



# Man of Mystery

*Madeleine Urban*



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*by Madeleine Urban*

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"Hey, Dad, look! It's one of your mystery books!"

Alan's head shot up from where he was reading a food label in the grocery store. "Where?"

Bobby pointed across the way to the trademark red eye-catching cover of a hardback book on an end-cap display. "Is it a new one?"

"I don't know," Alan said distractedly, squinting to try to make out the title on the lurid cover. "Here," he said, handing his five-year-old the box of whole grain cereal he'd been examining. "Pick out some cereal while I look."

He walked down the aisle, getting more excited as he got closer. He grabbed the hardback book and looked at the title, eyes wide and excited. "*Headlong Flight, a Terrence Whitehead: Man of Mystery* novel," Alan said under his breath, opening the cover to avidly read the dust jacket. He loved these books; they provided him with entertainment and dreams that let him break free of the daily tedium of his settled life.

Bobby pushed the small plastic basket along in the floor to get to Alan. "I'm done with the shopping, Dad," he said, happily toting a lurid blue box with a tiger on it.

"That's great, champ, thanks," Alan said, obviously focused on the book. He tore his gaze away to grin down at his son. "It's a new one."

"Good! Then you can read it and I can play my Nintendo at night!" Bobby declared.

"Is that so? Mommy might have something to say about that," Alan said with a laugh, scooping Bobby up and flipping

him to carry over his shoulder. He pushed the basket to the nearby checkout lane, listening to his son giggle the whole way. It was going to be a great day.

\* \* \* \*

Idly stirring the skillet with one hand, Alan held the hardback book in his other, reading closely. He dropped the wooden spoon to turn the page and brushed his fingers against the skillet. Swearing under his breath, Alan shook his hand and stuck his fingers in his mouth, but didn't look away from the book even though the food in the skillet sizzled dangerously.

"Dad? Dad!" a young voice piped up.

"Yeah?" Alan answered absently around his sore fingers, still reading.

"Dad, is our dinner gonna be burnt like breakfast was?"

Alan blinked and finally looked up from his book. Seeing the blackened mess in the skillet, he sighed and pulled it off the burner and dropped the whole thing into the sink. Closing the novel—his finger marking his place—he stooped over and picked Bobby up. "How about McDonald's, sport?"

"Yay! Chicken nuggets!" Bobby cried.

Alan grinned in return. He walked through the house and picked up his keys, toting Bobby and the book the whole way. A Happy Meal and the Playplace would go a long way toward keeping Bobby amused while he kept reading his book. They'd made it out to the driveway when a car pulled into the drive. Frowning, Alan stuck his keys in his pocket and went to

meet it; it was just his luck that Danielle would come home a little early for a change. Now he wouldn't get to read at all.

She got out of the car and gave Bobby a big hug. "Where are you going, Alan?"

"We're having chicken nuggets, Mommy!"

Danielle turned a faintly disapproving look on Alan, which deepened when he stuck his book behind his back. "A new book, is it?" Her face tightened a little and then she sighed. "All right, McDonald's it is."

Alan relaxed and opened the back door of Danielle's car for Bobby, buckling him into the booster-seat before getting in the passenger side. "Thanks, Danny," he said quietly as she restarted the car.

"We'll discuss this later," she promised a bit darkly before brightening to talk to Bobby.

Alan's hands tightened around the novel, and he just looked blankly out the window. He should have known when he bought the book. He should have known she wouldn't like it, just like she hadn't liked the six others that preceded it.

\* \* \* \*

He was changing over the laundry when Danielle entered the small utility room and shut the door. "Alan."

The brunette looked up and saw the look on his wife's face. He knew exactly what was coming. "C'mon, Danny, it's just one dinner at McDonald's." Why did she have to do this?

"Preceded by two days of Frosted Flakes, pudding packs, and no housework," Danielle finished, crossing her arms. "We've had this discussion."

"Yes, we have, and I still think you're overreacting. It's just a damn book."

"If it's just a damn book, then why is the house a wreck? Why is there burnt food in the sink in the kitchen? Why don't I have clean clothes for work tomorrow? Alan, I don't ask a lot, but this is irresponsible."

"Irresponsible?" Alan stared at her. Didn't she trust him to do anything?

"Look, Alan, I know it sounds harsh. But just try to see it from my point of view, please? Why is it that you find more enjoyment in a fantasy than you do in your real life? Those stupid books—they're not even real mysteries. The main character is a playboy who goes all over the country fucking around, only he thinks he's being followed by gangsters or something."

Alan frowned. "That's not true." They were mysteries, with a healthy dose of suspense. Just because there was sex thrown in...

Danielle sighed and laid her head back against the wall. "C'mon, Alan. When was the last time we had sex?"

Alan fell slightly ill. He'd tried to avoid it, because the truth was he'd never really been interested in sex. Until now, it had never been an issue. "What's that got to do with this?"

"A hell of a lot, really. If I didn't know better, I'd say you're cheating on me. 'Cause I'm sure not getting laid."

"Danny," Alan objected. "We're married, for God's sake! I'm not cheating with anyone."

"Look, I don't ask a lot. I work all day and sometimes all night. I love my job. And when we got married, you said you were okay with that," Danielle said.

"I'm still okay with that," Alan insisted. It was his own life he wasn't okay with, but he'd never get her to understand that. All she saw was her high-powered job as a lawyer.

She continued to forge ahead, getting louder. "And all I asked was that you raise our son and keep up the house. Make sure he eats well. Keep the laundry caught up. It's not that difficult, Alan, and most of the time, you're fine. But every time one of these books comes out...."

