat down, reached back, and dropped the rose onto the seat in the back. If Joe looked back there, he'd see it. If he didn't, he wouldn't. She wasn't hiding anything from her husband.

Pulling out of the space, she sped to Joe's work. Pulled up outside the building, and Joe ambled over.

He got in the car and didn't glance into the back. "Hey." He leaned over to kiss her on the cheek. He wore black pants and a red shirt. Crossed his buff legs and put the seat back as he did every time he got in the car.

"Hey yourself." She glanced over at him as he buckled up, and they sped off. "Did you get a delivery today?" She tightened her hands on the steering wheel. Would make it so much easier if he had.

"Why? Did you send something?" He grinned boyishly at her. "Something good?" She could see him watching her as she peeked from the corner of her eye.

Damn. There went a good theory. That only left bad thoughts.

Why had Amos checked into her personal life without talking to her first? He had to have known where she worked. Where she parked. What she drove. That had involved his digging into her life. Not to mention, why hadn't he signed the card?

This snooping into personal information didn't thrill her. Didn't flatter her. Only made her suspicious.

It was troubling. But maybe not that troubling. She'd see what happened. "No. I didn't send you anything, but I ordered some stuff online. Had it sent to your address because you're usually there, unlike me." Which was true. He would have told her if there had been any flowers or anything else delivered. Which left her alone in roses. Damn.

"I'll look for a package then."

She nodded. She'd tell him about the rose after his time with Amos was over. After all, it was only one flower. And if Amos had checked into them, maybe it was because he was thinking about embarking into a new relationship with them. Maybe she should do the same about Amos.

She pulled up outside Amos's studio. His home. She looked into the upper reaches of the building. What kind of apartment did he have? Her breathing went aflutter thinking of him being up there.

Her husband was about to embark upon a picture-taking session with another man. A man she'd been honest with and told they were considering him for a threesome. And that Joe would be the one he'd have to win over.

Amos had looked as if he'd have plans for the session. That he'd taken winning over Joe as a challenge. And one he intended to win.

Oh, yeah. If only she could stay.

Joe reached across her and touched her hand. His fingers settled comfortably on her skin. "You okay? You seem a little jumpy. And distracted. You barely said a word on the way here." He looked in her eyes as if he could see into her soul.

The rose had discombobulated her. More than she'd realized. Of course Joe had always been able to read her better than anyone else. "Yeah. Yeah, I'm fine." She grasped his hands in hers. Held on to him as though she could keep him. An inkling of not wanting him to go in there bubbled up. She bit it back. It had no purpose in her world. She wasn't insecure and she wouldn't start now. This was what she wanted. "I told you I talked to him. About...things." She'd told Joe everything about her talk with Amos.

He nodded. Squeezed her hand with sure fingers. "Yes, you did." And he smiled. Like he was looking forward to this. A bigger smile hadn't moved across his face in a long time. Since Gary had started his trickery.

She wanted to kiss that smile. Keep it on his face forever. And Amos had put it there. Somehow knowing that Amos wanted him too had lifted Joe's mood to more elated than she'd ever seen him.

Her heart seemed to move up into her throat. Pounded there before dissipating. And she smiled back. It had been a long road and a long time since Joe had looked forward to something this much. She was glad he hadn't noticed the rose. She didn't want to take this away from him. "Have fun. Do everything I would do." She was the wilder of the two.

He laughed deeply. Freely. "Oh, I will do that." He waggled brows at her suggestively. "And more."

She felt the words down to her toes. And her doubts about this left her.

Amos had already been good for them. She only had to look at Joe to see that. And they weren't even fully involved with him yet. Whatever the purpose behind the rose, she had to trust in it. Trust in Joe and herself to keep the moorings straight on for them and their relationship no matter what wind blew their way, friend or adversary. She didn't know Amos well enough to trust him but she surely knew herself and Joe.

Joe moved out of the car.

She reached over and patted his ass. Couldn't help herself. "Want to go to I Heart That City tonight?"

He got out of the car and wagged his fingers at her. "No touching unless you're going to do something about it." She had a feeling that Amos would be doing something about it. A shiver raced across her. "I thought we were going tomorrow night. It is Valentine's."

Oh yeah. They would exchange pictures. She'd get to see the results of all three photo sessions. "Invite Amos. I don't think I did."

"I will." He flashed one more grin at her before closing the car door and headed into Amos's studio. The studio door shut behind him.

She couldn't see Joe anymore.

Somehow, another chapter in the journal of their lives was about to open. For good or for bad.

* * * * *

Joe sauntered in the front door. He felt more sure-footed than he had the other day. After all, he knew Daphne and Amos had talked. Now Amos knew what they'd been plotting. What he didn't know was how Amos would react to the information he'd been given. And Daphne hadn't mentioned if they'd talked about how the threesome would work.

Joe had been with other men before in college. He'd given up men when he'd fallen for Daphne. All the threesomes they'd had to date, not that they'd had many, had been with men who hadn't wanted any contact with Joe.

This time, if they proceeded with Amos, he sensed it could be different. Amos seemed as interested in him as he was in Daphne.

Amos spoke as Joe pushed open the door, "Joe?" A *clink* sound followed, as though something had been dropped. "Damn."

"Yeah."

"Come on in."

Joe loped into the studio area.

Amos was by the fireplace with a camera on a tripod, surveying the floor. He finally found a pin of some sort and tucked it into his pocket. He wore jeans and a tight black T-shirt. It showed off every muscle in his chest, and the sleeves were rolled up to show off his firm biceps. He moved with silent steps to the other side of the tripod.

Joe blew out a breath. Yeah, maybe with Amos it could be different. His cock hardened thinking about how different it could be. It had been a long time since he'd been with another man.

He could smell the cologne that Amos wore. It smelled oddly familiar. He inhaled, taking in the scent.

It was the same stuff he used.

He grinned. No wonder Daphne had told him that Amos smelled good last night as they'd been drifting off to sleep. She'd always liked his cologne, which was why he kept using the stuff.

"Hey. Sorry. I dropped something." Amos finished and let go of the tripod. "Getting a few details in order. Then we can get started."

"Take your time." It gave Joe a chance to observe Amos in action. Something he liked to do. The way the man's muscles rippled under the tight clothes was poetry in motion.

Amos smiled as he wandered to another camera, this one not mounted on anything. "How's Daphne? Did she enjoy the session yesterday?"

"She did." She'd been brimming with enthusiasm. And lust. They'd had an enjoyable night. "She wanted me to tell you to meet us at I Heart That City tomorrow night for dinner." He watched the man for any reaction.

Amos looked up at him and his eyebrows rose. "That's Valentine's Day." He continued to give him a look.

"Yep." Joe stretched, still a little stiff from a day spent at his desk. "Will some of the pictures be ready? You can give us a preview."

Amos nodded. "I can bring them with me. I don't want to intrude on your romantic dinner, though. Your celebration."

Tightness moved up Joe's chest. Gary had never been concerned with taking time away from Joe. Only in pulling them apart. It had taken him a while to convince Daphne of what

was going on. He'd almost lost his marriage over the whole affair. Amos, on the other hand, looked genuinely concerned that he'd be interfering. That set Joe a little more at ease. "You won't be intruding. And it will be great to get the pictures."

They both faded into silence.

Amos finally broke the quiet and said, "Why don't we start with you over by the fireplace? Some mood pictures. Brooding."

Now that Joe could do. He could be the brooding hero any day according to Daphne. He wandered to the fireplace and squatted down by the hearth. Looked into the fireplace as though he was contemplating something. "Like this?"

"Yeah."

Joe heard several camera clicks. Heard footsteps of Amos walking around behind him. The hair on the back of his neck prickled from awareness of the man behind him.

"Good. Now why don't you stand? Lean back against the bricks. Nonchalantly." Amos's voice deepened.

Joe stood up straight and turned to lean his back against the rough brick. He tried to keep the brooding look. Tension hung thick and heavy in the room. Something needed to break the aura around them.

Amos shook his head. Frowned. "You look too serious now. Relax." He swallowed. "Try and look casual."

"What? The bug-crawled-up-my-ass look doesn't work for me when I'm standing up?" Joe didn't let a grin out, but said the words with a serious face.

Amos barked out a laugh, which was what Joe wanted. The tension flung away like yesterday's newspaper. "No, that look doesn't work. It did in front of the fireplace. But not...I want something different now."

Didn't they all? "What should I try for?" Joe shook back his hair around his face. "Sexy?"

"You don't even have to try for that."

Yeah, that jump-started a few things. Amos thought he was sexy. And right back at him. Joe grinned, breaking the somber look in half. "Good to hear."

Amos swallowed. Held up the camera and snapped a couple of pictures.

Joe ran a hand through his hair. He shouldn't have said anything about Amos's comment. He and Amos were dancing around the fact of what Amos knew. Amos was hiding behind his camera. And the only way to get out of this rut was to provoke him out.

Which Joe could be a master at. He knew what pushed Daphne's buttons and did it often. Lecherously. Deliberately. Made her inner woman come out to play.

He dropped his hand to the top of his shirt, then farther down to his waistband. The other hand came around, and in one fluid motion, he pulled his shirt over his head. He

tossed it on the nearby chair. He'd modeled enough times for classes and ads; he wasn't embarrassed to be partially clothed. Hell, he'd worked enough construction jobs where the sun baked and bare chests were the only things to keep you cool enough to work. Even naked didn't make him feel uncomfortable.

Amos stared. Blew out a breath. He didn't seem to want to blink as he stared at Joe's chest.

Got you. He still hadn't been 100 percent sure that Amos liked men. He'd thought so. This proved it. A heterosexual male wasn't going to react like that to a bared male chest. As Amos had reacted to Daphne too, Joe could only assume one thing. Amos had bisexual leanings. How interesting to finally meet someone like him. "I can put it back on if you'd rather." Joe lowered his gaze to the unused camera in his hand. "But I thought this might give you some inspiration."

"Oh, uh. Yeah. Inspiration." Amos lifted his camera up in the air and looked at it like he'd forgotten how to use one. Still didn't take any pictures. "You could say that." He blew out a breath.

Joe flexed his muscles in his chest. Not something he did often. Yeah, he worked out, but it was for health, not to be a bodybuilder. However, the light that clicked on in Amos's gaze made it worth doing. Daphne often reacted to him like this. If only she could see Amos reacting to him. A smile lit his lips. His woman liked to be a voyeur, though she'd had little chance the last few years. She liked it almost as much as he did.

Amos still didn't lift his camera.

Joe leaned his arms back behind him, flexing again. Looked at Amos and watched him stare. "You gonna take pictures?" He almost hated to break the moment. But he wanted to get things going. Set things out in the open. The only way to do that was to confront Amos about what he wanted.

"Yes." Amos's voice was almost a wheeze. He raised the camera and took a couple of shots. In a more normal voice, he said, "Why don't you go to the rug? Lie down on it, stomach down."

Amos was trying to be in control. Both of himself and of Joe. He went to the rug and lay down. "Like this?" He propped his head up on his hands. Looked up at Amos. And saw the bulge hiding under his jeans. That sealed it. Amos did like men. Which made the idea of a threesome even more entertaining. Daphne had given him permission to do whatever he wanted. They'd discussed the situation as they were drifting off to sleep last night. He had carte blanche. His cock rubbed against the rug, which wasn't satisfying because he wanted it to be the nearby masculine body with the camera.

"Yeah."

Amos got down on the floor. A couple of clicks sounded. He turned the camera this way and that. "Can you lift up on your arms? Like you're doing a push-up?"

Joe lifted up and started doing push-ups, one after the other.

A small chuckle sounded. "It's hard to take your picture when you're moving so fast. Could you slow down a second?"

Joe stopped in mid-push-up and tilted up his head. Met the lens of Amos's camera with his gaze.

"You're good at those."

"Lots of practice."

Amos continued to kneel. "You can sit up now if you want."

Joe pushed up to sitting and moved closer to Amos. He tucked his legs under him, but his shoes kept getting in the way. "Can I take off my shoes?"

"Your photo shoot. Make yourself at home."

Joe moved his legs, then tugged off both shoes. He wiggled his bare toes, letting them air out.

"No socks?" Amos still stooped down low.

"Nope. Only the fuzzy kind."

"The fuzzy kind?"

Joe lifted his pants leg. "The fuzzy kind. Daphne always says those are what I wear instead of socks." He ran a hand along the hair that covered his leg down to his foot.

Amos snickered. "Oh." His eyes lit with merriment.

It was a look that Joe enjoyed seeing on the photographer. That he wanted to see again and again. It made his insides feel fuzzy too.

"You and Daphne are interesting." Amos still held the camera, but his smile was as wide as the James River down by the Chesapeake Bay.

"In what way?"

Amos took a while to answer. "A lot of people try and pretend when they're on camera. Try to be something they aren't. Neither of you do that."

Joe had never wanted to be anything but what he was, nor act like he did. "It's the way I am. Daphne too. Probably why we're together."

Amos nodded. The camera tipped lower. "I've noticed. You two don't put on pretenses. Or airs."

Somehow that insight made Joe smile. Amos saw into people. Or at least, he'd seen into Daphne and Joe. "Neither do you."

Amos's smile became strained. "You'd be surprised."

Joe cocked his head the side. "Oh?"

Amos picked up his camera again. "Yeah." His manner turned businesslike. "Pull a strand of hair down over your face. Like it's a curtain."

Joe had come too close to something. But what? 'Course a man who was attracted to both men and women usually did have to hide parts of himself. Daphne had been the second person he'd told about his attractions. She could handle his proclivities, where the first woman he'd shared with couldn't. She had called him a freak and left. Daphne had pulled him against her body and stayed. Like she always did. He pulled down a strand of hair over his face. It tickled his skin.

"A little more."

Joe dragged some more of his locks around.

"More."

He did it one more time.

"More --"

Joe interrupted. "Why don't you come help me with how much you want down? So I stop pulling on my hair."

Amos approached him and set the camera down by the fur. He knelt down in front of Joe.

His hands touched Joe's hair, pulling a good bit of it across Joe's face.

The strands tickled his lips and nose. He puffed out a spurt of air.

Amos dropped back to sit in front of Joe. He cocked his head to the side. "No, I don't think this is going to work."

"Good. Because it tickles." Joe reached to pull back his hair at the same time as Amos did.

Their hands knocked against each other.

"Ow." Joe pulled back his wrist. "What are you wearing?" He shook out his hand. And Amos pulled back his hair, which had been lying across his face. Made Joe's scalp tingle with awareness.

"Oh. Sorry." Amos held up his hand for a second, but it wasn't long enough for Joe to see anything. "It's a ring. My...grandfather gave it to me. He made it."

Joe reached across and grabbed the hand back up. "Let me see." His skin burned where he touched Amos's.

A simple metal ring with an onyx stone. It shone brightly against Amos's dark skin. Simple in detail, but there was craftsmanship there.

"Your grandfather made this?"

"Yeah." Amos didn't pull his hand away this time. "For my sixteenth birthday. It's heavy." His eyes, dark as the stone itself, burrowed into Joe's soul.

A moment of silence. Of quiet. Where the only sound they heard was the ticking of a clock somewhere. A car horn in the distance.

Joe still held Amos by the hand. His fingers stroked over the flat side, away from the ring and toward his wrist.

Amos coughed. "Well, we'd better get back to..."

Joe pulled him slightly forward so that Amos had to move or fall over. It brought him close. So close that they were almost touching.

Amos looked into Joe's eyes. Parted his lips.

And Joe couldn't resist. He dipped his mouth to brush along Amos's full lips. Took advantage of the part to roam and taste him. He tasted of coffee and chocolate. And man. A delicious combination.

Joe didn't linger. Didn't use his tongue. Kissed him briefly and pulled away. Immediately, he felt the loss of the lips no longer against his.

Amos looked at him and took a deep breath. Didn't say anything. Stared with those dark eyes that didn't let Joe see anything beyond them.

"Should I not have done that?" Joe didn't offer up an apology. After all, he wasn't sorry. Wouldn't take it back, even if he could. He'd be unhappy if Amos hadn't wanted the kiss, but he still wouldn't regret acting.

"Does Daphne know" -- Amos hesitated, then went on in a rambling voice -- "what might happen here between us today? Did you two talk about...?"

"Yes." She knew what might happen. She was okay with the possibilities. Though for the first time, the tables had shifted. Amos seemed as interested in Joe as her. Joe had sensed reluctance in her today, maybe a little envy. Threesomes had issues to work out, even in brief interactions. He'd heard triads often had even more. Relationships were always challenging. He'd had people tell him they couldn't handle being a regular couple, with two people and the trials of that, much less adding a third. But somehow, he'd always liked the difficulties of a *ménage à trois*.

Until Gary.

That thought made him sober.

Amos's eyes narrowed. "You talked about what might happen between us?" His eyes had the clarity of a panther and had seen Joe's shift in mood.

He thought Joe's change in expression was because Daphne might not have agreed to what was going to happen. Quite the contrary. She'd been excited about this foray. "We did discuss what could happen, and she was okay with it." He didn't bother to tell Amos why he'd gotten more serious. He wasn't sure how much Daphne had told him about Gary. And it wasn't important to the situation at hand right now anyway.

Something spiraled at the pit of his stomach. Amos was checking to make sure that Daphne was aware of the situation, as all good threesome partners should. Somehow that touched him even more than the earlier kiss. Something slammed against his insides. He didn't have long to ponder the situation, though.

Amos moved forward with the speed of a panther. “Good.” His lips plundered Joe’s with quickness and ferocity. His lips claimed Joe’s as though they could crawl inside him and live. Willfully. His tongue reached out to do a dance, swirling itself around Joe’s. His hands grappled in Joe’s hair.

Joe panted, his heart rate accelerating. Breathing went out of control. He pressed his mouth against Amos’s.

Amos shifted forward until his body touched Joe’s. Planted himself against the man with trembling running through his body. All the hair on Joe’s skin stood out. His cock flared up at attention.

They kissed and kissed some more.

Joe moved around and helped ease them down onto the rug so they were lying side by side. Groaned against Amos’s lips as he felt his strong body come against his. The touch was maddening and electric. If only they were naked.

Maybe they soon would be.

Amos never broke his mouth away from Joe’s. But continued to kiss him with relentless lips that barely let Joe breathe. It was as though he couldn’t get enough of Joe. And Joe gave him everything that he had.

Joe grasped the back of Amos’s head in one hand. Pulled him even closer to try and take back the kiss.

It was a duel. And Joe didn’t care who won.

Because in the end, they both would. They both would get hot. Sweaty. Sated. His stomach clenched.

Finally the urge for air broke them apart, both of them near hyperventilating while trying to get their breath back.

Joe ran his hand through Amos’s short strands. His hair was more prickly than soft. Probably due to gel.

Amos looked at him. He slung his arm around Joe’s waist. “How about that?” His swollen lips showed how well they’d been kissed. And made Joe want to do it all over again. Repeatedly.

“Yeah, how about that?” Joe moved his hands around Amos’s strong back, stroking over the lean muscles. “You ever been with a guy before?”

“Yeah.”

“A woman?”

“What is this, twenty questions? Yeah.”

Joe smiled at the creeping irritation in Amos’s voice. “But you’ve never been in a full threesome before.” Daphne had told him that. It wasn’t a cheap thrill that Joe was looking for by asking the question. Different experiences merited different arrangements.

“Daphne told... No. I haven’t.” Amos cocked an eyebrow. “I’m thinking a lot of people haven’t. If there’s some test or something I have to pass...”

“No test.” Joe spread his hand around in circles on Amos’s back. He felt the muscles tense and relax. “Call it curiosity.”

“Why do you want to know about me?”

Joe leaned forward to nip Amos’s lips before he spoke. “Because I like to know a man I’m about to fuck.”

Chapter Seven

Fuck me and call me George. Amos shivered in places he didn't know he could shiver. His balls drew up close to his body. His cock grew to amazing lengths. Who'd have thought words could drive him so wild? But these did. The images they drew up in Amos's brain of bodies wrapped around each other couldn't be beat.

Except maybe by the real thing. Which he was about to experience. If Joe had his way.

"What if I don't want to fuck?" Amos's dry mouth could hardly move the words out past his parched tongue. A lie. He did. With Joe. More than anything he'd ever wanted. Was this a test of some sort? Before they did the full-fledged threesome? Or was this for fun? He'd bet a little of both.

"No harm, no foul." Joe's hand schlepped away from Amos's back. "I move on. We go back to taking pictures."

And the opportunity at hand would be lost. Forever. Threesomes weren't common. One where a man wanted another man as much as Joe seemed to want him were probably even less so. Not to mention, he'd never been as attracted to others as he was to Joe and Daphne. He needed to see where this opportunity led him. For all their sakes. "Good thing I do want to fuck then, huh?" His skin prickled as the words left his mouth. There was no taking them back.

Joe's smile was dazzling and sexy at the same time. It was a smile meant to beguile. To bewitch. And it worked pretty well. "Yeah, it is."

Joe reached over and tugged on the bottom of Amos's shirt. He pulled the material from where it had been tucked into Amos's jeans. "Your turn."

Amos felt the groping hands all the way down to his shaking knees. "Okay." Not that Joe had asked him a question, but it seemed like something to say. He lifted and pulled the shirt off with a flourish. Chill bumps rose up on his skin.

“Cold?” Joe reached up and brushed his knuckles along Amos’s shoulder. Did it several times, as if not able to keep from touching him.

Amos shook his head. More like baking in the Sahara. Fire exploded along his skin wherever Joe touched. And it all flowed down into his cock like liquid lava. Engorging it. Making him throb. He wanted to free the turgid member from its confines. Before plunging it into much more pleasurable places. Places that would drive him wild with desire. Be wet and tight.

Joe moved in for a sweeping kiss. A penetrating, turn-your-head kiss that had Amos panting by the time he’d finished. The measure of his mouth was at lust and climbing quickly. Their tongues dueled in a fight designed for no one to win. Or maybe for both of them to win. Hard to tell.

Amos slid his hands through Joe’s hair again. The silken strands ran easily across his fingers so easily. So ready. The way the strands moved through his hands fascinated him. Made him want to sink his fingers farther and farther in.

Daphne’s hair would feel much the same way. Hers had looked this soft. Only it would be a golden instead of a dark waterfall.

Their bodies would contrast. The way they had in the pictures he’d taken of them together. Dark and light.

Joe growled and reached for Amos’s waistband, and all conscious thought fled from Amos. His fingers tugged roughly on the material, pulling it against Amos’s cock.

When Daphne had left, Amos had been fully prepared to take on Joe. To convince him that a threesome with Amos was in his best interests. But once Joe had walked in, his bravado had vanished. It had reappeared briefly when he’d started kissing Joe. But here Joe was, taking control again. It was his insistence on a kiss and now on stripping that was getting the ball rolling. How had Amos lost control like this to Joe?

Did Amos want to let him lead? Or did he want to fight over the ownership of the alpha male in the fucking?

And then, Joe’s tongue dueled with his and his hands opened up the front of Amos’s jeans. And somehow who was in charge didn’t seem to matter. Amos’s stomach sucked in with a heavy breath.

Joe’s hand undid the top of Amos’s jeans and went down inside. Touched his cock with a brisk caress under the jeans directly to flesh.

The rough hand stroking over his hard cock was almost more than Amos could bear. He jumped. He’d gone commando today. Not something he often did. Now he’d been caught at his stunt. Which maybe he’d hoped would happen all along. Maybe that was why he’d worn nothing under his jeans today. So Joe would explore and find that out.

Joe’s hand stretched down his pants to grasp him fully. The hand covered him with warm fingers.

Enclosed him.

Amos leaned back, letting Joe have full access. The roughness caressed him. Tightened around him. Fingertips played in the small secretion of precome on the tip. Up and down, the hand moved around Amos, sliding in a regular motion. Down the base and up again.

Amos groaned. His heart did a ramp-up like a skateboard and then headed off into the atmosphere. His breath came in pants. He pushed his jeans down with his hands, needing his pants off five minutes ago. Wanting the same thing.

Joe moved his hand away and helped to shuck Amos from his pants. His gaze didn't pull away from Amos's cock. His eyes lit up like he was starved and Amos was the meal. Made Amos shiver. Yeah, Joe could eat at his place anytime. He wanted to see that look again and again in Joe's eyes.

Joe reached for Amos's cock again with sure fingers, but before he could get there, Amos stopped him.

"Ah ah ah." Amos waved a finger back and forth at Joe's face. "Not until we're all even."

Joe arched a brow. "Even?"

"Take 'em off." He pointed to Joe's pants with the same finger he'd wagged at Joe. Went back to being in charge again. Was this how it would be between them? Control bouncing back and forth? How long would Joe let him stay in charge? A smile tickled his lips, rolled down his throat, and made his stomach clench.

To his surprise, Joe pushed to his feet, body going away from Amos, leaving Amos chilled in response. Joe's toes wiggled around in the soft fur underneath, playing. Teasing.

Amos drew his gaze away from the toes to Joe's head. His face looked impassive but the eyes -- the eyes said so much.

His eyes gleamed down at him with a mischievous twinkle. "You take 'em off." He put his hands on his hips as if to accentuate what he wanted Amos to do.

Amos stilled. Joe wanted him to take off *his* pants? Amos slowly rose to his knees. Looked at what his head was in line with. This could get interesting. He had an idea about how to take off the pants in a more friendly way. A more intimate way.

Joe shifted his weight. "Hurry up." His voice took on the commanding tone of someone used to being in charge. Yeah, there would be many grapples for power in this dynamic.

Amos looked up at him and waggled his eyebrows, telling Joe he was not the only one who could tease. Then, he took his fingers and slowly edged open the button on Joe's jeans. His knuckles contacted Joe's skin. Slipped over the flesh with ease. Warmth lit Amos's fingers like firecrackers.

Joe shivered. The action was quick and if Amos had blinked, he might not have seen it. But he did. Joe had enjoyed the minute touch. The brief contact. As much as Amos had enjoyed touching him.

Amos got slower. Took his time working the stubborn button free. Finally, he released the button from the hole.

Joe growled and bucked his hips in impatience. Seemed to want his pants down right then and there. Well, he would have to wait. For what Amos had in store.

Amos was in charge right now, and he intended to up the torture.

Amos brought his head across and reached for the zipper with his mouth. He eased it up between his fingers so it would be easier to catch.

Joe inhaled, sucking in his stomach under his jeans, making a dip in the fold. He said something that Amos couldn't quite make out.

Amos managed to grasp the zipper pull in his mouth after a try or two to get it in between his teeth. Gripped it between the front four. Wasn't quite as easy as he'd thought it would be. Slowly moved down with it while keeping the zipper in his mouth and not drooling. Lost it and had to start again. Brushed hard against Joe's full cock.

Joe let out a growl. The sound was low and deep, the direction almost like it came from Joe's stomach.

Amos didn't say anything but grasped the tab again to move it down farther. Kept bumping his face against Joe's cock as hard as he could.

He could feel the lump of Joe's cock under his mouth. He wanted to wrap his mouth around it much like Joe had his hands on Amos's cock earlier. Soon. Soon, he'd have Joe within his grasp. Within his mouth. Squirting out his come. Soon, he'd taste Joe on his lips.

Finally, the pull was at the bottom of the zipper teeth. Had taken longer than Amos had thought it would. About time.

Amos shifted back up on his knees so that he was at eye level with Joe's crotch. The bulge was evident in the V between the jeans.

"What are you doing now?" Joe's voice sounded growly. Breathless. Much like Amos felt inside. Like a bear that had woken up, starved for food. Only it wasn't food that Amos wanted. He wanted Joe. "Take them off."

Amos didn't answer but placed his mouth on the left side of Joe's pants. Took the top of the waistband in his mouth and moved them down some. Dragged his tongue against the skin on Joe's belly. His skin tasted salty. Sweet. He felt the hairs, especially when they rose up slightly. He liked the rough yet soft skin against his tongue.

Joe's body jumped. He pitched forward as though he couldn't control the motion. His breath came with effort through his mouth.

Amos moved to the other side. Pulled down that side with his teeth to match the first at about equal distances.

Rocking back and forth, going between each side, Amos slowly eased down Joe's pants bit by precious bit. Tasted Joe's round hips with each splurge of his tongue. Enjoyed each wiggle of Joe's pelvis.

Until the pants fell in a pile around Joe's feet. Baring his body to Amos's eyes and ending his work detail.

Eagerly, Joe kicked the pants off, standing in all his naked glory. The underwear had come down with them. His cock jutted from his body in a proud arc. Joe's body was dark, with the bit covered by his underwear slightly lighter. He must spend time in the outside with little on.

Which would be a sight to see.

Amos leaned back on his legs, looking at Joe's cock. Thick and red, it looked bone hard. Weeping a tear from its single eye. For him. Worth the effort he'd made to get down the pants. His tongue swirled around his mouth, swiveling Joe's taste all around the corners. Wanted to ingest it down. Take him down.

His hand went out to touch Joe. To touch the heavy, hard cock that tantalized him. The instant he made contact, Joe groaned and his hips bucked even more wildly. Amos wrapped his hand around Joe's cock and ran it from tip to base. So hard, yet Joe felt like velvet. He could feel the lines of blood vessels. The rodlike length of him.

Holding his life in his hands. He'd heard that once about a man's member. And the way it controlled men, he could surely see a cock being called one's life.

Joe slowly lowered to his knees with Amos following him down all the way. Amos did not intend to lose contact.

Joe stretched out before Amos like a banquet. Then, suddenly he cursed. "Damn. Do you have lube down here?" His face drew up in concerned lines. "Or protection? I didn't bring any with me."

Amos didn't let go but answered with a curse of his own. "Shit. No." He had nothing of the kind downstairs. Had never needed it down here before. It all was upstairs in his bedroom. Not that he'd needed it yet in the new city. He stroked several more times up and down Joe's length, not ready to release the man's cock yet. Even for reasons so important as lube and condoms.

"This isn't encouraging me to go upstairs." Neither was it encouraging Amos. Joe put his arms behind his head. Looked down at Amos as Amos added a second hand. "At all." He seemed to wheeze out the last word.

Amos's eyes traveled around the room. Searching for something. Anything that meant he didn't have to head upstairs. Maybe he'd left something down here that he'd forgotten. Yeah, for some tumble with a model? He didn't think so. This was his professional studio. He didn't spy anything of use to him. Not in fucking or anything else sexual. He was about to give up and turn Joe loose...

When he saw the massage oil on the makeup table. Some other model had brought it in for a photo session. And had provocatively announced, "It's edible." Like Amos had cared. All Amos cared about from the wannabe model was getting paid. The model had left it and

Amos hadn't disposed of the bottle. It was new with the wrapping still on. Had never been opened.

It wouldn't work for lubing up for fucking in the ass. But a handjob? It could work wonders.

And Amos wanted to give Joe a handjob. Before they took this further.

Amos dropped his hand from Joe's cock. Joe froze as though Amos had scalded him. "Hang on." He scurried over to grab the small bottle and hurried back. Didn't want the moment to pass.

Joe hadn't moved, though. He looked up as Amos came forward with the bottle in hand. A wash of relief spread across his face.

Amos sat down beside him and drizzled about a quarter-sized puddle in his palm. Rubbed his hands together to warm up the gooey liquid. Didn't want to chill anything that was so hot it burned. Like Joe's cock.

Joe grabbed the bottle from where it had landed on the rug with fingers that wrapped tightly around the plastic.

What was he doing?

Joe sat up slightly, twisting to his side. He drizzled out an even more copious amount on his hands than Amos had used.

Amos's heart rate spiraled out of control. All his body's muscles clenched in abandon. This was unexpected.

Joe shifted toward him and sat spread-eagled in front of Amos. His cock poked away and up from his body.

Amos mirrored him to sit with his legs spread apart in front of Joe. His own cock felt heavy and tight. Like a spring ready to go off any second.

They reached at the same time for the other. Hands covered in wetness covered the other's cock.

Amos's hand tingled with his clutching of Joe's life. It felt even better than before and that had been good. The cock pulsed with a life of its own in Amos's hands.

Amos felt Joe's sure hand grasp his cock. Envelop it in warmth and deliciousness. His hips shifted forward uncontrollably.

Joe held a man's cock in his hands. It had been a long time. He swallowed past an impossibly dry throat.

So slick. So soft. Such steel.

Amos's hand shifted down on Joe's cock like he was in control of a stick shift and wanted to change gears. To faster. Harder. Dammit.

Electricity hummed down Joe's cock. Frying him. Making him need. More than he'd ever thought possible.

The speed of his hands picked up on Amos's cock. And Amos matched him stroke for stroke. Whatever he did on Amos's cock repeated on his own.

He panted, trying to bring his breathing back under control.

He couldn't.

His heart pounded in his chest as though it were trying to claw its way out of the confines.

Each time he slowed, Amos slowed.

Each time he sped up, Amos did too.

Amos's hand was persistent. Joe couldn't escape his touch. And the feelings were all too real.

Was Amos feeling all this too?

It was a wonder he wasn't reaching for his camera to hide behind. Or maybe Joe had finally broken behind his reserves.

Joe was in control of the handjobs even as he went out of control. He leaned his head back, trying to get a grip. Didn't want to spill yet.

Amos flicked a finger across the top of Joe's cock. Pushed along the crown to grasp him. Pushed another hand into the space between Joe's legs.

Where was he going?

Amos managed to get a hand enough under Joe to fondle his balls. His hand cupped and ran along the wrinkled skin.

Joe couldn't breathe. Couldn't take any measure of air into his lungs. His body's focus narrowed to the space between his own legs.

Not yet.

He moved slightly closer and thrust his hand to encircle Amos's cock. Used both hands to form a tunnel. The oil still clung to both hands and cock, so there was enough to make the motion slick and easy.

He created a channel for Amos's cock to go in and out of.

And a rhythm.

Amos's hand paused on his balls. Slowed. As if he couldn't concentrate as well with the hands sweeping over him.

Up and down, both sets of hands worked the cocks and balls in their touch.

Joe kept thinking of sports statistics. Tried to draw this out as long as he could allow. Didn't want to rush this moment, this first moment with Amos.

His hands worked the flesh within their grasp, getting to know Amos. What he liked. What set him off.

Amos's hand on his balls stilled again. The hand on his cock tightened. Amos's hips bucked up and down as though he couldn't control himself. His head flung back for him to look up to the sky. "Joe..." The orgasm grabbed him and made him lift his body into the air. He arched his back, his hips pumping as come sprayed everywhere.

Amos panted for a minute.

Then, he doubled his efforts on Joe's cock. Kept his hands working furiously on both balls and cock.

To be the subject of such intensity with already being turned on, it didn't take long for Joe to follow Amos over the edge.

The pumping didn't seem like it wanted to end as every last ounce of pleasure wrung through the tip of Joe's cock.

Joe moved his hand away, now slick with come rather than massage oil. His breathing started to normalize.

Amos shook his head. His eyes were wide as though he remained stunned. He held up a hand. It was covered in semen.

Joe chuckled. "I guess we got a little messy."

"Yeah, a little." He rolled away from Joe and the rug. "Good thing that rug is washable."

"Yeah." Joe pushed up and away to roll off the rug himself.

"Why don't you come upstairs? Get cleaned up. You can shower."

Invited up to the inner sanctum. Joe didn't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out Amos didn't do things like this often. Maybe not ever. "That sounds good." He wasn't about to turn down the invitation.

"Ignore the mess."

They stalked through the studio for the apartment, leaving their clothes on the floor.

Amos stopped on the steps so suddenly that Joe ran into the back of him. "Sorry. I need to lock the door." He turned to face Joe and frowned.

They did a dance on the narrow steps figuring out how to get by each other.

Soon as Amos got by him, Amos muttered, "Hope no one is outside the door." The frosted glass on the door wouldn't do anything toward concealing there was a naked man on the other side.

"Hey, if they are, they'll enjoy the show." Joe sure was. He watched Amos tiptoe down the steps. His butt was delectable. He could bounce a quarter off Amos's ass. Yeah, anyone would enjoy the show. Hell, they'd probably even pay. "I know I do."

Amos put a hand behind him with his middle finger extended directed Joe's way without pausing.

"Anytime."

Amos shivered before he rounded the corner to the door.

Joe blew out a breath. His cock felt heavy and sticky at the same time. He'd had fun playing with Amos.

Only something stirred deep inside of him.

He didn't want to play.

Amos had shown himself time and time again to be an interesting man. He was sexy as hell. Smart. Funny. Talented. They all had artistic creativity in some manner in common.

He and Daphne had had fleeting threesomes with people until Gary. And at that point, they'd been ready for some consistency.

Only Gary had used that to manipulate them. To try and steal Daphne from Joe. He'd never thought Gary capable of such a thing until near the end.

What if Amos was like that too?

But he likes you as well as Daphne. That's different.

Unless he were trying to get Joe off guard and then go after Daphne. Gary had seemed too good to be true. Interested in a triad, although even he had never pretended to want Joe sexually. He'd taken Daphne with Joe but they'd never touched each other. Especially not like this.

Joe had never been too jealous of people with Daphne. After all, he liked to watch his wife with others. But then, with what had happened, things had changed on them.

Amos came tromping back up the steps. "Okay, the door is locked." He looked up at Joe's face. "Who pissed in your cereal?"

Joe carefully smoothed his face out. No sense discussing this now. "No one." He couldn't explain what he'd been thinking about. It wasn't logical.

Amos searched his face with concern. "I didn't do anything wrong, did I?" He stopped on the step below Joe.

Joe reached out to pull him into a heavy kiss. "No. No, you didn't. It's not important." He turned to start up the steps. "Let's get showered."

Amos's hand shocked him by caressing Joe's ass and the other snaked up under to fondle his balls. "Good. Because I intend to make sure you get clean in the shower."

Joe's breath metered out in spurts. "Do you now?"

"I do. Extremely clean."

Joe's cock sprang back to life. He put off thoughts about whether Amos was too good to be true for another time. Another place. When his cock wasn't so accessible.

The lube and condoms were about to come in handy. Which was why Joe said, "Get lube and condoms out before we get wet."

Amos went to another room, presumably his bedroom, and tromped back to the Spartan bathroom with them in hand. There was a towel on the floor and a grocery bag for a trash can. There were no pretty accessories or rugs. A cap lay beside the toothpaste. Looked like a single guy's bathroom.