"What are you saying, Danny? That I'm unfaithful to you with a book?"

"No, Alan, I just think you're being selfish, childish, and immature. What if something happened to Bobby because you were jacking off, so wrapped up in one of those books?" Danielle asked, voice rising sharply.

Alan literally flinched. "That's an awful thought," he hissed. He put Bobby before himself every time. "I love Bobby more than anything."

"More than anyone, too, including me," Danielle nearly yelled. "Except when you get one of these books. I really worry about this, Alan. Really. I've thought about putting Bobby in day school. I won't have him neglected just because you think a dirty sex book is more important than he is!"

Upset and hurt, Alan withdrew as she backed him against the door. "That's not true!" How could she attack him like this? "Don't you trust me at all?"



"You need to give up these adolescent fantasies, Alan. You're a father and a house-husband with a high school education who married the first woman who asked. You're not a playboy man of mystery and you never will be!" Danielle insisted. "You either straighten up, or I'm ending this marriage and taking Bobby with me."

Horried by her heartless words, Alan yanked open the back door and fled out into the yard. Danielle's strident voice followed him, ordering him to return. In the past, he always had, cowed like a pet dog, giving in to what she wanted regardless of what he wanted. But this time, scared to death by her threats, he headed off at a lope, barefoot in jeans and a T-shirt, across the back yard, through the neighbor's yard, and out to the alley, speeding up as he ran down the twisting lane leading away from Danielle. He had to get somewhere safe to think. He had to get someone to help.

The driver didn't see Alan run out of the alley and into the busy street. With a shrill scream, she hit her brakes, but the bumper still hit his knees from the side and knocked him down. His head smacking on the asphalt left him stunned as other cars stopped and people gathered around him. All the different voices made him dizzy. Alan passed out just as he heard the ambulance's siren.

\* \* \* \*

When he opened his eyes, he just as quickly closed them again. Then he carefully reopened one, sliding it up and down and from side to side, trying to see as much around him as possible. Then he carefully did the same with the other eye

before deeming it safe enough to move. No one was in the hospital room with him. Lucky. Maybe he could get out of this mess. He threw off the sheet and threw his legs over the edge, standing up ... and just as quickly sinking back down, dizzy and weak, cursing quietly. They must have drugged him. Something to keep him quiet and docile until they could find out who he was. He hadn't been carrying any ID for just that reason. That would slow them down.

Taking a deep breath, he steadied himself and walked to the bathroom, did his business and found some clothes. He was sure they weren't his, but they would serve until he could get more. He got dressed and slipped out of the room. He had to get out of here before she found out what had happened. He had to get on the road. First order of business was to get out of the suburbs. If she found him quickly, there'd be hell to pay. At least if he gave her a merry chase he might have a chance—a chance to live, a chance to be himself, a chance to do what he needed to do to make a difference in his life. Once outside, he hitched a ride into the city, riding in the back of a pickup truck driven by an older woman who chuckled and waved once he jumped out and flashed her a charming smile.

Now in an upper-class shopping district, he started evaluating his options. He was going to have to depend on the kindness of strangers, but that wasn't new. He'd found over the years that most people were still innately good and willing to help others. And even though he was penniless and homeless (at the moment), he certainly wasn't helpless. He knew he could go a ways on the power of his smile. He'd used it many times before. He watched traffic crawl down the high-

priced street, fancy stores down each side, measuring people in vehicles for their suitability. He passed on a couple of women who winked at him as he leaned casually against a light post. While they offered interesting diversions, he'd be in far more trouble accepting help from them than he was in already. Several high-powered businessmen drove by, not even noticing him, caught up in their own worlds. Finally he saw the perfect choice.

It was a car that exuded class, power, money, and sex—a Mercedes SL65 AMG, silver-blue and stunning. The sleek lines caught his eyes and held them, and he flushed with heat just looking at it. He grinned. You knew it was a high-class car when a guy got a hard-on just looking at it. The driver's side window was down to let in the sunshine and let out the curling smoke from a cigarette set casually between two long fingers sprinkled with blond hair.

Oh yeah.

He stood up and threaded through the stopped traffic. He paused at the driver's-side door and looked in, hand braced on the window sill, already talking before he got a good look. "I need your help."

Bright green eyes turned his way, measuring him through the window. Chiseled cheekbones and chin covered by carefully trimmed scruff and sun-bleached hair brushing the collar of a linen shirt. It was a mature face. It was a lady-killer's face. The driver raised an eyebrow and set the smoke between his pursed lips. He pulled out a tooled leather wallet and slid a folded bill between the other man's fingers, then tossed his wallet onto the console.

The man outside chuckled. "Thanks, but actually, I need a ride." Green eyes looked back his way and the man moved his chin, looking him up and down again, taking in the worn jeans, bare feet and T-shirt. His lips twitched. The hitcher grinned. "Looks like I can pay you," he said pertly, holding up the folded bill. The driver snorted and jerked his head to the passenger-side door.

Grinning, the man outside straightened and walked around the car, opening the door and climbing in. The door closed with a solid thunk, a sound like a vault door that gave you a feeling of weight, security, and quality. Traffic started moving again and the driver held his peace until they made the freeway; he smashed out the cigarette in the ash tray and sent the window rolling up with the touch of a button. "Where to, stranger?" a raspy, dark voice asked.

The brunette smiled, looking out his side window as the car moved along, eating up the asphalt. "New York City," he answered.

The driver's eyes shifted from the road to his passenger, giving him another long, lazy, amused tip-toe look. "I assume you're paying?" he drawled.