Joe's own bathroom looked like a little city with bottles and jars of God knows what. He'd been amazed how much stuff had arrived with Daphne when they first moved in together.

If only Daphne could see him now. She'd assure him this was fine. That he could do what he wanted.

She'd watch him with Amos.

When they got in the shower, Amos got in first. He quickly soaped up his hands and ran them over Joe's pecs. The scent of Amos was present. Must be the soap. Something clean and fragrant smelling. Almost like spring. Not flowery, though.

Joe could feel the trails of the warm, sudsy water as they slipped down his eager body. Could feel the hands touching him, rolling gently across his skin.

The sliding of the hands down Joe's chest made his cock go to full hardness. Joe groaned as Amos tugged at his nipples.

The soaped-up hands drifted farther down across his sucked-in stomach, dipping farther still to grasp his cock and stroke him forcefully.

Joe spread his legs apart to give Amos more access. Better access. The soaped-up hands tugged on him, pulling him out. They created a cavern for Joe's cock to go in and out of, clutching at him. Playing across the tight skin of his cock.

Amos smiled as he put his hand down to Joe's balls. "Making sure you're all clean. Have to be thorough."

It was too much. Too much arousal had built up inside Joe. He seized up like he was in a pressure cooker. He'd been thinking about this moment almost since the time he'd first seen Amos.

He reached down, grabbed Amos's hands, and growled. "Turn around." Couldn't manage much more than that. He helped to guide Amos to face the wall with his legs spread apart.

Grabbed lube, flicked off the shower, and applied the lube to Amos's muscular ass. Dripped it in the hole and penetrated him with his finger to prepare him.

It had been so long since he'd been with a man. Surely he'd remember how, though. Men's anal openings were more tender than a woman's pussy. They didn't get wet on their own. Moisture had to be shipped in. And carefully maintained.

Each way of sex with a man versus a woman was different. No less pleasurable. Just different.

Joe pulled the condom over himself. Looked down at his banquet as Amos stood, legs spread, ready for his pleasure. And it would be a great. Joe would see to that.

Joe dumped more lube on his erection. The chilled gel made him wince. Should have warmed that. Didn't detract from his arousal. At this point, nothing would.

He stood on tiptoe and gripped his cock in one hand. Slowly he approached Amos's hole. Amos remained against the wall. He dipped the head a bare minimum inside.

Amos hissed.

Joe enjoyed this first moment of penetration. Enjoyed it with Daphne. And with men. Sinking into a tight hole, whether wet with precome or lube, was such a feeling. As though a snug glove fit around his cock.

He tried to slow himself down enough, calm himself enough to go slow. To take it easy as he slipped farther inside Amos's hole.

Deeper and deeper inside, he slipped. In and out, he kept the pace to a crawl. Kept the speed and force to a minimum. His whole body shook with the effort. Sweat broke out across his back.

"Shit. Fuck me." Amos's throaty whisper made Joe's hips buck in response. "Hard."

Now *that* Joe could do. He'd not been sure how fast to go. And the last thing he wanted was a broken lover. He'd been waiting for a sign that Amos could take more. And now, he had it. Air wheezed from his lungs in a long, drawn-out hiss of breath before he started to move.

He clutched against the wall with his other hand and sped up the rhythm. Went down harder and faster than the last time. And each time he increased the pressure. The direction. The speed. Until he was slamming into Amos. Amos was pressed against the wall.

Amos rolled his hips around in response.

Faster and faster he whirled, becoming one with the man in front of him. Entering him as fully as he was able. Joining. A mutual joining.

Until the lights dimmed and the stars shone down their glory inside Joe's eyeballs as he came deep within Amos's backside.

Amos's chest panted under Joe with the force of his breaths.

Joe laid his head on the back of Amos's. Rested for a brief moment. Pulled away from him to pull out and yank off the full condom.

Amos turned, then leaned heavily on the shower wall.

Joe tossed the latex in the bag.

"You know I have more, right?" Amos licked his lips.

Joe smiled. “Oh, yeah. That box will come in handy today.” He pulled Amos down for a kiss to show him how handy the box would be.

Chapter Eight

Daphne rushed out of the office to the parking garage. She looked at her phone for the fifteenth time in ten minutes. Yeah, she couldn't make time go any slower, despite her mental powers. Her boss had decided at the last minute to call a meeting that she'd had to attend, and kept them forever while going on and on about the magazine's bottom line.

Now she was late. Had to pick up Joe and hurry for I Heart That City. And it was Valentine's Day of all days. As usual she'd put off shopping for flowers until the last minute. She'd not gotten a chance to get something at lunch because she'd worked through it and then hadn't been able to leave early to grab a bouquet as had been her plan.

She reached her car, unlocked the door, and got in the driver's side. As she stuck her key in the ignition, something caught her attention on the window.

She frowned and got back out to pick the item off the windshield. As soon as she'd looked, she'd known what rested by her wiper blades.

A single red rose.

Another long stem like the one before. The note attached to this one's stem read, *I'm the only one for you.*

She stared at the beautiful flower. Wanted to rip the petals to shreds and grind them under her shoe. The nerve of that message.

This, she couldn't cover up. She'd not seen Amos alone to ask him about the first flower. Now there was a second. And the message was clear. That he was the only one for her. Not a good thing when you were trying for a triad.

Maybe they weren't from Amos? They wouldn't have been from Joe.

Her mind flicked briefly to the man she'd trusted who'd almost cost her her marriage. But he'd been in northern Virginia the last time she'd heard from him. The blooms couldn't

be from him. He wouldn't dare. He'd been embarrassed about his prior behavior. Had apologized for it and seemed contrite.

She held the rose tightly. Moved her thumb up the stem and scratched it on a sharp thorn. "Dumb. Dumb. Dumb." A pinprick of blood rose up on the skin. It hurt less than the flower itself. Because that hurt inside.

Neither the flowers nor the snooping sat well with her.

She tossed the rose in the backseat of the car. Valentine's Day wasn't a good time to ask Amos about the flowers, but she'd not sit on this any longer. She'd confront him. The flowers delivered to her only and the message on this one would make Joe's head explode.

She reached Joe's work and he loped to the car carrying a bouquet he'd probably nabbed from a street vendor like he always did when he bought her flowers. "Want me to drive?" he mouthed through the closed window on her side.

"Nah." She shook her head, unsure if he could read her lips. She wanted to keep her hands on the wheel. The tension in them rode out through her clenched fingers.

He hopped in and showed her the bouquet of carnations. "Got you something." He beamed at her, waving the bouquet.

She smiled. "They're beautiful. My favorite." He'd even made sure most of them were pink and not red because pink was her favorite color. "You'll get your present later." She waggled brows at him. She had managed to pick up some lingerie earlier in the week.

With a wink, he turned to set the flowers on the backseat. He stiffened, the smile fading. "A rose?"

She nodded. "It was on my car when I came out of work. I got one the other day too. Left on my car like this one." A horn sounded behind her. She put the car in gear and started off toward I Heart That City.

After putting on his seat belt, Joe's hands folded up across one knee as they sped along. "A second rose. Who are they from?" His voice was even, though it vibrated something below the tone. As though he was trying to keep emotion from spilling out. "Were there any notes?"

"The notes do not say who the flowers are from. They had cryptic messages on them." She didn't offer up what the notes had said. If only he wouldn't ask. Or look. But this was Joe. And he would.

Joe reached in the back and picked up the flower. He twirled the rose around before reading the note.

Daphne glanced at him from the corner of her eye.

His mouth tightened into a solid frown. A tic beat time in his cheek. "Only one for you, huh?"

Her hands clenched tighter on the steering wheel until they turned white. "I'm going to ask Amos about the roses tonight." She rounded a corner, albeit a little fast but slowed down halfway into the turn.

His head swung her way. "Amos? You think these are from Amos?" His fingers tapped on his leg.

"Maybe."

"You think they could be from him? To you and you only?" Joe's voice sounded gravelly. Hoarse. As though emotion was eating him from the inside out. Instead of tapping, his hand fisted.

"I don't know. But I don't know who else they could be from." She'd tried to come up with another name and couldn't. She didn't want them to be from Amos. But it seemed as though that was the only sane explanation.

"I can think of someone else they could be from." He didn't look as she turned her head to face him while they were stopped at a light. Another bar rested on that corner with neon and flash. Didn't have the charm of I Heart That City.

"He's in northern Virginia, remember? I told you he called. And he was sorry for all the trouble. He apologized. Wanted to be friends." It had been the nicest dialogue they'd had since he'd left. He seemed to have turned a corner on moving forward with his life. Which was good. She'd wanted things to end on a better basis than they had.

"You think Amos left these?" He tossed the rose in the backseat. Didn't look to see where it went.

"His is the only name I can come up with." She didn't dare glance at Joe. Instead, she focused on the street ahead and finding a parking space on the crowded road. Parallel parking wasn't her forte.

"I wish you'd told me about the first flower *before* I went to his studio." Low voice. Clipped words. Unhappy tone. Left unsaid was, *before we'd done something together*.

"I didn't know... I mean, he could have also left you one. At that point, I didn't know." She hadn't wanted to ruin the moment for Joe. Maybe she should have spoken up. But if Amos had also left Joe a rose that day, the point would have been moot. Except for Amos looking up information on her (and possibly Joe) behind their backs.

"Well, he didn't leave me anything."

Now their conversation was marching down slippery slopes and across thin ice. Paper-thin. With a chance of falling into the icy darkness below. "I didn't know that at the time. I thought he might have treated both of us."

"This note makes it plain. Whoever this is, they think they're the one for you. The only one." His voice dripped into bitterness. That had been what Gary thought. And Gary had taken several opportunities to try and prove that. At Joe's expense.

Which meant her positivity the roses were from Amos didn't bode well for him and any continuing relationship. "I... We should talk to Amos first. See what's going on before we jump to conclusions." Although she already had.

"We will." Joe stared out the window as she parked, managing to hit the space on the first try. "How did he know where you worked? I thought...well, we weren't discussing that stuff with him until we were sure of where we wanted to take this."

That was the other problem with this situation. "I don't know. I'm assuming he did a search on my name to find out where I worked." She didn't add, *if he'd been the one to leave the flowers*. She hesitated a moment before continuing. "Maybe we should call Amos. Call off dinner."

"No. He's already here. We're late."

That was short. And showed how off center Joe was. They'd stopped talking when Gary had begun to do what he had. Joe had been taciturn during the worst period. Something she never wanted repeated. "Joe?" She wouldn't let them go down that road a second time.

He got out and slammed the door behind him. The sound echoed down the quiet street. A person on the sidewalk turned to look their way.

She took a deep breath and crawled out of her car to stand on shaking legs. "Joe?" She went around the back of her car to where he stood. His arms were straight by his sides, hands clenched. His whole body looked like a coiled spring, ready to go off in a second.

He turned to face her. His face had the look of a mask. With tight features. Angry features. Uncertain features.

"Don't do this. Don't shut me out." He'd tried to before. She'd had to keep chipping away at his defenses to find out what was wrong. It was only then that they could see what Gary was doing. Dividing them. Trying to conquer their relationship and make his relationship with her stronger than theirs.

His face softened. "I'm not trying to. I don't want to do that." He saw *her*. Unlike before when he'd looked through her.

She went to him and took his hand. Her hands shook as they wrapped around his. She couldn't lose this. Couldn't lose him. "Whatever happens with this, I'm with *you*. I'm yours. I'm no one else's."

She'd always been his. From the moment they'd met. And would always be. No matter who thought they could take her away from him.

* * * * *

Amos sat nursing a drink at a table he'd fought for. I Heart That City was crowded. A lot of regulars and a few new couples celebrating the day. He'd come in sure he'd be

celebrating too. Now, he had a table for three that seemed like it would be a table for one, and one only.

They were late.

He checked his watch. Yes, they were late. They'd been so excited about getting the pictures back. About meeting him for Valentine's Day dinner. They'd insisted he come with them. What could have happened to have them not show up?

He rubbed a hand over his face. And then he saw a familiar pair stroll through the door and look around the bar. His heart pounded at seeing them. His breathing eased.

Daphne and Joe.

They had come.

He half stood and motioned to them with his hand. Through the crowd, it would be a wonder if they saw him. But he wasn't about to lose this table by leaving it.

They looked around and around and finally spotted him, evident by their nods.

Their eyes lit with recognition.

Only it was cold recognition. A chill brushed across their faces like a cold cave with no fires.

No warmth for him lit their features. No twinkle set about their eyes. No smile graced their lips.

Amos sat back down his chair, sinking down much like his feelings. Had he gone too far with Joe? He'd expected more life on their faces toward him as they embarked upon this evening together. Not this dead look. This look that said he didn't matter.

They picked their way through the crowd over to him. Joe sat on one side of the table, and Daphne sat between them. She pulled her chair closer to Joe, as though she didn't want to sit next to Amos.

Well, this wasn't going as planned. Even though he was only delivering pictures, that they'd wanted him there had made him think more might happen. "Hey. I have the pictures for you." He tried not to stumble over the words. Maybe they'd warm up to him in a few minutes. But why the coldness now? What had he done?

"Good." Joe's word was clipped. His face had a stoic look. His hands were on the table, clenched together.

Bridget came over, interrupting more awkwardness before it could occur and took their drink orders. "I'll be right back I hope, but don't hold your breath." She waved a hand to the crowd as she filed back toward the bar.

"Let's see the prints." Joe leaned back in his chair. His body was ramrod straight. Almost like a tension bar.

Amos pulled out the pictures. He'd organized them into Joe and Daphne folders with pictures of each other and pictures of them both enclosed. Handed Joe one and Daphne one.

"Here you go." He held his breath as he watched them rifle through the photos. Maybe these would mediate whatever had happened to make them look so dour. He resisted the urge to grab them back and not share.

Joe snapped his folder shut. Didn't say anything about the pictures, nor did he look at them all.

Or maybe not.

Daphne took her time to look through. "These are good. Better than I thought they'd be. Way better."

Joe still didn't say anything. He watched Daphne with an occasional glare at Amos. Prickly didn't do the man justice right now.

Amos watched Joe sit there and Daphne look through the pictures for a minute or two longer. And then he had to do it. Had to find out what was going on. "So, what's up? I'm sensing I did something wrong."

Bridget interrupted them again to deliver drinks. She looked back and forth between them. "This is Valentine's, you know." She grinned. "Be a little more cheerful. Are you ready to order dinner?" At the shakes of their heads, she commented before she moved away to stop at another table. "You three look like someone should be singing at a funeral." Her attention shifted to her next customer.

Once she'd gone, Joe spoke. "Oh?" That was directed to Amos. Joe took a sip of his drink. "Did you do something wrong?"

Daphne closed her folder. She pursed her lips, looking at Joe. "Amos, did you leave me two flowers? Long-stemmed roses left on my car windshield where I work?"

Amos sat forward. "What?" What did roses have to do with anything? And why would he leave them roses after the last time when the rose hadn't gone over well?

"Flowers. Did you leave flowers on her car?" Joe's hand clenched on the table. He scooted his chair forward, scraping it on the floor.

Amos slowly shook his head. "No, I didn't leave any roses. Why are you asking me about this?" He shifted his gaze from one to the other.

It rumbled over him right before they spoke. Not leave *them* roses. Leave *her* roses. No wonder they were put out.

Daphne's face closed down, blocking off any emotion. "Amos, roses were left on my car today and the day of Joe's session with you." She conveyed a great deal with her words. Including that she thought Amos had left them.

Joe's face cleared a little. Like storm clouds chased away by a sunny day. "You didn't leave them? You're speaking honestly?"

Joe had started out madder than a bee looking for honey. Now Daphne seemed to getting madder, but Joe was calming down. What the hell was that all about? "I didn't leave you any roses." If he had, he sure as hell would have put his name on them so there wouldn't

have been any doubt who'd left them. He wasn't stupid. "I take it there weren't cards? I would have left a card."

Joe looked at Daphne. "You didn't leave her flowers on her windshield?" His voice lightened as he repeated the same question again. Seemed to need to keep hearing the answer.

"Come on, Amos. You didn't leave me anything? On my car? While I was at work." Daphne sounded skeptical.

He shook his head. "I didn't. You can ask for the parking deck security tapes if you don't believe me. I'm sure they'd have a camera set up." He folded his arms in front of his chest. Obviously this wasn't about leaving flowers but about something bigger. They were worried about a repeat of Gary.

Joe's face cleared. But Daphne's shriveled even more. "How do you know I park in a deck?"

Uh-oh. He'd not thought about that. He'd researched them both in preparing for their photo sessions. And because he was curious. "I... You mentioned it." Maybe she had. Maybe she hadn't.

"No. I didn't." Now her voice had gone to low and clipped. "I didn't mention anything of the kind about where I work or where I park." Her mouth pursed up into a bow. A flush rose on her cheeks, and it wasn't the kind that was made by fun either.

"Oh. Well. I did sort of research you both. Heh." Amos's hand tightened on his drink. He'd not intended to let them find out how deep he'd dug. "I was curious about you. To what you both did for a living. That kind of thing."

Daphne scratched her head. "You're saying you looked up information I hadn't volunteered? But didn't use it leave *me* roses?" Her voice sounded as skeptical as an atheist about the existence of God. Left unsaid was the, *Come on. I'm not stupid.* But he could hear that in her voice.

"Right. That's what I'm saying." Amos tried not to let irritation creep into his tone. He might have looked them both up to find out about them. Entering into a threesome, he'd thought he had a right to know about them. But he wouldn't deny leaving something on Daphne's car if he'd done it. "There's more to this than you're saying. You both were upset when you arrived. What aren't you telling me?"

"Whoever wrote the note on the current rose suggested they were 'the only one' for Daphne." Joe took another long sip of his drink. He looked at Amos over the cup, as if trying to gauge his reaction. Looked as if he was sizing Amos up.

No wonder that had set them off. Especially when the flowers had been sent to only Daphne. Amos had gathered snippets of what had happened with Gary. He'd hurt them and set them up badly. But that didn't mean Amos was trying to do that. "Well, I didn't leave flowers or notes on anyone's car."

Still sounding suspicious, Daphne said, "If you didn't, I don't know who else would have. I can't..." She broke off with a huffy breath.

"If I'd left you a rose, I would have left Joe one too." He'd seen early on that he needed to play fair with Joe and Daphne. Tread carefully. Not do anything that could be construed as favoring one over the other.

Joe's eyes met his. They'd heated up considerably from the chilly reception earlier. "Really?"

Daphne's voice wasn't quite that warm. "Really?" She could have frozen some sunspots with the inflection of her voice.

"Really."

"I don't know who else it could have been then." Now she sounded flustered. Her hand fluttered all around.

Amos had an idea. But he wasn't about to voice what he was thinking. He was too new to them. "It wasn't me."

Joe started flipping through his folder again. "These are good. I particularly like the one of Daphne in front of me."

That Joe was now looking at the pictures was a good sign. He hadn't been interested when he'd been angry at Amos. Of course, now Daphne was irritated. Amos blew out a breath. Ah, the intricacies of a threesome. "I like that one too." He liked them all.

Daphne set down her drink with a *clink* on top of the coaster. "I don't understand this at all."

Joe shoved the picture he'd been looking at up under her nose. "I like this picture. See." He lowered the photo and gave her a casual look.

She glared at him. "Smart-ass."

"Always."

Amos leaned forward on his chair. "All I know is that I didn't leave the flowers. If I had, I would say so. But I didn't." Until the person who had left the flowers was found, there would be a cloud hanging over them. Which made him want to find the true culprit. He met both their gazes. Tented his fingers.

Joe met his gaze with a little more relaxed stance than he had had before. He nodded to Amos. He'd still have doubts, but he at least seemed to believe Amos.

Daphne sighed. Didn't say anything or meet his gaze. Instead, her eyes lowered. There was the trouble spot. She didn't seem to believe Amos. Which stung way more than it should have.

"I understand you don't know me well enough to know I'm telling the truth." Amos looked into his tented fingers. Tried to put that in his brain over the stinging. "When you get to know me, you'll know I'm being serious when I say I didn't leave those flowers."

Daphne took another sip of her drink. Looked at the picture that Joe still held. “That is a good picture.”

Not a declaration it was over, but a change of subject. It would have to do. For now. But Amos wouldn’t let it rest until he’d proved to them both he’d not done this.

Chapter Nine

How quickly one man could blow from hot to cold had never ceased to amaze Daphne. Joe had come in there ready to string up Amos by his balls. Now he was looking through pictures as if he didn't have a care in the world.

Her lips pursed. She still wasn't satisfied. Something gnawed at her about her reactions, telling her she was wrong, but she ignored the sensation. Logic said it had to be Amos.

Bridget came back to check on them. "Decided yet?"

They were there for dinner and not only drinks this time. Daphne hadn't even looked at a menu. Neither had anyone else. "We need a few more minutes."

Bridget nodded and plodded off.

"So, are we all doing dinner?" Amos's voice was hesitant. Unsure.

He wasn't sure if he was still invited to stay or not. And neither was she. Funny how things could change in a moment.

Joe answered for them. "Yeah." He didn't look over to check with Daphne but seemed engrossed in his menu.

Daphne hid her frown by diving into looking at the menu too.

"I can go if you two would rather be alone." His voice sounded lost. More than she'd ever heard him. But of course, she didn't know him that well. And therein laid the problem. He might *say* he hadn't done this. But how did she know? Gary had lied to her so many times. And she'd known him.

Joe's hand crept over to grasp Daphne's. His skin warmed hers.

Her gaze turned to him. She didn't say anything to educate him on how she felt. But looked into the brown eyes she felt safe with. The ones she knew. They questioned her. Asked things that he didn't say out loud.

"No. You stay. Figure out what you want to eat." Not the most welcoming invitation. But it was all she could manage at the moment.

He nodded. Flipped open his menu and started looking through.

Joe squeezed her hand and kept his on hers.

Even when Bridget came by, took orders, then delivered the meal, Joe kept his hand resting on hers. It was like a talisman. Something to keep her grounded. She liked the weight of it on her skin. His touch always kept her high.

"What are you two doing after here?" Amos took a sip of another drink that had been brought to him as he'd finished up his burger.

"Going home." Joe looked to her and squeezed again. "Aren't we?" He took a bite of his fries.

"Yeah." She looked down at her half-uneaten meal. She hadn't been hungry, nor had she joined into much conversation. So much for Valentine's. This day was supposed to have been about celebrating romance. Trying to find something they'd lost along the way. Instead it had wound up being about an old habit from a new friend.

You don't know that. Her gut argued with her brain.

Gary would be pleased that things hadn't gone well for them.

Even in his new life, he'd asked her about whether they'd formed a new threesome yet. Had seemed pleased when she said they hadn't.

Her eyes shut briefly. He'd impacted so much of their lives. And she wasn't about to let him win. Not ever. She snapped open her lids. "Why don't you come back home with us? For a nightcap?"

Both Joe and Amos stared at her. They looked to each other, shrugged, and then looked back at her.

She sat back in the chair. "I mean it." They'd looked doubtful she'd meant what she said. "Come back with us for a nightcap." This time, she said it stronger than the last time. More forcefully. Take that, Gary. He wouldn't win.

Amos stood up so fast his chair almost flipped backward. "Okay." He motioned to Bridget to bring their checks, and they quickly paid the tab.

Joe rose slowly to his feet. "Are you sure about this?" His gaze centered on her with concern.

Yes, she'd been angry earlier. But she wouldn't allow Gary to control her life this way. She would continue with her life intact. The way she'd always been. She wasn't going to lose herself to the likes of Gary. "Yes." She said one word, socked away the rest of her drink, and stood up.

Amos put on his coat as Joe said, "You can follow us to our house. I'll go slow." Joe wagged his brows.

“You do a good slow.” Amos’s eyes glazed over.

Amos didn’t know where they lived. Only he probably did. She didn’t say it aloud, but he might have looked up their address on the Internet.

If he did, he didn’t say anything to tell Joe that he knew.

She and Joe approached the car where they’d left it.

Her knees knocked together as she approached the driver’s side. Should she be doing this? Had this all been a big mistake?

“Let me drive.” Joe pressed a hand to the small of her back. The fleeting touch made her skin tingle.

Joe started up the car and slowly eased from the parking space. “Amos is behind us.” He took a hand from the wheel to touch her knee. “You sure about this?”

She nodded, then realized he couldn’t see her in the darkness. “Yeah. Yeah, I am. It’s only a drink or two at home.”

Their house. Their domain. It upped Amos’s intimacy with them. A shiver rocked her. Good or bad? It was set in motion now.

They arrived home.

Amos loped up through the front yard to the house.

She walked behind him, surveying him. She liked the way his ass curved under his jeans. Could get lost in the way his hips swiveled when he walked.

She looked over at Joe to find he was staring at the same thing she was. Good to know she wasn’t the only one affected by Amos.

She became slick between her thighs. She liked the feel of herself as she walked up to the porch. Made her pussy tingle even more.

“Nice house.” Amos’s voice was deep in the darkness.

Their two-story Cape Cod was a nice house. Not too big for the two of them, neither was it too small. The space was about right. And Joe had done lots of work in the front yard. In summer, it was gorgeous. “You should see it in the spring and summer.” A step creaked under her weight. “The yard is beautiful.”

Joe reached the door. “It’s a pain in the ass.”

But he loved doing the work. The scent of wood smoke reached her. Someone had a fire going in the neighborhood.

Joe opened the door. He moved in quickly and grabbed for the white woolly mammoth trying to see who their new friend was.

Kip bounded all around.

Amos took a step back as Daphne shut the door behind him.

“Don’t mind him.” Joe scratched his head. “This is Kip.” Kip lunged to say hello to the only stranger in the house.

Amos didn't move or exclaim. He held out the back of his hand for Kip to sniff. "What kind of dog is he? He's beautiful."

"Great Pyrenees. We adopted him from Henrico Humane. They do rescues with them." They'd gone to a pet expo so Daphne could cover it for the magazine, and someone had Kip there. He'd been about a year old, huge, and wide-eyed. And they'd applied that day to become his owners. Only the dog had ended up owning them. Daphne plunged her hand into his thick fur. He'd grown in the months after they'd gotten him to reach his adult size.

Joe grabbed for Kip's collar. "I'm going to put him out for a few minutes. You two get comfortable." He led Kip to the back door.

Barks sounded in the evening air.

"He's protective. Barks more at night than any other time. They're still used to guard sheep and goats from predators on farms and such."

Amos looked expectantly at Daphne as she explained about their dog.

They both seemed to be waiting for her on everything. Depending on her to run this show. And she was still unsure what she wanted.

"Come on into the living room. What can I get you to drink?" Her heart pounded as he followed her into more of their intimate spaces. He followed too closely. And she wasn't sure what she wanted to happen. If anything.

"Tequila." Amos stuck his hands in his jeans and looked around the room. His gaze was caught by a picture on the wall. "If you have it."

"I do."

She reached the bar and pulled out a bottle of tequila. Stared at the wall as she set about unscrewing the top of the bottle. The color of the low-key room was off-white. The walls and carpet were all that same color. But they'd gotten a maroon couch to offset the lack of luster in the room and hung some colorful pictures on the wall. It was a room they spent a lot of time in to relax, and it suited that purpose well.

Her body heated. The last time they'd drunk tequila at home, they'd wound up doing body shots from each other. It hadn't been anything she'd done since college, but one night Joe had suggested it as something fun. And it had been. Sexy. They'd wound up making love until the early morning hours. It had been a renewal of their relationship. A celebration of being off shaky ground.

God, she loved him.

"Everything okay, Daphne?" Amos's voice dipped low and sounded concerned. He'd come closer to her while she ruminated. She hadn't even noticed.

Instead, she'd been staring into the bottle as if it had mesmerized her. "Yeah. Yeah." She grabbed for two glasses in which to pour the amber-colored courage.

"Make that three."

Kip's panting strayed into the room along with footsteps. She'd not heard them come back in the kitchen. How long had they been back inside?

She added a third glass and poured liberal amounts into each piece of crystal. Grabbed Joe and Amos's to deliver.

Amos patted Kip's head until she delivered the glass; then Kip settled down on his pillow. Once he came back in this late at night, he was done. When he'd been younger, he'd wanted to play all hours of the day. He was almost eight now. In dog years, that was getting up there. Especially such a big dog.

Kip liked Amos. Pyrenees had been bred to sleep with the herd animals at night and protect them. He could sometimes be a little skittish of strangers and protective, especially of her. She'd detected none of that behavior with Amos. 'Course Amos had obviously known how to handle a strange dog.

Kip had never cared for Gary. The feeling had been mutual. Gary had often wanted Kip out when he was inside the house. That hadn't sat well with either her or Joe. Kip was their family. One of the first indications that things weren't what they seemed with Gary was how he'd reacted to Kip and Kip to him.

She shook her head, heading back for her own drink. Good or bad, she had to stop comparing Amos to Gary. They were their own persons. Different in so many ways.

She could drive herself nuts, or she could enjoy whatever happened tonight. A sip of her tequila had her murmuring, "Whatever will be, will be." She only hoped she was ready for what was to come.

Joe sat on the couch and motioned for her to sit by him. He patted the seat and leaned back against the cushions.

Amos sat down on the other side of the couch from Joe. Looked at her expectantly. Held his drink high in the air, as though saluting her, before he looked to the spot Joe patted with a tilt of his head.

She'd be in the middle. One man she knew on one side. Another man she didn't know as well on the other. Both gorgeous. She was attracted to both of them and them to her. It wasn't arrogance that told her that but common knowledge.

She'd be in a sandwich.

Her breathing caught in her throat. Was she ready for this? On quaking legs, she walked to the couch and plopped down unglamorously. What a klutz she could be. Leaned back against the soft cushions.

"Thanks for having me over. You'll have to give me a tour of your home later. Or another time." Amos smiled, showing his even, white teeth. He sat back, body not touching hers. He seemed to be trying to put her at ease.

"We'll do that." Joe sat with his glass in his right hand. Sat away from Daphne as well. While she wasn't sure what she wanted with Amos, she wanted Joe's comforting touch. Missed having him against her.

She pulled her arms closer around her middle. "Yeah." She couldn't manage more than that right now with them. What was wrong with her? She always could chatter with the best of them. All she had to do was make small talk.

Amos nodded. "Definitely."

Silence reigned over them. Disturbing in the most peculiar of ways. She found herself trying to fill it. Babbled something about getting together and all her knowledge about dogs and the Humane Society. Before she'd been too reticent, now she needed to shut up.

Joe took a sip of his tequila and stared into the glass. Was he remembering the last time they'd imbibed at home? A smile coated his lips.

Yes, he was.

She fell silent again.

He swirled the liquid around the glass, sloshing it back and forth, looking thoughtful. "Nothing like good tequila."

"Oh, yeah," Amos concurred. "Especially for..." He broke off and blew out a breath. "Never mind."

"What?" Joe looked around her to Amos.

Amos shrugged. If he'd been fair skinned, would he have been blushing? "I was going to say body shots. It's been a while since I've done them, but I thought about them recently." An expression of satisfaction rolled across his face. "You drank tequila... I saw you two at I Heart That City. I guess that made me think about doing them." He rolled his shoulders up from the shrug and then relaxed.

Joe looked across her to Amos. "I was thinking of body shots tonight too."

Her eyes closed.

"You were?" Amos sound intrigued.

Did she like that emotion apparent in his voice? Her heart felt about ready to break from free her chest.

"Yeah. We had some fun a while back doing them."

"You two want to have some fun right now?" Amos's richly timbered voice came low. Barely a whisper.

Her eyes flew open.

Joe transferred his gaze from Amos to her. His gaze scorched her. "You mean with body shots?"

"Yeah."

A tremble ran through her. Her body tingled much as it had when Joe had been licking the tequila from her skin.

“Rum cream is also good for body shots.” Amos dangled his hand in his lap, close to where his erection poked up under his jeans.

He was turned on.

A quick look down revealed that Joe was too.

Joe nodded. “I’ve heard that but not tried it. Takes longer to run because it’s thicker. I think all we have is tequila, though, right babe?”

She nodded, head bobbing fast and furious like a bobblehead doll before she stopped. Her tongue tripped over itself. “All we...uh...have...uh...is tequila.”

This was what she’d been wanting, if she was honest with herself, for a long time. A threesome. Trust between her and Joe established enough so that they felt they could have a threesome again. And now that she had it, she wavered, unsure of herself. She looked down at her shaking knees.

It wasn’t that she wasn’t attracted to Amos. She was. Highly. But the roses had shaken her. Made her doubt. And she wasn’t sure she was past that or not.

“I’d hate to get tequila all over your sofa, though.”

Joe smiled. “I take it you take the shot off the body directly?”

Another shiver rocked Daphne. Lips on her skin. Licking. Licking from Joe’s salty body. Nips. Citrus. And Amos...

“Yeah.” Amos’s eyebrows went up quizzically. “How do you do them?”

“Lick the body. Pour salt. Lick the salt. Take a sip and retrieve the lemon from the other’s mouth with a kiss.” Joe shifted his legs.

“Ahh.”

They’d done shots both ways last time. She’d enjoyed the tequila drops on her breast and Joe licking them off. Her nipples pebbled.

Amos moved closer to them. “I’ve never done them that way.”

Joe pushed off the sofa and went to the bar. Quickly sliced a lemon and came back with salt. “No time like the present for experience.” He sat on the coffee table in front of them. “Who wants to go first?”

Daphne moved away. “Why don’t you?” She might not go at all. Her feet shook nervously. She hadn’t been expecting this.

Joe took her seat and flashed her a quick grin. He handed Amos a lemon slice. “Tilt your head.”

Daphne moved over to the spot where Joe had been. She wanted to see what was going to happen.

Amos cocked his head.

Joe leaned forward and ran his tongue up the side of Amos's neck, salt shaker ready in his hand.

Daphne's toes curled at the lick. She clenched her thighs together. Tightly. She knew what Joe's tongue felt like. Silky hotness running across. She knew what Joe's touch felt like. Rough hands that could be gentle. And she was watching him do something to Amos he'd done to her, so she could almost feel it as much as Amos could. Almost.

No wonder Joe'd liked to watch her with other men. Her pulse sped up as Joe rained a few drops of salt on Amos's wet neck.

Amos chuckled. He propped the lemon up. "That tickles."

"Lemon in your mouth." Joe's voice took on a commanding tone. A masterful use of syntax that had goose bumps rising on her arms. She liked it when he took on the dominant role. When he started telling her what to do.

Amos tucked the lemon in his mouth.

Joe quickly rolled his tongue up Amos's neck before swallowing a taste of tequila. He planted his mouth on Amos's and took the lemon slice while kissing him.

Joe shook his head quickly back and forth and spat the lemon into his hand. He puckered his mouth. "Whoo."

Longing moved through her at seeing her husband kiss the other man. Awareness crackled along her skin. A *thud* sounded in the distance.

Amos rubbed his neck. "Huh."

"A little different from the other shot method." Joe closed the distance. "Though the other is messier."

"Depends on how fast your tongue is. I'm pretty quick." Amos waggled his eyebrows. "At least when I need to be."

"Oh? Prove it."

Daphne pulled her feet up under her. How far did Joe intend to go? Of course, they'd already shared some sexual moments. She hadn't with Amos. Her eyes darted from one of them to the other. Held her breath.

Amos picked up his glass of tequila. "Okay." He hovered the glass in the air with obvious intent.

Joe moved to yank off his shirt. Exposing his chest.

She got lost in it as she always did. His pecs were muscular. Abs so well formed. The sprinkling of hair made her want to follow it down below to what she knew lay there. A hard cock.

He stretched out on the couch. "Do it." He put his arms up behind his head. "Don't get anything on the couch."

Amos swallowed, Adam's apple bobbing up and down nervously. He tried to get beside Joe. Which put him in between the coffee table and the couch. And up against Daphne. He smiled as he came alongside her.

She sent out a wavery smile to him. Didn't know how far she did or didn't want this to go. She'd go along for now. How far was the question.

"Okay. Get ready." Amos readied the glass. "Get set." He poured a small amount around Joe's belly button. "Go." He leaned down and lapped the alcohol up with his tongue. Swirled it around his mouth. "Yum."

Joe pushed up to sitting. Looked down. "Well, hell, you didn't get any on my jeans. You are quick. In that at least."

Amos nodded. "Told you so." He looked pleased with himself. He licked his lips again as if savoring the taste of Joe.

"But I'm quicker." Joe lifted his eyebrows.

"Prove it." Amos put his hands in front of his chest.

This play was new. She and Joe had always teased when they loved. But never had a lover played so much with them. Especially including Joe like this. A warm feeling crept up her throat. Her chest. Joe liked Amos. A lot. That he would play with him and accept his word over the flowers said so much. Suppose she couldn't handle Amos in a threesome? Her hands clenched. What would Joe do then?

"I will." Joe turned to her. His gaze softened as if he saw through her outsides to her inner turmoil. And he wanted to include her in their games. "Lie down."

Moment of truth. Did she go along with this? Or let her doubts rule her? She hesitated, then said, "Okay." This evening from the time they'd left the bar had been about not letting Gary win. And she wouldn't back down now.

She moved between them on the couch as they made room for her.

Amos was at her head. And Joe was at her feet.

"Where are you going to do the shot?" If only her voice didn't sound so damn light. She wasn't some wimp to let her fears rule her. "Huh, Joe?" That came out better and more forceful.

He looked across her body thoughtfully. Gaze came up to her. Surveyed her as though judging his options.

Amos wiggled behind her.

"Take off your shirt."

Amos had never seen her naked. Exposed. He'd always seen her with clothes on. Even the lingerie had covered most of her parts.

She licked her lips. Joe had experienced her body and had his shirt off now. She'd match him in nakedness.

She reached around herself and pulled the shirt up and over her head. Didn't look down. "Should I take off my bra too?"

Movement behind her made her look. Amos had pulled his shirt off. His lithe, toned chest captivated her gaze.

His grin was boyishly charming. "Have to be all even."

She closed her eyes. The image of his chest stayed behind her eyelids and took over her brain. Not to mention Joe's was already encapsulated in her mind. She'd never be able to get the images from repeating.

Two yummy men. Without shirts on. What a day.

"Should she take off her bra?" Amos's hand came up to stroke across her back. "Or leave it on."