Long fingers held out the folded bill casually and the driver laughed, a full, deep sound that filled the car without echoing. "Keep it. I'm sure we'll come up with something." He turned the car toward Interstate 15. "I'm Jared. What your name?" he asked.

Crossing his legs at the ankle and kicking back comfortably, the passenger answered, "Terrence."

\* \* \* \*

He'd watched the spa for more than an hour now, studying the comings and goings, the ebb and flow at the front desk. It was easy to lurk around the huge aquariums and blend in with the opulent Indian-themed decor. No one gave him a second glance—they were all tourists, after all. His chance came when the perky attendant dug into her purse for her ringing cell phone and walked away from the podium.

Terrence slipped inside the outer door, walking casually, just another person visiting the spa ... until he spotted the Employees Only door and changed course to slip inside. He found someone and asked after Room 5—where his mark had gone. When questioned suspiciously, he revealed he was the target's boyfriend and wanted to surprise his lover. The romance of it and the folded hundred dollar bill made it happen. Ten minutes later, dressed in a spa employee's clothes, Terrence entered Room 5 to see the redheaded woman on her belly on the table, nude but for a towel over what looked to be a pert ass. Terrence smiled. Easy pickings.

An hour later he left the room, wiping his smirking lips and adjusting his belt. The smiling woman left behind slept contentedly on the chaise lounge, and he had a large handful of \$1,000 casino chips clicking in his pocket. With a modest smile, Terrence headed for the shops. Proper clothes were in order, especially if he was to find another mark, as well as keep Jared's attention. A hotel keycard was in his pocket along with the chips. He'd be using it soon. Jared was his meal ticket to New York, and if Terrence was lucky, it would be a hell of a ride.

A cut and style returned his messy hair to its sharp look, and a visit to the swank men's shop took care of clothes. Once well-dressed in elegant linen trousers and a neatly pressed shirt, Terrence left instructions for the rest of his purchases to be packed in a suitcase and sent to Suite 1204. He was headed there himself. He keyed into the executive suite and sauntered in to find the man who'd picked him up growling into a cell phone, a tumbler of liquor in his other hand. Terrence helped himself to a similar drink and walked across the carpet to the floor-to-ceiling windows. He hit the shades so he could see the glittering lights of the city spread out around him. Vegas was gorgeous from up here.

His eyes slid to Jared. The city wasn't the only gorgeous thing to look at.

With a final mutter, Jared snapped the phone closed and tossed it on the bar where it clattered and slid. He ignored it and stalked over to the window to stand near Terrence. They stood in silence for some time, drinking. Terrence waited. The other man would speak first. Curiosity would drive him to it. But Jared didn't speak; he merely stood there, apparently lost in thought. The brunette weighed his options. This man was obviously a cool customer, and that increased his own interest. It made Jared more mysterious. And that turned him on.

He watched Jared's reflection in the glass before deciding to go for the jugular. The sooner he could hook the other man, the better. "Thought about your payment?" Terrence asked idly, his voice a perfected low swath of velvet. He watched the reflection take a solid swallow of scotch.

"Transport and lodging to New York City—that's got a high price tag. Not to mention everything else you might need ... Although you seem to have done well for yourself with my seed money," Jared drawled.

Terrence grinned wolfishly. "Charm goes a long way." So does finding a susceptible mark—like the frustrated redheaded wife who'd been ignored by her husband all week and really needed an outlet to relax. He licked his lips again.

Jared closed in behind him. "Charm and gorgeous looks?" he asked, one hand settling on Terrence's hip.

The brunette's eyes flared. "Charm, gorgeous looks, and a light touch."

"What if I want a firm touch?" Jared murmured against his ear.

Terrence suppressed a shiver and watched Jared's reflection carefully, only to see the other man watching him as well. My, my. Jared was obviously a pro like himself. "You're driving—name your price."

Before he could draw another breath, his chest hit the window as Jared pushed him forward without warning. Both tumblers dropped to the carpet, scotch splattering and ice cubes scattering under their feet to be crunched.

"This is your one chance to cry foul," Jared breathed, his groin already bumping against Terrence's ass.

Spreading his long fingers out on the warm glass, Terrence pressed his cheek to the window and deliberately moaned provocatively. "You read my mind," he rasped. Gotcha, gorgeous.

Chuckling, the blond pulled Terrence's shirt-tails free of the pants and slid his hands in and around to grope warm skin. Then one hand dropped to cup the erection he found there. "Could tell this was what you were offering."

Terrence purred and pushed back against the other man, rubbing against the hard cock he could feel sliding against the crack of his ass. "How about an appetizer before dinner?" he asked throatily, ready to take back control of the situation.

"What do you have in mind?" Jared asked before nipping sharply at Terrence's neck.

Terrence slid a hand down the front of Jared's shirt and over his waistband, squeezing the sizeable cock buried under dark fabric. He tilted his head back to look up at Jared and raised an eyebrow in silent, suggestive commentary.

"Oh yeah," Jared encouraged, his hands gripping Terrence's shoulders and pushing him to his knees.

The brunette looked up at Jared to see him framed by the city lights. Oh hell yeah. Gorgeous. He made quick work of Jared's pants and pulled the straining cock free, reveling in Jared's muttered reactions. Not wasting time, he licked the thickened head, only to chuckle as Jared's skull banged back against the glass. He felt the other man's fingers sink into his hair, and Terrence flushed with another thrill. He was in charge—and when he sucked Jared's cock between his lips, the blond swore.