Joe's brown eyes twinkled. "Hmm. She is a vision in the bra. But I'd hate to get tequila on it. It's a favorite."

"That she is. But if you're quick enough... I'd leave it on."

And his motivations were her comfort. Even at this, Amos was looking out for her. He didn't think she'd be comfortable half naked in front of him.

"Yes. I agree." Joe's hand came out to rub against her stomach. "I do love the way the satin looks against her skin." His touch stroked along her skin, lingering in places. Burning her.

"Oh, yeah."

Daphne cleared her throat. "And *she* is *here*. Listening to you two." Their talking about her filled her stomach with butterflies, pulsing under Joe's hand.

Both of them laughed.

That relaxed her a little. This was play between the three of them. What could come from it? Surely she could play with them and keep it light. Not get burned. It was obvious they worked together well.

"I think I'll leave the bra on." Joe's hand pushed her back. "Since Amos agrees."

She ended up with her head in Amos's lap. Most unexpectedly. She'd not thought about where her head would go when Joe was giving her a body shot. She tensed up. The warmth from Amos's legs cushioned her hair.

Amos smiled at her. Stroked his hands through the loose locks. Gently pulled on a strand where there was a tangle. He seemed to be trying to soothe her. Relax her.

Her scalp tingled. His hands felt wonderful. And it worked. The tension seeped from her body.

Joe pulled her attention back to him. He straddled her stomach. His erection pressed into her, though most of his weight rested on the legs to each side of her. He held up the glass of tequila. Leaned himself forward so that he was over her breasts.

His eyes shone down on her like twin lighthouses. Her beacons in any storm. Long eyelashes came to shield the windows to his soul for a moment before opening back up to show the love reflected there.

He poured the tequila in the valley between her breasts and quickly lapped up the remnants before it could run.

Her back arched at the contact of chilled tequila and his warm tongue, pushing her into his body.

He raked his tongue over the tops of her breasts before breaking contact. Came down to the satin of her bra. Breathed warm air through the material to her aching nipples. They puckered under his attention.

He lowered his mouth to breathe over one of her nipples, enveloping it with hot air. Bathing it in warmth. Then he sucked in a breath, cooling her off just as he'd warmed her.

She squirmed under him. The ministrations of his mouth left her breathless. Her pussy ached. Longed for some of his attention.

Amos stroked his hands down her sides, reminding her he was there. His hands were warm on her bare flesh.

Joe eased his teeth around the barest tip of her nipple. And tugged slightly. Then released her.

She jumped and moaned, unable to help her reactions. His teeth didn't hurt but provided the harshness of pleasure.

Joe maneuvered to the other side. Breathed on her other nipple.

Amos's hands slid down her sides. One came up to the breast that Joe had left. Slid up to toy through the material. His fingers started gently rubbing and pulling.

One side of her body had a mouth devouring her breast. And this side had hands to bring her pleasure with the fullest of touches.

Too good.

Her hips bucked wildly back and forth under Joe's weight. So much need dropped around her that it covered her.

He pressed his erection against her, sending up her threshold that much more.

So wonderful. It was too good.

She reared her head back in Amos's lap, unable to stop from squirming. She couldn't even articulate what she wanted.

Joe's mouth left her other breast. He slid down her body, heading for other regions. He nipped and laved in his body's heated wake.

Amos's hand replaced Joe's mouth at her other breast. Through the material, he stroked her. Caressed her. And then both of his hands breached her bra at the same time, going

underneath the material to cup her. Warm hands covered her breasts under the material that was intruding upon her pleasure.

Joe's hand unbuttoned the top of her slacks. Slipped the button through the hole, rubbing against the skin of her upper stomach.

His hand slipped in under the loosened trousers and found her underwear. He pressed against her center, wiggling his hand across her aching pussy. Back and forth he rubbed.

As did Amos.

They worked in tandem. Worked together. Hands stroking in time. Matching the speed even as the other sped up or slowed down.

It was if they'd been born to work together on her pleasure. No other lover had ever been this in sync with Joe.

Each touch was bringing her closer and closer to a fevered pitch where she'd scream in pleasurable agony. Each touch took her further up pleasure's ladder. Had each rung dripping with her essence.

She looked up and saw Amos's face as he bent over her. So thoughtful, as though concentrating on what he was doing.

He saw her looking at him. Smiled. "Happy Valentine's Day, Daphne."

Joe's hand continued to press against the place that wanted her out of her clothes. Wanted to be bare. To take both of them inside her depths and give them back tantalizing deliciousness. "Happy Valentine's Day, baby."

"One day I'll shower you in flowers," Amos growled. His eyes narrowed as he licked his lips.

And it all came rushing back.

The day. The roses. Gary saying, "I'll shower you in roses." Gary doing so much to undermine her relationship with Joe. Gary taking her without Joe's approval or presence while telling her that Joe knew what they were doing. His lies to get her on his side. Until she hadn't known what was up or down anymore.

She'd almost lost her most treasured love. The man she'd loved almost since they'd met. The man she'd wanted to marry since their first date. The man who understood her better than she understood herself.

She shivered and stilled her body. No longer rocked back and forth to their caresses. Their touches became like a stone around her neck. She could bear them no longer. Take this no more. Needed herself back. "Stop."

Both hands immediately stopped their intrusions into her body and her psyche. It was like she'd pulled the plug on them both.

Amos even removed his hand. Snatched it away from her like she'd burned him. And maybe she had.

She took a deep breath. “I need a minute.” She struggled to sit up. She needed to clear her head. Needed to think about what was going to happen and what had almost happened between them. “Sorry.”

Amos reached to help tug her up from the cushions. “Nothing to be sorry for.” His impassive face didn’t seem as reassuring as his words, but his eyes still glimmered. “If you’re not ready, you’re not ready.”

“I need...”

Amos rose to his feet, interrupting her. “I think it’s time for me to go.” He didn’t ask any questions. Simply began to dress, hurriedly yanking on clothes.

It was time for him to leave.

But she hated to see him exit like this. Only she didn’t know what to say or do to minimize this impact. So she kept her mouth shut, her arms around herself, and watched him walk through the door and out of their lives.

Chapter Ten

Joe rubbed a hand across his face. His mind wouldn't stay on his work. Kept drifting back to last night.

It hadn't gone well.

After Amos had left, he and Daphne had talked long into the night. But nothing had worked out. They'd felt more uneasy after talking, evident by Daphne clamming up. Usually they talked and worked things out. Usually he stopped talking before she did. Not last night. And he didn't know how to fix this one.

They'd switched sides. He'd been a little reluctant at first to go for Amos, and she'd been gung ho. Now, they'd reversed positions. And she resented him for that. Did he resent her? Not exactly a term he'd use. He understood her reluctance. It was something they were going to have to face. And he wanted to do that now and together. She was reluctant.

Threesomes were more difficult to work out than couples because there was another person involved. In all ways. Bedrooms. Emotions. Adding another person to a mix changed the consistency of a relationship. Unequivocally. It was like adding a third egg to cake batter. It could make it better or it could ruin the mix.

He pinched his nose.

Amos wouldn't ruin anything. But Daphne wasn't seeing that right now.

He kept seeing Amos's face as he'd walked out the door. He had wanted to call him all day. Only what could he say? Nothing had been resolved. He could call and check on Amos but to what end? He didn't want to raise Amos's hopes again.

So instead, he picked up the phone and called Daphne. Maybe he could work things out on that end. She didn't answer her cell, so he dialed her office.

"Daphne Thompson's office." The person answering the phone sounded harried, as if they wanted to be doing anything else but that job. It wasn't the usual person screening her calls either.

"Yeah, this is her husband. I'd like to talk to her."

"Yeah, so would I. She missed a meeting this morning." The man punched out the words like a time clock punching cards. "Is this Joe?"

"Yeah." The voice sounded more and more familiar. He frowned. Why had she missed the meeting? He'd left his usual time. She'd planned to stay home for a few more minutes before she had to go in. She'd been bitching about the meeting she had to go in for, too. Daphne liked being out in the field doing stories rather than in meetings in an office, and lately there'd been a lot of meetings.

"This is Ed." They'd talked a few times and met briefly. As though Joe might not recognize his name, he continued, "Her editor. She didn't show up today. I can't get her on her cell or at home. She didn't call in. Least my receptionist did that today." A note of concern entered the man's voice. "You haven't heard from her either?"

"Not since I left her at home this morning." Joe's hand clenched the phone. This was not like his efficient wife. Not at all. Not when it came to work.

"It's not like her..."

"I know. I'll tell her to call you as soon as I hear from her." He flipped the phone closed. Held it a minute, then dialed her cell again. No answer. Dialed home. Let it ring until the answering machine picked up. "Daph. Call me." Then he dialed the number again as if it could be a wrong number even hearing her voice on the machine. Still no answer.

He grabbed his coat, still listening to the ringing of the phone in his ear. An empty sound if he'd ever heard one. Nothing could sound so mournful. Not even a bobwhite in the country. "I'll be back," he told the foreman. "Have to check on something at home." Before the man could argue, Joe ran for his car.

This wasn't like Daphne.

Joe drove home as quickly as he legally could. Didn't want to get a ticket. Radio turned off. Still dialing numbers. "She's got to be somewhere." Didn't everyone? But where could she be if she wasn't at home or with her cell?

Maybe the home phone wasn't working. Maybe a line had been knocked out and he'd see all about it on the news later. Maybe a cell tower had fallen down. Yeah, one that ran her phone and not his when they were on the same cell phone plan.

He arrived home to find her car gone. Puffed out a breath. She'd gone somewhere at least. But that wasn't comforting because he still hadn't found *her*. Had she been in an automobile accident? Where was she at now?

The front screen door hadn't been shut all the way. It blew back and forth as if waving at him. That wasn't like her either. She always made sure things were shut tightly. Made sure

things ran smoothly. That was his Daphne. A klutz and a controller all rolled up into one delectable package.

He couldn't shake the feeling that something was wrong.

He got out of the car and slammed the door behind him. Hurried for the house to see what he could find there. Put the key in the door, hesitated a minute, and realized something immediately.

No Kip.

That was even more unusual. Kip always came to the door to see who was there. He sometimes jumped on the door before they could get it open or was in one of the front windows. He'd never missed them coming home. He might not bark, but he greeted them each and every return home.

Maybe Joe just couldn't see Kip or hear him.

Joe pushed open the door. Warily looked around. Maybe she'd taken the dog on a walk. In the car? Maybe to a dog park to play. When she had a meeting at work to go to? Maybe Kip had had an emergency and she'd rushed him to the vet. But she still would have called. Or answered her cell phone. "Daphne?" No answer. He shut the door behind him. "Kip?" Nothing.

His heart pounded. Kip had never missed greeting him when he'd come home. He'd always been a fuzzy doorman. Maybe the vet scenario had happened. Maybe her cell phone was here at the house. She rarely left without it, but if Kip had been hurt...

Suddenly, a rumble of barks responded from the back of the house. They were muted. And something banged, sounding like it came from the back of the kitchen. Joe hurried to the kitchen to find Kip shut in the utility room. Lunging at the door. Agitated. Joe let him out and he snuffled around, not calming down. At all. He couldn't sit still.

And there went the vet theory. He'd found Kip but still not located Daphne. And the vet scenario was the one plausible one he'd come up with. None of the others explained where Daphne could be to any satisfaction.

Kip barked twice at Joe, bounding in the air. Something he'd not done since he was a puppy. Something had him riled.

There were claw marks on the utility side of the door from where Kip had tried to get himself out. Luckily, he hadn't torn apart the door or torn off the door casing. But he'd obviously been desperate to get out.

Joe patted his head, and he barked again at Joe, as if telling him something. Ran toward the living room to the front door and back again. "I don't know, boy." If only Joe were as good as Lassie's owners, the collie from television and books who'd often told her owners of some crisis. But he couldn't interpret dog speak.

Something was going on.

They'd never shut Kip in the utility area for long periods of time, especially when they were going to be out. If someone came over who was uncomfortable with dogs, they'd stick him in there during the visit. But they'd never leave him there while they were both gone. Kip had the run of the house and had since they'd gotten him. Plus, when he was shut in the small room, they'd tried to make sure he had a pillow and a chew toy to distract him. Kip hadn't even had water.

Joe looked around. If they left notes for each other, they usually put them on the fridge. No note hung there. Nothing else seemed amiss in the kitchen that he could tell. What should he be looking for?

Kip barked at him again, his head cocking to the side. He ran for the front door, then came back again with another high-pitched yelp.

Joe moved forward, looking around. Nothing was knocked down or broken. Nothing was out of place. "Daphne?" he called for her again, knowing he wouldn't get an answer. Her car wasn't even there so why did he keep looking for her there? Because it was the last place he'd known where she was.

Silence answered him. Silence he wanted to rail against. Break in two. Only it would do him no good.

He tried to rationalize. Tried to come up with a plausible explanation. But nothing would gel as to where she could be.

He did a walk-through that was more a run around the downstairs, looking for anything out of place. Nothing. Nothing was knocked over or even put away differently. There were no clues as to where his wife could be. Only that she was not there.

He dashed upstairs. There he did find a suitcase missing. He only noticed it because the closet door was open. Another thing that wasn't Daphne-like. She always shut things when she was done with them. He couldn't tell if any of her clothes were missing. She had way more on her side of the closet than he did. She could pack almost everything and he'd never be able to tell.

Maybe she'd been called out on a trip and had to leave in a hurry? That would explain the suitcase. Only her editor didn't even know where she was. That ruled out a work trip. And if it had been a personal emergency, she would have called him. He checked his phone yet again. No calls or texts from her since yesterday.

He didn't see anything else out of place no matter how hard he looked. Maybe he would have to go through her clothes.

Frustrated, he went back to the kitchen table and noticed a pad with a pencil lying on it. He hadn't noticed it before due to Kip's agitation and his unease at where his wife could be. It wasn't lying in the place they used to leave notes for each other.

The writing was Daphne's, and it was if she'd had to press hard. The writing had even left an impression on the next page.

Dear Joe,

I'm sorry things didn't work out with Amos. I think we need some time apart. I've gone by myself. Don't look for me.

Daphne

He read the note several times before the words sank in. The words were only noises in his brain until he comprehended them.

Daphne was gone.

She'd left him. For some time apart. Even when things had been at their worst before, she'd never walked away. Never left him. Never pulled away to go find herself or work something out that she couldn't with him.

He sank down in a kitchen chair. His heart felt like it had gone to his knees. To his feet. His eyes burned.

Kip whined and nudged Joe's hand with his furry head. Barked at him and headed for the living room and door again.

"She's gone, boy. She's left me. And you." He shook his head. "Why?" She hadn't even had the guts to call him and tell him before she'd walked away? His hands clenched the table. Hadn't even had the decency to talk to him before she'd booked out on him? On *them*. On their lives. On their marriage.

"Fucking shit. The things I put up with with Gary. The things I never walked away from. Fucking bitch..." He got to his feet and ranted. Not that it made him feel better. Nothing would at this point.

Kip grew more and more agitated, continuing to growl and bark. Following Joe as he paced around the kitchen. Trying to lead him to the living room and the door.

And the ranting wasn't helping. If anything it made Joe tense up more. Clench up more. He wanted to punch something.

Kip backed into the trash can at a particularly loud set of words from Joe and knocked it over.

Joe stopped. "I'm sorry, boy." This was unbelievable. His wife had left him. He was ranting to a dog in their kitchen. But Daphne wasn't there to talk to, nor was she answering her cell phone. So he'd work with what he had.

He righted the trash can with Kip dancing around, nails clicking on the linoleum.

Something tinkled onto the floor from the can instead of falling back into it.

Glass.

He looked closer. No, it was a slice of ceramic.

He picked the piece up and looked in the open lid of the trash. A coffee mug had been broken. *His* coffee mug. He'd used it that morning.

Now, with Daphne's lack of grace, they'd had more than their share of broken mugs and glasses. He'd joked that he should take out stock in a ceramics or glass manufacturer after a bad week. She'd dropped a lot of dishes as well.

Only this mug was special. It had been his father's. His father had purchased it over in Germany, and when he'd passed on, Joe had taken the cup. There was nothing too special about an earthenware mug except whom it had belonged to. Joe always drank from that cup. Every morning.

Had Daphne broken the mug, she would have called him, blubbering, before she'd even picked it up. She would have been in tears and apologizing all over herself. No matter how mad she'd been with him, if she'd broken the mug, she would have called him. That he was sure about. If there was one thing he knew, it was Daphne.

He looked around the kitchen again.

Kip panted and barked as if to say, *Listen to me*. Each bark was getting louder.

Something wasn't right. Something wasn't adding up. None of the clues he'd found were a smoking gun. But...

Maybe he didn't want to accept that Daphne had left him and he was pulling at threads to see if they unraveled for him.

He patted Kip's head. "I'm going to find her. Talk it over. Then she can leave." She at least owed him that.

But where to start looking for her? The note gave no indication of where she'd gone or planned to go.

Amos's.

It was as good a place to start as any he could come up with. Maybe Amos would know something.

Joe ran out the front door with a promise to be back soon for Kip. And a promise to figure out what the hell was going on. For both his and Kip's sake.

* * * * *

Amos was seated at his desk, looking over some prints when the door opened. And someone bellowed his name.

Not someone. Joe. Not someone he'd expected to see today, or for the next few days, after last night. He'd figured they would avoid him until they'd regrouped and knew what they wanted.

His heart rate tripled despite his telling himself that Joe's visit wouldn't mean anything. "In here."

What was Joe doing here?

Clearly neither of them was ready for a threesome yet. It had been a botched affair. Amos had felt like his hopes had been raised to the height of the Sears Tower and then tossed from the top like an old penny. He'd been debating whether he had the patience for them to work through their issues to get to where they were ready for a threesome, if they ever did, or if he should cut his losses and move on.

His reaction to Joe now showed him an earnest truth. Even when his mind was unsure, he still wanted the man. Wanted to be with them. If only it could be...

Joe barreled into the room where Amos sat. His eyes looked a little wild. "Amos." He stopped in front of the desk. He must have been running to get there because he was winded.

"I'm right here." Amos pushed back from the desk but remained sitting. Joe's breathing calmed, so it looked as though he could speak. "What's up?" It looked as if something was wrong. And Joe had come to him? His belly tightened.

"Have you heard from Daphne today" -- Joe's eyes brimmed with something like a wish -- "by phone or in person?"

Amos shook his head. Why would she come to him? His brief head shake dashed to the floor anything Joe had wanted judging by his expression. He resisted the urge to go around the desk and hold him. "I haven't seen or heard from her all day."

Joe sank in the chair across from the desk. "Dammit."

Joe sounded worried. And Amos's own stomach bottomed out hearing Joe curse like this. "What's happened?"

"I'm led to believe that Daphne left me."

"What? She left you?" Amos shook his head back and forth as if to negate what he'd heard. He'd not expected that. She'd left Joe? How could that be? That wasn't anything he could imagine happening.

"That's what I'm supposed to believe. That she walked out on me this morning after I left for work."

Amos's eyes narrowed. He pushed the pictures out of his way so he could lean his forearms on his desk. "What do you mean 'supposed to believe'?" That sounded like Joe had other ideas. Why?

"Hear me out. It's going to sound strange." And Joe launched into his tale about his morning events. When he was finished, he looked expectantly at Amos. As though wanting something from him. A reaction. Backing up or dismissing what Joe had told him? Joe probably wanted the former.

Amos cleared his throat. How to answer this one? Little events didn't add up to a conclusive hypothesis. "So, she left you a note. It's in *her* own handwriting." Amos twiddled his fingers on his desk. "That said she was leaving you."

"Yeah. I'm sure it was her handwriting."

"But" -- Amos paused, trying to take all the information in so he could digest what Joe thought -- "there are things out of character that happened this morning too. That make you wonder if the leaving was... If she didn't leave you, Joe, then what did happen?" That was the question. Even Amos's doubts about Daphne leaving Joe didn't change the fact that she had done just that.

"I don't know. I keep thinking about the roses. And wondering about Gary." Joe's eyes turned stony. "I know my wife. She'd never have left Kip like that..." Joe froze. "Kip never liked Gary or vice versa." His eyes became haunted as he glanced back at Amos. "We shut Kip up sometimes when Gary would come over because Gary wanted it..." He broke off. "You think I'm grasping at straws, don't you? So I don't have to accept the fact that my wife left me? That she walked away?"

Amos carefully considered his answer. Joe was a powder keg right now. He didn't want to set the man off. And he couldn't figure out how much he trusted these little occurrences. But that Joe thought something different held some weight over Amos's thoughts. "I think you know Daphne better than anyone else. And if you have doubts about some things... The only thing is, if she didn't leave you, what's going on? That would be what we need to figure out."

"I...don't know." Joe frowned. His mouth tightened. "All I know is something isn't right about all this."

When your wife left you, things weren't supposed to be right. But Amos didn't mention that. Joe needed a listening ear. And Amos would give that to him. "How stable is Gary?" Amos tapped his fingers on his desk. "I mean...well, you know what I mean."

"I don't think he's too fucking stable." Joe got up and began to pace the small room. "I don't know what to do. I feel like something's wrong with this whole situation. And I can't put my finger on who or what could have happened. And, regardless of that, she's gone." He stopped by a window. "She's gone, Amos." The emotion in his voice made Amos sick to his stomach. Never wanted to hear that much sadness again. Joe looked lost. And for the big man, that was humbling.

Amos pushed to his feet and slid the chair back. It made a scraping noise. He walked to Joe in two strides. Put his arms around his waist. Pulled Joe's body closer against his and enveloped him in an embrace.

Didn't pull him fully into his arms. Didn't offer any encouraging words. But they stood like that for a full minute. It was more intimate than a buddy's touch. But not so intimate that anyone would think them lovers if they'd seen it.

Joe's phone rang. He grabbed it so fast from his pocket that Amos got knocked to the side. "Daphne?"

Amos's breath held. Please let it be her. He wasn't sure what to think with Joe's rambling story. But he hadn't gotten a sense of a woman about to give up on her marriage, even last night when she'd been pissed and then out of sorts. Last night she hadn't been ready for a threesome. But that didn't mean she'd been ready to bail on her marriage or on Joe. It didn't seem her style to leave this way. Not to mention that she loved Joe. That had been evident in everything she'd ever done in front of Amos. Why he'd wanted to take pictures of them together in the first place. Because of the evident, abundant love.

"Oh, hey." He shook his head to let Amos know it wasn't Daphne. Shit. So much for that idea. But then Joe's voice perked up. "What? Okay. Where at? Yeah, thanks for letting me know. I can't talk right now. Gotta go." Joe hung up the phone and swiped a hand through his hair.

"What's up? Who was that?" Joe looked disturbed and confused. Amos backed away from him to give him space to talk.

"That was Ed. Daphne's editor. One of his reporters was in the Fan this morning on a story. Saw a car get booted that was parked on the street."

"So?" Cars got towed and booted all the time in the city from what Amos had seen. Though the car must have had some unpaid tickets or it would have just been written up. He'd been told it took three unpaid citations to get a car booted after his car had been immobilized a few months ago. He was finally starting to get the rhythm down of the street parking so he didn't get tickets as often.

"The vehicle was Daphne's. The reporter recognized the car and called the magazine to contact Daphne to let her know her car was being booted. They got Ed instead."

Amos turned his head. He could see where this might support Joe's theory that something was wrong with Daphne leaving him. "Her car was booted. So, she's not driving it. And it was left in some random spot..."

"Yeah. Not so random, though. It's on a street near I Heart That City." Joe's voice turned grim. "I'm starting to think Gary took her. Which is crazy, but what else am I supposed to come up with?" He shook his head. "And I'm going to kill the son of a bitch if he did take my wife." The jut to Joe's chin made Amos a believer.

"But why would he take her?" Amos folded his arms in front of him. "Unless...it's to make her his. Finally. Without..."

"Me." Joe's face grew even grimmer. "*Forever*. That's what he always wanted. A together without *me*. Which means she's in trouble. If he has her, she's in deep, deep trouble."

"We have to go to the police." Amos turned to reach for the phone. His fingers trembled. This wasn't good. He was starting to have the same feelings that Joe did about the

whole situation. He kept coming back to Daphne wouldn't leave Joe. It wasn't anything he could picture happening anytime soon.

Joe stopped him with a hand on his arm. "What are we going to tell them? My dog was locked in a utility room and my favorite cup was broken so some maniac has my wife? We don't have enough to show anything but that my wife left me while I was at work. They aren't going to do shit with this."

Amos blew out a breath. Joe was probably right. The idea of Daphne in danger was squishing up his insides so that they hurt. He could only imagine how Joe felt. He looked at Joe's pinched face. Yes, it was easy to see and imagine how Joe felt, because Joe was wearing it on his face. "Then what do we do? What can we do?"

"I'm going to go look at Daphne's car. Maybe something will be there. To tell me anything. Like where he fucking took her." He took two steps toward the front door of Amos's building.

Amos grabbed his coat off the back of his chair, not stopping to put it on. "We'll look at Daphne's car. And maybe... Whoever took her knew about me because of the note, so maybe someone at I Heart That City will know something. He had to be watching us. And I bet he put that car there for a reason. It was your celebration place."

Joe blinked. "I hadn't thought of that. Even if Daphne physically wrote the note, he told her what to say and she mentioned you."

Which meant she'd been coerced into writing the words. Which might mean a weapon. Against Daphne. Nothing good to think about. Amos fell in line beside Joe.

Joe stopped and hesitated. "You don't have to... I needed to make sure she hadn't contacted you is all. I didn't expect you to help me." He looked almost apologetic. "I know last night...didn't go as expected."

"You two weren't ready last night. That's got nothing to do with finding Daphne now if she's in trouble. Of course I'm coming with you." Joe wouldn't be able to get rid of him. Especially because Amos knew something was wrong. He could feel it. He would support Joe and help Daphne in any way he could.

He only hoped they could get to Daphne and Gary in time.

Chapter Eleven

Looking at the booted car, Joe folded his arms. "It's Daphne's all right." He frowned, looking at the vehicle. Had he hoped it wouldn't be? Or that it would? He didn't know what to think anymore. Hadn't since he'd walked into his own house to find his wife gone.

"Yep." Amos stood next to him, shoulder to shoulder.

Funny, out of all the threesomes he'd had with other men, Amos was the one he'd felt the most partnership with. They weren't even fully involved yet. That Amos had come with him to face whatever would happen only intensified that feeling.

Joe took out a key ring and walked to the driver's side. "Use gloves." He put on some latex gloves he'd snatched from the cleaning closet before they'd left Amos's studio. He opened the door and unlocked all the others. "You look in the back."

"Okay. What are we looking for?" After putting on some gloves, Amos pulled open a back door.

Joe didn't sit in the car but leaned inside. That was a good question. "I don't know exactly." Joe's detective experience was limited to reading the Hardy Boys books as a kid, and as a grown-up, watching police shows every week. "Anything that seems...oh shit." He took a big whiff. "Smell that."

He heard a few discreet sniffs from the other side of the backseat. "What is it?" Amos let out a little cough.

"Gary's cologne. I'd know it anywhere. He always reeked of the damn stuff. I always wondered if he poured the whole bottle on every morning." More and more, Joe was asking himself why they'd ever gotten involved with Gary. But he'd seemed normal enough when they'd started. And as rare as threesomes were in their society, choices of thirds were limited.

Joe opened a cubby on the door. Something rested inside wrapped rested inside. He lowered his head to smell without lifting the item or even picking it up. "Gum. It's that stop-smoking gum. I recognize that too. Gary was trying to quit." Though the asshole should have been done with the crutch by now. It had been over six months since Joe had last seen him. And it would have been fine with him to never see him again.

"You realize we're messing up a crime scene now?" Amos's voice came low. "By looking around in this car we've probably contaminated it."

Someone else watched cop shows too. "Yeah, probably. But I've ridden in here tons of times. My DNA and evidence would be all over the car anyway. Don't get inside the car. Keep using the gloves. Don't touch anything you don't have to." They still didn't have enough to call the cops.

He heard a sudden low intake of breath.

"What is it?" Joe turned his head to see what Amos was looking at. He couldn't see anything from where he stood, but it didn't sound like Amos liked it. He hopped away from the car when Amos didn't seem inclined to answer him and approached the backseat.

Amos held up a hand. "Don't. Don't mess with anything." His voice was hushed. Brittle. Not good sounding. What had he seen in the car? Joe couldn't breathe as he peered inside, trying to catch a look without disturbing anything.

Hairs lay strewn across the backseat.

Blonde hairs.

Shimmery hairs.

Long hairs.

Daphne's.

He didn't need a close look to tell him who they belonged to.

She'd been in the backseat of this car recently enough to leave hairs behind. Not on her usual seat but on the one she never rode in. She was always in the front. Three, four, or more hairs now rested on the backseat. Amos had done well to spot them. They semiblended into most of the fabric, only they were positioned on a darker stripe, making them easier to see.

They rested on the seat along with a small, rust-colored stain on a lighter nearby stripe...

Blood?

He froze. Heart went into his throat.

Her blood.

It was a smear. Hardly anything and barely visible, even on the beige seats. But it did look like blood.

Joe's head exploded. His eyes went black. "Dammit. Shit. Fuck." He banged his hands on the roof of the car. His hands stung from the contact. If only it hurt as much as his chest. The walls of his upper body felt like they were closing in on him.

"Satisfied now? Want to beat the car up some more?" Amos looked at him across the roof of the car.

"No." Joe growled after the word. "He hurt her. I'm going to kill him for doing this." All he could think of was Daphne bleeding. Of his woman hurt. Taken against her will. He'd find her. No matter what. He'd never give up. The bastard didn't know what he'd unleashed.

"Don't keep saying that in public. And stay off the seat. We have to call the police now, Joe. We have to. It's a crime scene." Amos pulled out his cell phone and dialed. His voice spoke into the receiver as Amos said, "I'd like to report..."

Would they believe them? He thought there was still a twenty-four-hour wait period on an adult before they could list them as missing. Unless something looked like foul play was involved. And half the stuff they had as evidence was circumstantial at best. God, they'd have to believe them. Have to help them. Or he'd go crazy.

To find Daphne, he'd do anything. He'd call the FBI, CIA, and any other acronym he could think of.

Joe turned and saw I Heart That City in the distance.

Amos hung up.

"Are the police on their way?"

"Yeah."

"Let's go into I Heart That City. Ask around."

"We can't leave a crime scene!"

Joe sighed. True. They shouldn't leave before the police got there.

Unfortunately, he knew the first suspect in a case like this was usually the husband and leaving would not look good. But it was hard to be patient when your guts felt like they'd been ripped out.

* * * * *

Several hours had passed. And Joe was no closer to knowing where Daphne was. Neither were the cops. They'd called in the cavalry, but even they couldn't work miracles. Each second Daphne was gone, it was more unlikely that she'd be found. *Alive*. The police hadn't said that out loud. But he'd seen it in their eyes. No, Gary wouldn't want to hurt her. Not at first. But when she didn't want to be with him, he'd do things he'd regret. Hell, he'd done that while they'd been together. He'd never been violent against Daphne. But Gary had never kidnapped anyone before either.

Amos touched his shoulder. "You okay?"

“Yeah.” No, he wasn’t. He wanted to run off and handle this himself. Only he couldn’t. Had no clue where to even begin. So he was depending on other people. Not something he did well. He wasn’t good at this. “Yeah.” He didn’t say any more than that. Amos wouldn’t press him. He ran a hand through his hair.

“Why don’t we go eat something?” Amos’s hand stroked up his arm again. Amos had been careful in front of the police. He hadn’t touched Joe at all. But since they’d been waiting in the lobby at the police station, Amos occasionally laid his hand on Joe. And it wasn’t an unwelcome touch. Not at all. It helped to keep Joe from going off the deep end and into a pool of nothingness. Just as telling himself that they’d find Daphne did.

Joe didn’t want to eat. He wanted his wife back. But that wasn’t possible right now. He didn’t answer Amos’s query.

“Come on. We can get some food and come right back. They have all our numbers. We’ll let the police officer know where we’re going if they find anything.” Amos led him to his truck from the police station.

Joe hadn’t eaten since breakfast, and that had been on the run. His stomach growled. He followed Amos willingly. Wasn’t like he was being important at the station. They didn’t seem to need him. Which made him more impatient. Why hadn’t they found her yet? Or at least had an idea where Gary was going?

“I Heart That City isn’t too far away from here.” Amos played with the door handle. “If that works for you.”

Joe nodded to the suggestion. He didn’t care what or where he ate. The police had briefly questioned a bartender at I Heart That City, but it hadn’t gone any further. And nothing had come from anything else they’d done. Every lead they’d toyed with had turned up nothing.

Gary had to have been watching them. Stalking them. Feeling them out. He had to have left a trail in doing that. The man wasn’t a genius, nor was he invisible. Why couldn’t the police or Joe find the evidence he’d left behind?

All Joe could think about was the drop of blood on the seat. And finding his woman.

They walked into the bar and snagged a table. They sat in silence. Neither wanted to talk about Daphne or about what would happen when she was found. Or even worse, if she wasn’t found.

No, Joe couldn’t think that way. They had to find her. She was his life. He didn’t know what he’d do without her. He willed his phone to ring with the news that they had her. Safe. Sound. Without worry.

Bridget strolled over after delivering some food. “What can I...?” She broke off as she looked at them. Her face grew wide and excited. “I’ve been trying to get hold of the cop who came by here earlier before I came on shift. I’m so glad to see the two of you!”

Joe's heart ran cold. This had to be more bad news. That was the way his day was going. "Why?"

"Because." She took a deep breath and sat down at the table with them. In what should have been Daphne's seat. A lump moved up Joe's throat. "Zach told me that the cop came around and what he was asking. They think someone abducted her?"

Joe nodded. "Yeah." What a horrible word. The whole damn situation was, in fact, horrible. His wife had been kidnapped. By a man they used to trust and care for. This was fucked up by any definition. His throat closed off. She'd been abducted. Kidnapped. Taken. God knew what Gary was doing to her by now. And Joe was getting ready to order dinner like everything was normal. When in fact, things might never be normal again.

"*That* guy. The one you and Daphne used to be seen with all the time in here. He was in here on Valentine's Day. He sat at the back table. In a corner. Off to himself."

That confirmed their suspicions that Gary had been watching them. He'd probably watched them for a couple of weeks. He'd already known their routines. Known when he could rush in and pounce on Daphne. That gave him little comfort. Nor did this information do much to help them find Gary. Still, it was something. "Thanks, Bridget. We figured he'd been watching us. You keep after that detective." How long had he been watching them? How detailed had he been with surveillance?

"You think he's the one who has her? That he took your wife?" She seemed as though she was clarifying. "The man you two used to be with?"

Amos's turn to nod. "Yeah. We do." He looked at Joe with concerned brown eyes. Neither of them needed this rehash of the situation. They knew what had happened and what could happen. If only Bridget would take their orders and leave.

"See, on Valentine's, he was disguised. I didn't recognize him. But I recognized the first name on his plastic." Joe must have looked confused, because she clarified. "He paid by credit card. I asked for ID before I saw the name on the card. His last name was different too, than it used to be. Once I saw the first name, though, I knew him, even with the different last name and disguise. It had been bugging me all evening who he was. I knew I knew him from somewhere." Her voice sounded triumphant. As though she'd figured out something large in nature.

Joe looked away to the neon. At least they had verification Gary had been watching, and that would prove he'd been nearby. Now to find him. "Yes, I can imagine..." He froze and looked at her. They'd thought Gary might have a new name because everything under Gary Cousins was from when they'd been together and nothing current existed on the man. Even though Joe knew he'd moved away from Richmond, Gary's current license still had his old address listed. If Bridget had seen the new name and a new ID, maybe she could help them. "You saw his ID? With a new name? Was there an address?"

"Yeah. Gary Morris." Morris had been Daphne's maiden name. "Instead of what it used to be." She nodded again. Leaned over to whisper. "He had a Charlottesville address. Stoney Point Road." She shook her head. "I wish I could remember the numbers, but I --"

Joe leaped to his feet. "No. No. That's plenty of information." He grabbed her hand to pump it up and down. She'd remembered enough to find Daphne. "Thank you."

Joe heard Amos passing along thanks too.

"Come on." They didn't have time for etiquette. They had a woman to go save. A woman to rescue.

"Hang on. Getting her cell phone number for the cops." Joe looked back to find Amos scribbling fast on a cocktail napkin.

Yeah, the police probably would want to verify what she'd just told them. Probably want to come down here and talk to her.

Joe kicked the floor with his shoe and waited.

Amos joined him. "We have to get this info over to the police, Joe." He looked serious as if expecting a fight.

"I know."

As much as he wanted to save Daphne himself and go running in with guns blazing, it wasn't the best idea. He didn't have guns, and Virginia had a waiting period on getting them. He didn't want Daphne to get hurt by his being reckless. He wanted Gary punished to the fullest extent of the law. That meant working within the system. So as much as hated it, he had to take the information to the police as Amos was urging him to do.

But he wasn't getting left behind in Richmond. Hell, no. They had another think coming if they thought that. He'd found the information needed to rescue his woman, and he'd see it through or die trying. He'd be there when they found her. Come hell or high water.

Joe increased his speed to running as they neared the car. This could be the break they'd been waiting for.

They belted themselves in.

"Good thing I suggested eating out, huh?" Amos grinned with an impish look.

"Yep."

Amos continued to grin. "We make a good team."

Joe nodded. "Yeah. We do."

Looking as though he'd expected an argument, Amos sobered, his face drawing down. "I hope this is the lead we need."

No more than Joe did.

* * * * *

Daphne lay on the bed with her eyes closed. Her hands were bound behind her, and her feet were tied together. Her lip hurt from where it had split when Gary had slapped her. When she'd begged him not to do this and then asked to put a bowl of water in the utility room with Kip, he'd lashed out because she shouldn't thinking of "that damn mangy thing" when she was about to get her happily ever after with him.

She'd been so stupid.

Gary had shown up about two minutes after Joe had left for the day. Said he had a meeting later in town and wanted to stop by and see her before he went. He'd seemed so earnest and sincere. She'd put up Kip to talk to him. He'd seemed contrite about the past too, much like he had in their recent phone conversation. She'd thought he'd changed and maybe they could be friends.