"Fuck yeah, spread those pretty lips," Jared growled, tipping his hips to start fucking Terrence's mouth. The younger man's confidence faltered as Jared pushed farther into his mouth. He inwardly flailed, a momentary flash of



panic, mostly because he couldn't figure out why it bothered him. He'd done this many times before.

Ignorant of Terrence's fear, Jared thrust harder, rasping more filthy encouragement as he moved his hand behind the other man's head and pulled it toward him as he thrust. Terrence's tongue laved his sensitive flesh and when Jared felt his throat tighten, he gasped and groaned, stilling for a bare moment before he pushed hard once, lodging into that slick passage and coming down Terrence's throat.

Despite his desire to prove to himself that he could handle it, the last push choked him. Terrence pulled his mouth off Jared's cock as he coughed violently. Still climaxing, Jared grabbed his spit-slick cock as it popped free of Terrence's mouth and pumped it hard, more come spurting across the brunette's face, catching and dripping. "Fuck," Terrence choked, trying to swallow the come, feeling the thick fluid coat his tongue and teeth. Licking his lips just spread it around.

Breathing hard, Jared looked down at him with sparkling eyes. He reached for Terrence's chin and tipped his head back. "Aren't you pretty?" he rasped.

The younger man frowned, trying to hide his inner confusion and fading fright behind a show of annoyed nonchalance. "Glad you think so," he muttered, climbing to his feet and wiping at the dots of come on his cheek.

Jared smiled and tucked himself away before reaching out to catch Terrence's arm. "C'mere," he growled playfully, pulling the slighter man close and palming the bulge in his pants. He used his other hand to wipe the speckles, streams,

and spots of come from Terrence's face. The brunette's smile started to return as he saw the fire undimmed in Jared's eyes. The older man chuckled. "There's that smile again."

Terrence rolled his eyes. "Like what you see?" He certainly hoped so; making this work hinged on it.

Jared hummed noncommittally as he unfastened Terrence's pants. "Long way to New York," he murmured. "You want to keep my attention, right?"

"Oh yeah," Terrence groaned as long fingers wrapped around his cock. He flexed his hips, shifting in Jared's hand, and leaned his head back as his eyes closed. God, it felt good. It felt like he hadn't had it in forever. Each time he swallowed he could taste the bitter tang of Jared on his tongue. It was the same come the blond man was using to ease the stroke on his cock. Terrence hissed as the hand tightened.

"Is this what you do for the money?" Jared asked silkily, pressing close against Terrence's side. His free hand was pulling open the buttoned shirt, exposing bare skin and taut nipples.

Terrence moaned as he snapped his hips against Jared's fist. "Sometimes," he ground out. One of many things.

"This time? If I'd kissed you before fucking your sweet mouth, would I have tasted another man there?" Jared's voice was low and darkly seductive.

The dark-haired man opened intensely gleaming eyes. "Not another man," he admitted, lips pulling into a smirk as he continued to work himself in and out of Jared's fist. "Found an easier way." Women were so much easier to seduce. Men usually had that macho image holding them back—although

that didn't keep them from enjoying a hell of a blow—and they wouldn't reciprocate. Jared didn't appear to have that hang-up.

Jared laughed lowly. "Yes, I bet you did. But now you've got my come on your tongue, my scent on your skin," he growled and slathered his tongue along a sharply defined cheekbone where sticky residue remained. "You're so pretty with my come on your lips. Lick them for me," he ordered.

Terrence's grin widened, and he obeyed, sliding his tongue lasciviously over his full lips. "I can still taste you," he teased, prodding at Jared's ego, getting a feel for the other man's dominant nature. He was sure it was stronger than he'd seen yet.

"Mmmm, tell you what ... you suck or lick or kiss or fuck whoever you want, Pretty. But when you come back to me, I'll wipe all their tastes away with my own," Jared promised, eyes glittering. "That's what I want in payment."

Terrence moaned, eyes shuttering as Jared's grip tightened and his fist moved faster. Fuck all, that's the kind of payment he could really get into. Get addicted to. Not to mention he wouldn't be the only one paying. Jared would ante up as well. The younger man's cock was hard enough to hammer nails. His hands gripped Jared's upper arms as his breathing hastened.

"You let your marks fuck you?" Jared asked in that deep, addictive voice.

Wondering when he'd lost control of the situation, Terrence thought frantically about how to reclaim it, but the burning in his groin distracted him. "No," he said firmly.

"Too bad. I'd have enjoyed wiping that memory away, too," the blond growled in his ears.

Just the thought of being under this man made Terrence tense so hard that his control snapped. He jerked in Jared's grasp and came with an explosive exhale, the hot slick fluid gathering on Jared's fingers and intensifying the sensation, drawing out the orgasm until Terrence bent over in huddled reaction. He was seeing stars as he dragged in labored breaths. Jesus Christ. It was like he hadn't gotten off in weeks. Jared moved his wet hand under Terrence's chin and tilted it up. Then he wiped his come-covered fingers over Terrence's lips, smearing it down his chin before pushing two digits into the brunette's mouth and deliberately cleaning them on his tongue.

"Another time," Jared promised darkly.

\* \* \* \*

Terrence lingered over his coffee, comfortably sprawled at a back table in the cafe just off the grand lobby. Jared had said he'd join him after a little shopping, so the brunette didn't feel rushed. He flipped through a newspaper idly, and a picture caught his eye. He blinked in surprise. It was a picture of him. Terrence swallowed hard. Missing, it said. Cash reward for information on whereabouts. "Shit," he muttered. Ads in newspapers—she stepped up the search, the bitch. She must really want him in her clutches. Of course she did, he reminded himself. He knew too much about how she operated.

He folded the newspaper over abruptly when the server came by with more coffee and offered a charming smile. Once she was gone, Terrence's smile melted away to be replaced with a cold look. He tossed a large bill on the table and left the restaurant. He didn't see the server return, bump the newspaper, and see the photo—soon she was notifying the manager.

After a stop at the desk to trade in a sizeable sum for a money order, Terrence mailed it and turned toward the lobby, where he ran into Jared. "Let's get out of here," he said gruffly.

The blond raised an eyebrow. "Sure," he said good-naturedly. He handed the valet ticket over to an employee, and they exited the hotel. The brunette looked around subtly before getting into the car. Just as Jared pulled the vehicle out of the lot, a couple of security officers walked outside to see the car leaving.

"In a hurry?" Jared asked as he merged onto the Interstate that would take them to Denver.

Terrence forced a smile. "Just ready for new pickings," he said casually, drawing a laugh from the other man.

"New pickings. New meal tickets, you mean."

"Aww, come on now, you know you're my only meal ticket. The others are just fun," Terrence said. And that was what he wanted. Freedom and fun, mostly.

"So you're fancy-free, huh?" Jared asked. "Left on a street in L.A. without shoes and money." His voice still reflected his amusement.

The brunette snorted. "Long story," he said.

"So give me the short version."

Terrence turned up his nose. "A woman, of course."

Jared laughed. "Of course," he said, glancing at the disgruntled man.

"Shit," Terrence muttered. "Men are easier to shake. Women want to sink their claws in."

"True," Jared agreed. "That's why I'm not married anymore."

"Got scars?"

Now Jared turned up his nose. "She was a gold-digger and I was young and impressionable."

"And horny."

"Hell yeah," Jared said with a grin.

Terrence snickered. "How old were you?" he asked, curious.

"When I got hooked or when I got loose?"

"Both?"

Jared chuckled. "I was twenty-two when my father said 'yes' to Sabrina's father. I was thirty-eight when I finally got loose by buying her father out of the business."

"Not many people can just up and drive across the country. You obviously have money, so it must be a lucrative business."

"You could say that."

"Hmmm. So how old are you now?" Terrence asked cagily.

Jared snorted and reached for his cigarettes. "What's it worth to you to know?"

Terrence laughed. "Sensitive about it?"

"How old are you, junior?"

Terrence laughed again. "I'm thirty-two," he admitted.

Jared harrumphed, holding the cigarette between his lips as he lit it and inhaled. "I'm forty-six," he muttered. He cracked open the window and blew the smoke out.

"Nothing wrong with forty-six in a man who's sexy as hell," Terrence said silkily.

A shadow of a smile haunted Jared's lips. "Flattery will get you to New York," he drawled.

Terrence grinned and shifted in his seat. He leaned over the console and nipped at Jared's ear. "Mmmm. Verbal flattery? Or physical flattery?"

The smile on the blond's face widened. "Oh, both, Pretty. Both," he murmured around the cigarette as he reached to grope between Terrence's legs. The brunette hummed in approval and licked into the curl of Jared's ear while he splayed a hand over the blond's chest and dragged it down to his belly. Eyes on the road, Jared's smile expanded into a shit-eating grin. "This is gonna be a great trip," he said around the cigarette as he moved his hand over Terrence's and pushed them down to his groin and over the growing bulge there.

Terrence kissed along Jared's neck and made a sound of agreement before tipping his head to lick at his throat. God, this man was pure sex—he didn't know how he'd ever get enough of Jared. Good thing he had plenty of time to sate himself. The blond purred quietly as he smoked his cigarette, shifting his hips slightly against the other man's petting. Terrence kept it low key, but the warmth still flushed through them both. The brunette slid his hand back up over Jared's

belly and started unbuttoning his shirt until he had access to his chest, and he leaned over to suck at a brown nipple until it tightened and he felt a slight tremor pass through the man driving.

"You've got a gorgeous fucking mouth," Jared said, flicking the cigarette butt out the window and closing it. He took the wheel and slid his right hand behind Terrence's head and cupped it, holding it close. "Use it some more."

The brunette's right hand slid up Jared's chest to pinch at his other nipple as he lifted his head to kiss at his shoulder and back up his neck. "You want me to suck you until you're hard?" Terrence whispered into his ear. "Until you're hot and hungry for my mouth? Until you have to pull over 'cause you can't see straight?" He smiled against Jared's neck when he heard a frustrated groan.

"Do it," Jared ordered, gripping Terrence's skull and pushing him down against his cloth-covered crotch.

"But you're driving," the brunette mock-objected, lips still dragging over Jared's skin.

"Do it or you'll be walking," Jared answered in the same sing-song voice—an empty threat, Terrence knew. He snickered, pulled the other man's shirttails from his waistband, and started unfastening his belt.

"Better hold on," he growled. "It's gonna be a hell of a ride."

Jared's hands tightened on the steering wheel as Terrence went down on him.

\* \* \* \*



"You picked this place out just for me, didn't you?" Terrence asked as they got out of the car. Nestled against the backdrop of the Rocky Mountains, the resort and spa was a gorgeous place.

"Just for you? I don't think so. I'll have you know I've stayed here many times," Jared answered as a valet approached to take the keys.

A man and woman dressed professionally hurried out the main door. "Mr. McCall, it's wonderful to have you at Omni Interlocken Resort again," the man whose name tag read 'Harry Willis, General Manager' said briskly. "Your usual suite is being prepared as we speak." Willis glanced to Terrence. "Will you need another suite, sir?"

"No, just the one, Harry," Jared said as he pulled out his cigarettes and a lighter.