Now she knew how wrong that idea had been.

He'd been waiting for the right moment. He'd left the flowers, not Amos. Gary had been watching her for at least the last few weeks, if not longer. It had been his pastime. He'd watched Amos leave the night before. Watched Joe leave this morning. Had decided to pounce while she was alone in the house.

And she'd fallen for it all. So stupid!

They'd talked for a few minutes about what was going on in their lives. She'd been getting ready to go the whole time they'd been chatting. She told him she had a meeting to go to and had to leave but that she'd love to have dinner with him tonight. When he'd pulled the gun, she'd thought it was a joke. Only it hadn't been. The gun had been all too real.

He'd made her write a note to Joe by threatening to open the door and "kill that damn dog" that had been going ballistic in the utility room. When she'd tried to argue with him at the start, he'd thrown Joe's coffee cup on the floor. Joe's favorite mug, the one from his father. She'd blinked tears away when it had hit the floor, where it smashed into pieces, which Gary had her pick up and throw away. She'd hurt her hand, which had bled for a while. He'd hit her before he'd ushered her to her car, Kip's roaring barks thundering in their wake. If he could have gotten the door open, he'd have protected her. If only she hadn't penned him up.

Stupid.

Gary had tied her hands behind her, her feet together, and laid her on the backseat of the car. He'd driven them down near I Heart That City where he'd gotten into his own vehicle after parking hers on the street. It was early enough that there were no people around the bar to notice a bound woman being transferred between vehicles.

He'd planned everything out so well.

He'd laughed about leaving her car near the bar that was so important to her and Joe. "So much for your little celebrations." He'd cackled after that.

He'd driven them away in a car she didn't know or recognize from when she'd been with him. And if she didn't know it, neither did Joe.

They were never going to find them.

Gary was Gary Morris now. He'd changed his last name to her maiden name and gotten fake IDs. And he prattled on and on about how she'd become Mrs. Morris now and what a happy marriage they would have. It made her sick to her stomach every time he sounded off about how they'd be so happy now with no complications in their life.

Complications meaning Joe.

He planned to spend a few days wherever they were right now. Then head for Canada with her. Where Joe would never find them. Gary had enough of a head start on them now, they'd be hard to find anyway. In Canada, it would be impossible.

"Not that he's looking." Gary had sneered the words as they'd driven down a bumpy road. "Dummy will believe your note and wait for you to come back. You need smarter men in your life, Daphne. The fag photographer didn't look any smarter than Joe."

She'd raised a rousing "damn you" to that.

Now, she was somewhere in a house. Still trussed up. He'd driven maybe an hour or two. It had been hard to judge without seeing a clock. The region was hilly or mountainous from what she'd seen when she'd gotten out of the car.

Yeah, that narrows it down.

Actually, it did. They couldn't have driven east or strictly south. There weren't mountains in those directions. There had to have been a western tilt to their driving to encounter mountains. Only she didn't know how far you had to drive in Virginia until you saw mountains. Charlottesville maybe? They still had to be in Virginia. Virginia was a big state. It took more time than that to drive out of it.

But they still could have driven south, directly west, or north.

Not that it mattered where she was in the shape she was in. She'd have to get herself free to make that information useful. No one would find her. Her rescue would have to be driven by her own hand.

She could hear Gary in another room, humming to himself. He sounded so damn happy. She wanted to punch him. Stupid. Stupid. Stupid.

Her eyes clenched shut. If she could get her arms untied, then maybe she would have a chance to escape. Only the knots were tied so tightly. Her fingers wiggled in abject frustration. She had to get the bonds undone.

But she was so tired. Her arms ached from the position she'd been put in for the last few hours. They needed to stretch. Her face ached where Gary had hit her. Her hand throbbed where the broken mug had cut her. Everything was magnified because that was all she had to focus on.

He'd had her for hours. Darkness had fallen. She couldn't see light out of the windows in this room anymore. He'd probably had her for going on twelve hours now.

The only grace was that he hadn't come to do anything sexual to her. Her stomach rolled at the thought of sex with Gary. But he would try. Eventually he'd want to make this little fantasy that much more real for himself. He'd have to rape her. She'd never consent to having sex with him. Never. And if he gave her any freedom, she'd resist to her dying breath.

Even more reason to try and get free sooner rather than later. He'd only wait so long. She wiggled her numb fingers against the rope to no avail.

She heard footsteps approaching. She tucked her eyes shut as quickly as she could. *Help me.* She didn't want his hands touching her body. She'd retch if he touched her.

He let out a deep sigh as he approached the bed. "We're going to be so happy together, you and I. Once I get you past all the lies that Joe told you about me." He came over to sit on the mattress beside her. "So very happy."

She resisted the urge to squirm away from him. Fought back the bile building up in her throat. Kept her eyelids tightly together. Maybe if he thought she was sleeping, he'd leave her alone and stop talking to her.

No such luck.

He lightly stroked her hair. "I'm the only man for you, Daphne. I always have been. I can make you happy. I know I can. Much happier than with him."

She couldn't help speaking up. Couldn't let that go. She'd argue with him about Joe until he took away the air she breathed. "Joe's the man for me. Not you." *Please save me, Joe.* Only he had no reason not to believe the note. It had been in her own handwriting. Their problems and the situation last night with Amos would all conspire to make him think the note was the truth. Which would leave her with Gary.

Gary drew up his hand as if he'd hit her but pulled his arm back. "Never you mind about Joe. You'll forget him soon enough. He can go around with that fag of his. I know what they did in that studio. Not pictures, no way." She could hear the smirk in his voice because he thought he was telling her something she didn't know. "Had nothing to do with loving you that day, let me tell you."

But it did.

Unlike with Gary, who had been all about a relationship with only her, Amos had been pulling for a relationship with *both* of them. That had been evident from the start. Everything he'd done had been about a true threesome.

She should have known the flowers left on her car weren't Amos's style. Her gut had screamed at her that her thoughts were wrong, but she'd tried to be logical. She'd ignored what she felt deep inside.

Now she might never get a chance to find out his style. To get to know Amos better. To see Joe and Amos together. To be loved by them both. To wake up in the morning sandwiched between the two dark men.

That was her regret.

If she got out of this, she would make things right with Amos. Apologize to him for not believing more in him and listening to her gut. She would see what they could be together. If she ever got back to him and Joe.

Gary looked as if he was going to say more, but the doorbell rang. His eyes widened. "Now, who can that be at this hour?" He grabbed her head and forced a gag into her mouth, then tied a bandanna around it. "Can't have you making much noise. The visitor might hear." He licked her cheek. "See you in a minute, darling."

She cringed but couldn't have escaped his mouth. She heard voices in the other room. Muffled. But someone was at the door talking to Gary. Another person was present. A person she could reach.

This was her one shot.

She didn't know if she'd get another chance like this again. She had to alert the person that she was there. Had to make some noise. Get their attention. Maybe they'd realize what was going on and get her some help.

She yelled behind the gag and began flopping around on the bed. She wiggled to the edge, braced herself, and then made herself fall from the mattress. The *thud* winded her, but she kept at it, kicking the floor with her bound feet. Good thing she'd been a klutz all her life or the fall from the bed might have hurt her. One thing she knew how to do was fall.

She tried to make herself as loud as she could be with the limited resources she had at her disposal.

It wasn't enough. All the sound seemed muffled.

The noise intensified from the other room. She was moving around so much, it was hard to hear what was going on...where Gary was. But it sounded loud even to her struggling ears. She couldn't stop her quest for discovery. Had to get away from the crazy man who Gary had become. Who knew what the loon might do next?

She froze. Yes, who knew what he might do next?

Would Gary kill someone to be with her? She hadn't thought about that when she'd started trying to get attention from the person at the door. He'd been serious about Kip. She'd seen it in his eyes. *Don't let me have gotten someone killed.* Had she heard a shot or raised voices? Or even just the door shutting? It had been hard to tell over the movements of her body.

Her heart thudded so hard she couldn't have heard anything. She tried to catch her breath but could only breathe through her nose.

The door burst open.

She winced and curled in a ball, readying herself for Gary's rage at her pitiful attempt at trying to get someone's attention. He would hurt her for this. And having rolled from the bed, it couldn't be disguised.

Flurries of activity sounded behind her. She couldn't see who had opened the door, but Gary didn't come over to her.

A new voice spoke instead from above her head. "I'm a police officer. Are you Daphne Thompson?" It was by far the best-sounding voice she'd ever heard.

Tears began rolling down Daphne's cheeks as she tried to nod. A rescue that she hadn't anticipated had come for her. The police were here. She'd been saved. Thank God.

"Is anyone else here with you besides Gary Morris aka Gary Cousins?"

She shook her head. There'd been no one else at the house.

The officer came around to her side and pulled off her gag with one hand. "It's okay. It's going to be okay now." The officer frowned as Daphne continued to cry. "Let's hurry up and get these ropes off. Otherwise, your husband and that friend of yours are going to be in here with us. They are a persistent pair. If it hadn't been for them, we wouldn't have found you this quickly."

Joe? Amos? Here? "Thank you." Her whole body sagged in relief as the bonds came off. Who would have thought there would be two knights on white chargers instead of only one? The only question was, who would ride off into the sunset?

Chapter Twelve

Amos waited with Joe in the emergency room lobby at Martha Jefferson Hospital. He tapped his foot impatiently. Wanted to know how Daphne was doing. If only they'd hurry up and examine her. Then get back to the two of them. Joe was in an even worse state than he was.

When the police had finally brought Daphne out of the house, Joe had had tears in his eyes. Hell, maybe they both had. They hadn't known if they'd get to her in time before Gary had snapped or done anything. Or run. That had been their biggest fear. That he'd run before they caught up to him.

She'd been shaky. Kept rubbing her arms as if warding off a chill. Her lip had been split. There was a deep cut on her hand. But she'd looked entirely too good for what she'd been through.

Joe had ridden in the back of the ambulance with Daphne. Amos had driven himself in Joe's truck to the hospital. He'd been right behind the ambulance and there when Daphne and Joe departed the vehicle.

Daphne hadn't said much.

Neither of them had wanted to leave her when they'd arrived at the emergency room. Joe had held tightly to her arm.

But a nurse who made a drill sergeant look soft had insisted they leave Daphne to her. "I have things to do and talk about that don't require the two of you." The formidable linebacker of a woman had put her hands on her hips and stared them down. She didn't seem intimidated that they both were taller.

He'd half expected Joe to rush her for entrance to the examining rooms before he'd let go of Daphne's arm.

"I'll be fine." Daphne's soft, lost voice came from the stretcher to reassure them. She'd swallowed. Looked pale against the sheets. "You two wait out here so they can do what they need to do. I want to go home."

That had been the only thing that had kept Joe out of the examining room. And that was barely.

Amos hadn't said anything, but he knew the nurse's worry and why she hadn't wanted them back there. Daphne didn't look messed up physically. But that didn't mean she wasn't emotionally damaged. Hell, she'd been kidnapped at gunpoint. But things could get worse. She could have been raped.

He hadn't said any of that to Joe. Yet.

Joe hopped to his feet and paced along the tiled floor. "What's taking them so long?" He turned to glare at the entrance they'd taken Daphne through.

"It's hasn't been that long."

"Yes, it has." He paced some more, making Amos dizzy. "Dammit all. I'm going back. I'm going to find my wife." He started toward the door.

"Joe."

The big man whipped around to face Amos. "What? Don't tell me I shouldn't be with her. I should."

"Let them do what they need to do with her. It will be easier on her if we're not there hovering. We'd be in the way. She's in good hands." He wiggled his finger at Joe to motion him back to the chairs. The last thing they needed was for Joe to get busted by Nurse Drill Sergeant or banned from the hospital.

Joe sighed and approached him. Sat down with a *plop*. The leather cushion let out a great amount of air.

Amos put his arm on Joe's shoulder. Patted him. Stroked circles around his shoulder muscles. "She's going to be all right."

"Is she?" Joe leaned back into Amos's touch. He didn't look at Amos. Only glared at the doors as if he could make them open with his gaze.

"Yes. Physically, I don't think there was a whole lot hurt from what I saw of her." Amos stilled his fingers. "I'm not sure about emotionally, though."

Joe took a deep breath. His voice was shaky and hoarse with emotion. "You're talking rape."

Joe had been thinking the same thing that Amos had. They hadn't talked until now. Should have known Joe would be of the same mind-set. Amos restarted his touches. "I don't know. He had her awhile. But even so, she was abducted at gunpoint. Was at his mercy for the better part of a day. She's going to have issues for a while. Even if a rape didn't happen."

Joe had opened his mouth to respond when Nurse Drill Sergeant stepped out of the doors. “Mr. Thompson. Dr. Simolayan wants to have a word with you.” She kept the doors open and motioned him through.

Joe got up and moved toward the nurse. He realized Amos didn’t follow him and looked back. “Coming?”

Amos shook his head. “This is about you and your wife.” He didn’t belong at the conference. Maybe one day, if they could try things again, he’d find his way to belong. But after this, he didn’t have high hopes. Gary had messed with their minds again. Figured that Amos would finally find a couple he had an interest in and then factors beyond his control would stop it before it got started.

Joe pursed his lips together, shot Amos a look, and disappeared with the nurse.

Amos laid his head back on the chair. He should go. Let them deal with all this themselves. They didn’t need him hanging around right now. They had enough to deal with.

Only he couldn’t make himself leave.

He wanted to see Daphne. Make sure she was okay. Yeah, he’d seen her briefly when they’d brought her from the house, but that hadn’t been enough. He needed to know she was okay. Maybe even touch her to make sure. He couldn’t leave until he’d done that. Unless it was evident that he needed to vacate, he’d stay awhile longer.

It had only been a few hours since they’d been at I Heart That City. So much had happened. Joe had insisted they come with the police to the rescue. Wouldn’t interfere but had wanted to be on-site when they went in. The police had probably seen what Amos had. A man who’d go off half-cocked to rescue his wife if they didn’t watch him. So they’d allowed it, provided he did everything they said. A different set of cops probably would have arrested him.

Amos sat with eyes closed and listened to the ER sounds. Coughs. A cry here and there. Doors opening and closing. An ambulance siren.

“Yo, Sleeping Beauty.”

Amos opened his eyes to find Joe at the doors to the ER. “Yeah?” He couldn’t hide the surprise in his voice. He’d not expected to see Joe back so soon.

Joe came closer to Amos as he stood up. “They’re going to release her.” His face looked relieved. The news must have been good. “She’s fine. Has a split lip. She... He didn’t do anything to her sexually.”

Amos’s stomach went to his knees. “Thank goodness.” Not that what had happened wasn’t horrible. But to deal with a rape on top of being abducted seemed like too much. He was just grateful that Daphne didn’t have to.

“She’s still going to have psychological effects like you said.” Joe’s mouth went back down into a deep frown.

Amos lifted an eyebrow. “Psychological effects?”

"The doctor used a lot of fifty-cent words that amounted to those you used about the kidnapping. They're getting the discharge paperwork worked up right now. We can take her home."

That good news. "I guess I should head back to Richmond then. Let you two get settled." So much for seeing Daphne. Amos slung his hands in his pockets. He needed to get out of their hair tonight. Maybe for good, or maybe one day they'd be ready to try again.

Joe cocked his head to the side. "You kidding? You're riding back with us. I promise to drive slower on the ride home than the ride up here."

He'd driven like a maniac to meet the police. Made Amos hold the door a few times. "Maybe I should drive?" Amos *should* go home. Leave them alone to face this together. His brain told him that. But his heart was telling him something different. And Joe was asking him to stick around.

Joe grinned for the first time since he'd come to see Amos at his studio. "Come on. Let's go back with Daphne."

Amos hesitated. He shouldn't keep hanging on to them like this. Especially in a time of emotional crisis. "Are you sure? I can go on back..."

Joe grabbed his arm. "Nonsense. Don't be a dick. Come on." They went through a maze of curtains and rooms with doors until Joe pushed back one to reveal a frustrated patient.

Daphne sat on a gurney-style bed, dressed and looking impatient. "They haven't been back yet." Her color was back. She looked like a vision. Albeit an unhappy one. But the wan Daphne had vanished, replaced by the one with spirit. The one who warmed his heart.

"I was only gone a few minutes. They said it might take a while to get your papers worked up." Joe pulled the curtain back closed.

"I want out of here. To go home." She looked at Amos, as if noticing him for the first time, and her gaze softened. "Hi." Her voice lowered to almost a whisper.

"Hi." He hung back along the curtain line. Felt as though he was intruding on something private. He should have found another ride back.

Joe went to her and wrapped himself around her. He was standing and she was sitting on a tall bed, so her head hit about his midsection. He held her close. They made a picture. But oddly enough, Amos didn't long for his camera. He was content to watch them.

Joe continued holding his wife. "We'll get you out of here soon enough. Take you home. Kip will be so excited to see you."

"Oh my God...Kip." Her voice broke. "I locked him in so we could talk... He wouldn't let me... Is Kip okay?"

Amos looked away. He should slip out. They'd both argue that he needed to stay, but they needed this time alone. To sort out their chaotic feelings about this whole event. He'd seen Daphne, which was all he wanted. He started backing toward the curtain a little bit at a time.

"He's fine. He's one of the reasons I didn't believe that note."

Amos continued to take backward steps toward the curtain. He'd almost gotten there. Would be a simple matter to slip out now.

"Amos?"

He looked over at the bed to find Daphne peeking around Joe at him. Her eyes gleamed in the harsh fluorescent lights.

"Come here. Please."

The *please* did him in. He'd do anything for her at this point. On legs that were suddenly shaky, Amos walked over to her side. To Joe's side.

Joe moved away and motioned Amos into their personal space. The heat of their bodies called to him.

He slid in beside Daphne on the other side opposite Joe so she was sitting in between them. Her lip looked swollen. He clenched his hands together. How dare someone do that to this beautiful woman?

"I'm so sorry that I thought you left the flowers" -- she reached to put a hand in his -- "even when you said you didn't. I should've listened to my instincts. They said you couldn't have done it."

He shrugged. He'd known she hadn't believed him. "It's okay. You had no idea about Ga -- him." He never wanted to hear the man's name again. Nor did they.

A single tear brimmed over from one eye. Hung as if suspended there. "I should've believed you. For that, I'm sorry."

He reached over to take that tear from her. To try to take away her guilt. She didn't deserve that emotion. "We're fine. You had no idea you should believe me. You didn't know me well enough." Nor had she known how screwed up Gary was.

She squeezed his arm. "I want to. I want to get to know you that well. If I haven't screwed that up already."

"Daphne..." He shifted uncomfortably. It was emotion from the ordeal causing this. There was no way they could know what they wanted right now.

"When Gary had me, there were two things I kept thinking about. That made me keep fighting the little that I did. Joe. And you."

The woman had been through a trauma. And here she was, comforting his sorry ass. Trying to make amends for something Amos didn't blame her for.

She thought that she still wanted him. Wanted to see where things went with this attraction between the three of them.

He looked over to Joe, whose eyes looked tenderly at them both. Joe shook his long hair back.

Amos sidled in closer. "You haven't screwed up anything. There will be time to figure all this out... When you're ready. You know, because we have body shots to finish." Whether they would or not, he didn't know. But he needed to make her feel good today.