Terrence raised an eyebrow, but he was too busy checking out the pretty blond assistant manager who was giving him discreet glances. Jared gave the manager several instructions before turning to Terrence.

"Come and get a key before you ... go enjoy yourself," he said with a small smile.

"Sure," Terrence said, a smile cracking. His walk through the front doors didn't mean he took his eyes off the blonde woman who watched his ass the whole way.

\* \* \* \*

"What time's she off work?"

Terrence looked up from his coffee. Jared had kicked back from the dining table, smoking over the remnants of their

grilled Patagonian salmon. The brunette didn't attempt to misunderstand. "Ten."

Jared's eyes twinkled. "She's not got money, you know."

"It's not always about money," Terrence said in mock defense.

Jared chuckled. "Not always."

"That's right," Terrence said primly. Jared took another drag off the cigarette, grinning. Terrence huffed. "If you must know, I want a spa pass, of course. That's where the money is."

Jared laughed, a short staccato bark. "You could buy a pass. Lots less trouble."

"Lots less fun, too," Terrence drawled.

Jared rolled his eyes. "I'm off to the spa myself. I'll see you later," he said, standing and dropping his napkin on the table. He walked off without saying anything else.

Terrence watched him until the other man was out of the suite, smiling the whole time. He'd picked a fine meal ticket this time. It made being on the run quite a bit more enjoyable.

His nose turned up. Being on the run. He hated that she drove him to it, especially since he'd had to leave something so precious behind. Bitch.

He sniffed and set down the coffee cup. Two days here, Jared had said, then they'd move on, continuing their drive across middle America, stopping at the most luxurious spots along the way. Comfort and distraction for Jared, opportunities and options for Terrence.

He dug into his bag to grab some condoms and changed his shirt before taking the elevator downstairs. The blonde woman from the front desk was standing at the hostess station, waiting for him. Terrence pushed away the swirling thoughts, gave her a charming smile, and headed in her direction.

Three hours later, he left the small guestroom, buttoning up his shirt, the spa pass safely in his pocket. She'd been fun, despite the fact he didn't like blondes. As he walked, he had to admit he'd found the exception in Jared. Handsome for a blond. So maybe it was blonde women he didn't care for, Terrence revised, stepping into the elevator and hitting a button before adjusting his pants.

When he got to the spa, all it took was a charming smile and a couple of compliments to get him Jared's location and a robe of his own to change into. Picking a private dressing room at random, Terrence stripped naked and pulled on the thick, white cotton robe, tying it loosely at the waist, letting the front gape to show off his chest. He wagged his brows at himself in the mirror before leaving.

When he got to the hot tub grotto, he pulled the stand around to display the "Closed" sign before he walked around the wall to see Jared lounging in the hot, bubbling water, steam floating around him from the rocks and mingling in the lush, cultivated greenery.

"Evening."

Jared's eyes opened lazily. He was leaning back in the tub, arms propped on the edge, pushing his shoulders up. His hair was wet around the edges, twisting it into little curls at the

base of his neck. He looked relaxed. "Evening," he drawled. "Done already?"

Terrence shrugged as he approached the edge of the tub. "Took a little longer than usual. I was enjoying myself."

Jared chuckled. "Well. That's the important thing, right?"

The brunette laughed lightly. "Sure. What's life if you don't enjoy it?" He deliberately let the robe fall from his shoulders to puddle on the stones.

Jared's eyes narrowed and reflected appreciation. "Good point," he rumbled. "Get over here."

Terrence smirked and climbed down the steps into the hot water. At the bottom it was barely waist-high on him, and he waded across the tub to Jared. The water dipped and sloshed about his groin, giving Jared little peeks of Terrence's cock through the bubbles.

Jared reached out his arms as Terrence got close and closed his hands on the other man's hips, drawing him close enough to pull him down. With a chuckle, Terrence straddled Jared's thighs and sat, scooting to press his cock right up against Jared's belly. The blond growled in appreciation.

They hadn't been shy their first night together in Vegas, and they certainly weren't now. They'd done just about everything but fuck each other, and the easy manner between them reflected that. Terrence enjoyed coming back to Jared after his own conquests. It was like validation. Jared seemed to enjoy it as well.

"So how was she?"

Jared's questions had started up the second night in Vegas.

"Not bad. Honest. Hot. Smelled good," Terrence said.

Jared hummed in acknowledgement. "Any surprises?"

Another question. At first Terrence had thought the other man was digging for details about his sexual experience. He'd finally decided Jared just liked hearing about it.

"Nah. Too white bread."

The blond chuckled. "How sad for you."

Terrence shrugged. "Was nice."

Jared calmed, looking up at Terrence. "So you want nice?" he murmured.

"Sometimes," Terrence admitted.

"Well. I think I might be able to oblige," Jared drawled, sliding his hands from Terrence's hips down to squeeze his ass. Terrence raised an eyebrow in question as his hands settled on Jared's shoulders.

"The water's washed her off you, for the most part," Jared said, scooping water up with one hand and sending it tumbling over Terrence's back and chest. "So I have clean territory to mark. Won't have intruders around to make me want to do it quickly."

"You make it sound like I belong to you," Terrence pointed out.

"You do. Until we get to New York."

Terrence nodded slowly. "Guess you'd better get to work then." He leaned close and licked from Jared's collarbone up to his ear. "You've got lots of territory to cover."

\* \* \* \*

Argosy Casino, Hotel & Spa was on the river in Kansas City, and as usual, Jared had the best room in the place. He didn't skimp. No need to, Terrence supposed, when you had so much money lying around.

But he had better—or at least more important—things to do with his own money.

He finished the latest money order, some of what he'd brought from Denver and some procured the night before, when they'd arrived. Casinos and spas were so easy to work in. Mailing it off, Terrence turned around and stopped in front of a television showing the financial report on CNN.

Jared stopped behind him. They'd just had breakfast. By mutual silent consent, they'd settled on breakfast together every day, if no other time except when Terrence returned to their room after his latest assignation.

"Market's up," Jared commented.

Terrence looked over his shoulder. "I don't know anything about it."

Jared raised an eyebrow. "It's a good way to turn a little money into a lot if you know what you're doing."

"And you know what you're doing," Terrence said knowingly.

Jared smiled like a shark, all confidence.

Terrence rolled his eyes. "So, O Great One, what's the secret?"

The older man pulled out his cigarettes and tapped one on the pack. "You want to learn to play the stock market?" he asked, as if making sure he understood.

"Sure. It's a game just like the rest, right?"

Jared smiled slowly. "It is," he agreed. "Come on, then, we'll need a computer with Internet."

They stayed in Kansas City longer than planned, not that they were on a timetable. Terrence was happy with the surroundings and found plenty of women and a few men to take gentle advantage of. Jared was happy to relax and kick back, and he was enjoying teaching Terrence to make more of his acquired money. It was amazingly companionable, broken by fits of passion and hot sexplay.

Jared never asked about the money orders, though Terrence was sure he knew about them. Mailing them off about every third day, Terrence also kept checking the local metro papers for more "Missing" ads and other notices. He hadn't found any and was mostly satisfied that she'd either given up for now or he'd really lost her. He suspected the former. When she dug in her teeth, she always hung on.

Which was another reason for the stock market lessons. He needed to take care of himself and a few other things, just in case she did get a hold of him again. That wouldn't be good. Not at all. It was very likely he wouldn't survive it.

The brunette now split his money, sending some back to the bank in L.A., and the rest going into his new online trading account. He got a thrill out of checking it each day and seeing the amount go up under Jared's expert tutelage.

And Jared enjoyed Terrence getting a thrill.

\* \* \* \*

He almost got caught in St. Louis.

They'd checked out of the Millennium Hotel downtown, and Terrence was addressing the envelope with the money order he'd picked up earlier in the day. The woman at the front desk peered at him oddly—it made the hairs on the back of his neck prickle. He watched her go back into the office and pick up the phone. She glanced right at him and dropped her eyes as she talked.

Pressing his lips together hard, Terrence shoved the letter into the mail slot and strode away, heading to the side door where Jared was waiting for the car. As soon as the Mercedes arrived, he climbed in and shut the door, just as a desk manager and plainclothes detective of some sort walked up and stopped Jared. They'd asked after "a man" and gave a description. Jared answered in the negative right away, not offering to open the car. They asked a few more questions and the detective headed down the sidewalk. The blond watched him go before climbing into the car and getting them moving in the drizzling rain.

"Do I even want to know?" he asked calmly.

Terrence was quiet for a long moment. "I didn't do anything wrong. They're just looking for me to take me back to L.A."

Jared glanced at him, eyes narrowed. "Why back to L.A.?"

"That's where she is."

"She?"

Terrence sighed. "The woman who thinks she's my wife."

"She thinks she's your wife?"



"I signed the divorce papers, but she's refused. It's tied up in court. I refuse to be tied down to her just because she's being an utter bitch," Terrence said.

Jared fell quiet. "All right. She wants you back that bad, huh? To hire a detective.... "Now the odd furtive looks Terrence usually made around public places and his occasional hurry to leave somewhere made sense to Jared. "She's had someone following you the whole time?"

"Maybe. She put ads in the newspapers of major cities, saying I'm missing," Terrence muttered.

"Who are you? You don't seem like you have a shitload of money." Jared asked. Terrence shrugged; it was too complex to explain. The blond pursed his lips and got out a cigarette. "So she won't let go."

"No," Terrence said quietly. "She won't." His voice was low and tinged with pain.

"That's why you're going to New York."

"Yes. Do you have any more questions?" Terrence asked impatiently, starting to feel edgy. His leg was already bouncing, betraying his nervous energy.

"Calm down, Pretty," Jared said soothingly, reaching to slide one hand slowly over Terrence's thigh. The brunette swallowed and stared out the window. "So if you're trying to stay away from her, why send the money?"

Terrence's chin turned to Jared. "You've noticed."

"Yeah. You've sent back over five hundred thousand dollars, by my count. That's not pocket change. Is that why she won't let you go? You owe her or her business money?"

"No." Terrence fell quiet again and leaned his head against the water-streaked window, feeling dizzy. The spells were happening more often. He wondered distractedly if he had low blood sugar. His head hurt and just thinking about her and the problem made him hurt all over. The glass was cool against his skin. Finally he sighed. "She has my son. The money's for him."

Jared's hands tightened on the wheel and he didn't speak as more miles flew by. "I'm sorry," he murmured.

Terrence closed his eyes. "Pull over, please," he requested abruptly.

Jared hit the brakes without question and got the car onto the shoulder with a minimum of fuss. Terrence fumbled with the seatbelt and got the door open, practically falling out before throwing up into the grass, the light rain falling on him, marking his linen jacket. He retched for a long minute before he could catch his breath, and when he looked up, Jared crouched next to him. The blond man offered him a handkerchief, and Terrence wiped his chin. Jared held out a bottle of water.

Terrence stayed there on his knees as he washed his mouth out and swallowed a little of the water. Jared watched him solemnly the whole time, not paying the rain any attention. "You okay?" he asked quietly. Terrence shook his head. The blond waited a few minutes, then stood and reached down to help Terrence up as well. "Let's go," the older man said.