Both of them smiled. Amos responded in kind.

He pulled his arm from her and put it around her. So that he touched Joe too. His other arm went to clasp her cold hand in his.

And they stayed like that until Nurse Drill Sergeant came in with the discharge papers.

* * * * *

It had been a month since "the ordeal," as Daphne termed it. There was a lot still to come, a trial and court appearances and more therapy. But all in all, she'd been doing well. The nightmares were becoming more and more sporadic. She wasn't jumping at every little thing. She didn't feel like she was on a roller coaster most of the time, up one minute and sobbing the next.

She took each small progression as it came. Each night she didn't wake up crying or screaming was a victory. Each nightmare she didn't have was celebrated.

And now, the time had come.

They'd made a decision to finally try a threesome with Amos again. The idea was if it and subsequent encounters went well, they might aim for becoming a committed triad one day. That was getting a bit ahead of themselves, though.

First, they had to conquer tonight.

One step at a time.

She sauntered into I Heart That City wearing that little black dress. The one that made her feel all woman. The one she'd seduced Joe in umpteen times. The one she'd worn when Amos had told her to feel sexy. It seemed like that had happened ages ago, instead of only weeks.

Joe and Amos were both already there. Sitting at the usual table they sat at. Amos had been meeting them for Thursday night celebrations off and on. And about any other time they wanted to go out, he'd meet them, especially at the bar, which was now more than an institution to them.

I Heart That City had become even more special with the part it had played in her rescue. It also was the place where they'd met Amos.

Bridget smiled at her from near the bar. She had hugged Daphne that first time back at I Heart That City. And Daphne gave her big tips every night they went to the bar to pay her back for the big tip she'd given them.

She called over to Daphne, "Usual?"

Daphne nodded. Then she turned toward the men at the table.

They hadn't spotted her yet. Seemed engaged in conversation as Amos gestured wildly with his hands. It was probably about some sporting event. Their dark heads were together. Muscular bodies close. Touching casually.

Daphne melted into a puddle on the floor like a crayon baked by the sun. God, they were gorgeous.

Hers.

If things went well tonight, they'd both be hers. And she would be theirs. She sashayed toward the table, trying to overcome her self-consciousness. This was Amos and Joe after all.

And the little black dress had never failed her.

Joe saw her first and straightened up. His face took her in and reflected that he liked what he saw. His eyes glimmered with that look she knew so well. Love and passion all mixed together in a brew. He arched a brow and nodded his approval.

Amos turned to look where Joe was looking and his mouth opened ever so slightly. The look he gave her was one of longing. Hunger. The raw look made a shiver run up her legs and spine to the back of her neck where the hair stood up.

All for her.

She reached the table. "Hi, guys. Am I late?"

"No." Joe stumbled to his feet and pulled out the chair he'd been sitting in. "Here." He took the third chair at the table. It put her semi in between them. 'Course anywhere she sat, she would have been between them. Anywhere in a threesome she'd be in between them.

Bridget brought over her drink. "Here you go." She set it in front of Daphne. "Stay out of Joel's way. That quit-smoking thing is hitting him hard tonight." She waved a hand. "He's a bear." She tucked her tray up under her arm.

"Will do." Joe handed her money. "For all our drinks. Keep the change." He nodded to Bridget.

Her eyebrow lifted. "You aren't going to want seconds?" They usually had a few drinks at the bar these days, instead of only one or two. Because they didn't want to leave Amos behind.

Joe shook his head.

With a knowing smile, Bridget sauntered back toward the bar.

Amos turned to him, confusion evident on his face. "We aren't?" His lips quirked up. He looked disappointed.

Daphne took a sip from her drink. "We aren't doing seconds. Not from here anyway." Her breath grew warm by the alcohol. She savored the taste of the sip. Felt it burn all the way down her throat and into her stomach.

"Not from here, huh?" Amos looked down into his glass so she couldn't read his expression. "Where from then?"

Joe picked up his glass. "First, a toast." He held his drink in midair, waiting for them to pick up theirs. The neon lights from the bar sign hit the liquid, sending murky-colored shadows throughout the tequila.

Amos picked up his glass and Daphne followed suit.

"To the future."

They each repeated Joe's sentiment.

Their glasses clinked together, and they all took sips. The *clink* somehow made the celebration all the more real.

She was there.

She'd survived. Made it through a darkness with herself intact. And now was the time to move forward with her life for herself and herself alone. Not because of anyone else or their expectations of her.

She was about to embark on a new relationship and see where it led, while she remained in love with her husband.

She shivered. Life was too good right now. And she savored each sweet moment that she'd almost lost.

"So, not doing more drinks here." Amos swirled around his drink by twirling his hand. "Where might we be doing seconds?"

Joe took another sip before he answered. Licked his lips. And Daphne wanted to help him clean his mouth. "At home."

Amos looked from Joe to her. He seemed to want confirmation from her that this move was okay.

Amos didn't check as often as he used to, but he tried to keep their threesome conflict free by making sure they were all on board. Yet another reason she'd fallen for him. She repeated Joe's words. "Home." Nodded to Amos and smiled.

"Your home?" His words came slow, as if he was still checking. Still not believing what was about to happen.

They both nodded this time to let him know he'd assessed correctly.

"We have body shots to finish." She shifted in her seat. Was wearing brand-new satin underwear and a matching bra. And things between her thighs already felt so slick. They'd be even slicker later.

Amos picked up his drink and downed the rest of it with one sip. "Okay. I'm ready to go now." His eyes lit with an eagerness that overwhelmed her. His mouth broke free in a grin. He backed up his chair from the table and surveyed them.

Both Joe and she chuckled. Reminded Daphne of many a night here at I Heart That City with Joe.

After finishing up their own drinks, they all headed to the door. Joe held it open for Amos and Daphne.

Once on the sidewalk, Joe guided them to his truck with him and Amos walking on the outside and her in the middle.

Amos turned when they were several yards from the truck to head back in the other direction.

"We can pick up the other cars later if you two want. Why don't we ride to the house together?" Joe's smile was easy.

Amos nodded quickly. "Fine with me." He shoved his hands in his pockets and walked closer to her. "If that's okay with you, and you don't mind taking me back."

She nodded too, to show that she was okay with that. More than okay. It would give them more time together.

She was ready for this night. More than ready. And wasn't paying attention to where she was going. She tripped on an uneven place on the sidewalk and pivoted downward.

Until both men caught her. They each grabbed an arm and roughly yanked her up to her feet. Only their quick action saved her from a fall.

"You okay?" Joe rasped.

They'd worked together to save her clumsy ass. The two worked well together at all times. They'd be even better in bed than they were in life. Her knees trembled, not from the almost fall but from what was to come. "Yeah, I'm fine. Thanks. Both of you."

Neither let go of her arms. Instead, they finished their walk to the truck touching her as though they couldn't let her go. Which was okay with her. She didn't want them to let go.

Amos opened the passenger door for her and motioned her inside. Wanted her to sit in the middle of the seat.

Her breathing hitched as she slid in. Amos quickly followed, his body touching hers with warmth and strength.

Joe got in the driver's door and his body brushed hers. He started up the engine. It roared to life with a purr.

Interesting predicament. In the middle of two men was how she was going to spend this whole evening. Why not start now?

Joe pulled from the parking spot and then kept one hand on the wheel. The other he placed on her leg, above her knee. The muscles underneath tensed and relaxed at his fingers on her skin.

Her breathing sped up.

Especially when Amos put a hand on top of her own, which was lying on her thigh. His hand lay close to where she was needy. Wanting. A few inches over and he'd touch her pussy. A quiver moved across her intimate spaces.

She sat back straighter against the truck seat. Her breathing sped to a hare's pace. Again they were working together. Her heart pounded. The men's smells drifted to her nose. Both of them smelled musky. Wonderful. She wanted to bury her face in them and inhale. Never let them go.

Amos's thumb idly caressed hers. "So, I believe we left off with you as the subject of the body shots. Is that where we pick up again?"

"Yep, that's where I say we pick up again." Joe's commanding voice made tingles bubble up all over her body. Ripples of pleasure pulsed out from her sensitive pussy. Her breasts swelled against the fabric of the bra.

Her voice sounded husky when she could finally speak. "Don't I get a say in where we begin tonight?"

Amos's hand squeezed hers. "Of course you do. It was merely a suggestion. A reminder of where we were." His voice sounded magnanimous and teasing.

Joe's voice rumbled deep in his chest. "You have the ultimate say over both of us. What do you want? Where should we start?" He glanced at her as they pulled up to a red light.

She looked from man to man. They'd given her what she wanted. A voice. Both of them cared about what she thought. What she wanted. And they cared about the other. "I say, bring on the tequila."

Laughter filled the truck. It was a welcome sound. Things had been so serious lately. It was nice to finally play with her man. Her men. They needed to laugh.

Arriving home became a chaotic mess with Kip, who was thrilled to see Amos for the first time since Valentine's. After they had him settled in, they all wandered into the living room. Joe put Kip into a bedroom because of their erotic plans. They didn't trust him not to jump on Amos for a tummy rub.

"So what kind of body shots do you want?" Joe picked up the tequila bottle. He waggled his brows at her and held the bottle out suggestively.

"Both kinds." She smiled and went to the couch. Turned back around to face them. "From both of you." She rubbed a shaky hand across her middle. She could do this. Wanted to do this. Nothing had felt more right. The nervousness came from lots of things, none of which were about the men in front of her.

Amos took a deep breath. "You sure you're up to this?" He took a hesitant step toward the couch. He'd worried a lot about her the past few weeks, which he'd vocalized. Had tried his best to keep both of them happy. Seemed to always be treading a fine line. Yet he did it well and without one complaint. He deserved this night and so much more. They all did.

Not to mention, she wanted a night with them as well.

In answer, she lowered her hands and pulled off the little black dress. Stood before them in a dark blue bra and panties.

“Yep, I’d say she’s ready for this.” Joe’s voice sounded breathy. His chest heaved as though he couldn’t get in enough air.

She liked the sound of him puffing.

“I agree.” Amos sounded squeakier than she’d ever heard him.

“I really want to live tonight. I want you two to show me I’m here.” She put her hands by her sides. “That I’m alive. That I’m yours.”

Both of their gazes ate her up. Made her feel more alive than she’d felt in weeks. They both had feelings for her. Loved her in their own ways. Which was what she needed. They loved her for who she was. Hadn’t wanted to change her to suit them.

They understood her better than anyone else had.

She soon shivered from the chill.

In seconds, they both arrived at her sides. So solicitous. So giving. Always concerned for her welfare. Before she sank down onto the floor, she asked, “Got lemons?” Joe held up the bowl. “Salt?” Joe held that up too.

Amos shook his head with a slight grin. “You’re ready, aren’t you?”

“I was born ready.”

They exchanged a glance before they started. A heated look of promise and understanding. They settled her down on the floor in a host of blankets. Joe was at her head and Amos rested at her feet.

They hadn’t even discussed aloud when they started how this would work. They each seemed to know the other and act accordingly. They were like that a lot.

Joe readied the bottle of tequila in his hands. He slid to her side.

She tensed, watching him. It was going to be cool. She let out a gasp as he poured a small amount of tequila above her breasts and quickly sucked it off. The drop didn’t have any opportunity to run. He quickly laved it from her body.

Amos grasped the bottle in one hand near her middle. He licked her thigh with a rough nip. Quickly shook out some salt, took a sip, and licked the salt from her skin.

Tremors racked her body. His tongue felt good. Joe’s did too. They loved her with everything they had to give.

Each did shots from various places. Joe never let the tequila roll down her. And Amos’s warm tongue had her hips bucking as he sipped salt from both thighs like she was a willing glass. The cool and warmth of tequila and tongue made her writhe.

She looked up at the ceiling. To think she’d almost lost this. Almost lost the opportunity to see what this could be like.

Never again.

She’d live for herself and her men from now on.

Joe leaned over to kiss her on the lips. She tasted the flavor of the tequila as his tongue played with hers. He broke off from her mouth. "No seriousness tonight." He shook his head, admonishing her. "You deserve the happiness. The bliss."

She nodded. "No seriousness." She was done with grief and loss. It was time to live, and the perfect time to start was now.

He kissed her more deeply. Kissed her gently, then more wildly. She felt him motioning with a hand, and he was soon joined by Amos. She felt his presence and opened her eyes to see Amos standing there.

Amos watched her hungrily from the sidelines. His eyes were the windows to his soul. And his soul wanted her.

Her hand reached out to touch his cock through his jeans, finding it by some luck because she didn't look before she reached. He sucked in a wild breath. Hard and ready. She wanted to feel him through his clothes. Wanted to feel him under his clothes. Needed to feel his bared flesh.

She broke her mouth away from Joe's. "You two need more nakedness." This wasn't fair. She was nearly nude and they weren't.

Joe stood up and slowly pulled his shirt over his head, revealing tanned skin with a big flourish. He'd always made stripping like an art form. Seemed to know how to drag it out or make it quick to make a splash.

She purred. Liked to see his body revealed no matter how he did it. His nipples looked firm and flat. His stomach muscles rippled.

She turned her head as Amos shuffled to his feet and pulled off his own shirt. His lean muscles clenched and tightened as he divested himself of his clothes. He went one step further than Joe and got naked. He stood before them in his full glory. Naturally dark body and black hair gleaming in the lamplights. His cock poked out, large and red.

She wanted to reach up and taste him. Lick the gleaming drop from the head of his cock.

But the show wasn't done yet.

Joe reached down and unsnapped his jeans. She heard the snap pop. He pulled down the zipper excruciatingly slowly. Each crunch made her jump. When it was down all the way, he parted the front of his jeans. The bulge under the white became evident. He looked them both in the eyes before easing the jeans and briefs down his legs.

She wanted to scream, *Get on with it!* until his cock popped free. Satisfaction finally. Then she didn't mind so much that he'd taken his time. His full length rose powerfully toward his stomach.

Two different styles in her stripping men. And she liked them both. They both knew how to push her buttons.

"Now it's your turn again."

Yes, they were nude now and she wasn't.

She sat up as they both kneeled down beside her. Whatever they were going to start would have to wait. She unsnapped the bra and let it fall to the floor.

One of them moaned. Both of them looked mesmerized.

She slipped down her underwear and kicked them from her ankles, trying not to lose her balance as she pulled them from one foot and then the other.

She didn't lower herself right away.

She needed to do some touching of her own.

Just before she came back to them, she reached out with both hands and found a cock for each one. Felt the warm, pulsing rods with soft skin stretched over hard lengths. Enjoyed the slippery feel of them in her hands.

"Damn." Joe cursed and leaned back. Her hand didn't let go but followed him. Kept at him with light strokes.

Amos blew out a breath and shuffled his hips so that his cock filled her hand some more. Not that one hand could do it for him.

Either of them.

She pulled and slipped both of them in and out of her tight hands as best she could. Made a channel with her fingers and palm.

Kept up the pace with both of them, matching her. Cocks lengthened and grew even harder in her hand. Slight dribbles of precome leaked, which she used as a lube. It wasn't enough wetness to make her hands too slick.

She didn't want to let go of them to find lube. But it would feel so much better for them. So much slicker. She kept the pace up, getting rougher and firmer with both of them.

Finally, she let go of them both at the same time. Wanted to bring them both to orgasm but wanted someone inside her too. She couldn't wait to taste them. "Lie back..."

"Wicked, wicked woman," Joe growled and put one hand on her chest to press her back instead.

"But..." Her protest was short-lived. She looked up at him coming on top of her. His grin said it all. He wanted this now. To have her.

And who could argue with that?

"Turn your head to this side." Amos's voice had never sounded so steel filled. He must be taking lessons from Joe on how to order her around. Yet they were always telling her to do the things she wanted to do anyway. Made it easy to obey.

She turned her head without question. Suspected what Amos had in mind for her mouth.

He shifted his body so his head was facing her feet and palmed his cock near her face. Put himself at the perfect angle for a blowjob.

She smacked her lips in anticipation of getting them around his cock. Of tasting him for the first time.

Joe moved his weight, and his cock probed her entrance. She felt the tingles of first penetration as he guided himself down inside of her.

Both of them entered her at the same time. One slid into her mouth. The other slipped into her slick pussy.

She gobbled up Amos, taking him in and out of her mouth. Let her lips suction him. Breathed in nothing but his special scent.

The whole time she was taking in Amos, Joe pressed his cock inside of her. He matched her rhythm on Amos's cock with his own strokes. Pressure built deep inside, which his cock assuaged in some strange way.

She rose up to meet Joe's thrusts. Shoved her hips against him. Couldn't quite get close enough to her man.

Amos did much the same against her mouth. Shoved himself farther and farther down. She deep throatied him with ease.

The whole world boiled down to her mouth and pussy. Everything in the world faded away except for those two places. Twin points of pleasure.

She swirled her tongue around Amos, gasping as Joe went even deeper within her. Her whole being narrowed to these two men. As it should be.

In. Out. In. Out.

Her pussy clenched, body arched up, and she collapsed in a burst of light that had her blinking. She couldn't cry out because her mouth was stuffed with Amos's cock. Her body tensed and relaxed in a silent storm of pleasure. She quickly came back to herself only to see Amos's face get that telltale look.

Amos's head threw back in an arc. "Daphne." Her name fell like manna from his lips.

His cry happened as Joe's head went back in a similar way. "Daphne." A second dose of manna. Of heaven. Her pleasure on earth with the two men who loved her.

Come filled her mouth and her pussy with warm, salty wetness. spurts filled the two places as each burst took them further down into their own abyss.

She swallowed, lapping at the whole tip of Amos's cock. Took as much of the bitter liquid in as she could.

An aftershock racked Joe's body as he slammed down on her again. Her pussy spasmed in response.

Breathing superficial and hurried. Heartbeats pounding. Sweat coated all three bodies.

They pulled from her at the same time. She felt the loss of their penetrations instantly. Both of them had come into her life and infiltrated it as they had her body.

They'd taken her body and made it theirs, both on film and physically. Both had taken more than body shots from her tonight.

They'd taken her soul. And she wouldn't have it any other way.

They both lay down alongside her.

Joe's arm lay across her middle with Amos's arm above it. Both of them snuggled closer to her.

Whatever happened, they had tonight. And the rest of their lives to figure out the future.

"I think there will be more body shots before morning." She let a sigh drift through her voice.

Two cocks jumped against her legs.

"Definitely," said two voices in tandem. As it should be.

THE END

Mechele Armstrong

Have you ever wondered, “What if crayons have a kingdom?” Mechele Armstrong did at age five. Now, turning the imagination of a wide-eyed child into intense spellbinding stories for adults, she is winning over new fans every day.

Writing stories and poetry as a hobby, she graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with a degree in Religious Studies and Social Welfare. Although there were challenges with work and family, the need to write and be published, to share her passion for books was always there.

During a rainy weekend at the beach reading several romance novels she fell in love, not with the hero, but with the genre again. So began a two-year adventure of doing what she loved most, creating worlds with strong heroines and enchanting heroes that will keep you turning pages until the end.

Using the Internet and the local Romance Writer’s Association, she learned and refined her craft. Living in Virginia with a husband, kids, dog, and fish, she finds time to share her vivid imagination and ability to tell stories of adventure, love, lust, and everything in between.

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