\* \* \* \*

They stopped early, only about three hours later instead of their usual six or seven. Jared took an exit into downtown Louisville, Kentucky, and pulled up in front of a large historic building. He led Terrence into the lobby, and the younger man wandered around aimlessly, looking up at the painted ceilings, the fancy chandeliers and furniture, the carved marble columns. When he glanced back toward the check-in desk, he saw Jared waiting for him, just watching him.

"Where are we?" Terrence asked as they got in the elevator.

"This is the Brown Hotel, best in the city. It's an area landmark," Jared said.

"How did you find it?"

"I've stayed here before."

Terrence left off with the questions as Jared pushed the key into the slot for the club level. Once they got into the deluxe suite, the brunette wandered again before plopping down on the plush sofa. Their bags were delivered in a short time, and Jared locked the door. "C'mon," he said. "Up with you and into the shower."

The younger man raised an eyebrow. He thought about declining, but decided it sounded like a good idea. He'd been damp for most of the ride here after their stint out in the rain. He still felt queasy, too. He stood and stripped as he walked toward the bathroom. Jared followed, leaving his clothes on the floor as well, and once the water was running, he got in the shower behind Terrence and pulled the shower curtain shut.

Rolling his neck under the hot water, Terrence didn't look up although he knew Jared was there. The older man stepped closer and slid his hands along Terrence's upper arms, sluicing through the water and following it to the brunette's hips. He moved closer until their bodies touched, and Terrence slowly leaned his forehead on Jared's shoulder as the hot water rained down on both of them.

Jared nuzzled at his ear and extended his tongue to catch the droplets that trickled down Terrence's neck. The blond's hands slid up and down Terrence's back, roving from shoulder blades to the slight curve of his ass, where he squeezed. A light bite to the younger man's neck made Terrence arch against him, moaning softly. Jared shifted his weight to press his thigh between the other man's legs, and he pulled Terrence toward him and ground their bodies together.

They moved against one another as the shower steamed up, as their breathing quickened; it was silent but for the splattering water that bounced off their flushing bodies to the porcelain. Terrence slung his arm around Jared's shoulders and tipped his head back into the water as he twitched under the older man's firm touch. His free hand slid to circle Jared's erection, just as Jared's hand covered his own, and they surely and steadily jacked each other off, their gasps finally rivaling the shower's noise as they climaxed together, come dotting each other's bellies just like the water.

When Jared let go, Terrence turned and let the water wash their fluids away.

"So what about you?" Terrence asked later. He sprawled against Jared's back, practically on top of him. The older man

lay on his belly on the plush bed, his cheek pillowed on his folded hands.

"What about me?"

"Must be some business that you can just up and drive to New York without any notice."

Jared hummed a slight response. "My business is exports. To Europe, mostly," he murmured. "I don't really work anymore. I have people who do that. Now I just enjoy all my hard work."

"So now you live in L.A."

"Among other places."

"Must be nice," Terrence said before pressing a kiss to Jared's shoulder.

"Busted my ass and bossed people around for more than twenty years. I'm entitled."

Terrence chuckled. "So that's where all that dominance comes from."

"Dominance?" Jared raised an eyebrow. "I suppose so. Running an international company takes balls and ego."

"And you have them both."

Jared snorted. "So do you work? Or is this work? Traveling from place to place, seducing your way into disgusting amounts of money? You don't need the stock market, you do more than well enough on your own."

Terrence sniffed. "Nothing wrong with giving people a good time. It's not just fucking around. Sometimes there's no sex involved."

"Really."

"Bastard. I earn that money. And they enjoy it," Terrence insisted.

"Oh yes, we do," Jared agreed. The brunette slapped Jared's ass lightly, drawing a deep, lazy laugh.

"Hey, I'm the one in the position to know, right?"

Terrence grinned against Jared's shoulder blade. "Yeah," he admitted.

Jared was quiet for a little while as they just relaxed. "How'd you get into this?" he finally asked.

Terrence studied him for a long moment. "Rebellion," he said with a small smile.

"Hell of a rebellion," Jared commented.

"Well, I started small," Terrence said, his lips quirking into a smile.

Jared snaked one arm between them and smoothed his hand over Terrence's groin. "Somehow I doubt that."

Terrence's eyebrow jumped in surprise. "Really?"

Turning his chin, Jared looked over his face. "Really."

Terrence grinned and kissed Jared's cheek. "You say the sweetest things," he drawled.

Jared shook his head, though he smiled a little. "So why do you stick with it?"

Going quiet again, Terrence laid his cheek against Jared's upper arm. "It's fun, most of the time. Money's good. I'm not one for settling down. Tried it once, and look how that turned out."

"Except for your son?"

Terrence nodded and pressed his lips to Jared's arm.

"Tell me about him?" Jared asked.

"His name is Bobby," Terrence said softly, closing his eyes against the dull headache that was starting to throb again.

"He's five." He paused. "He's the best thing I've ever done."

Jared was quiet for a long minute. "Why not fight for him?"

Terrence didn't have an answer, and Jared didn't push. The silence settled around them, and the brunette finally rolled over and settled an arm over his pounding head.

"Headache again?" Jared murmured.

"Yeah."

Jared's tone was serious. "Tell me this. You're always careful, right?"

Terrence moved his arm and peered at Jared. "Careful?"

"When you're fucking someone," Jared clarified.

"All the time," Terrence confirmed.

"So you're clean," Jared said.

"Far as I know," Terrence said uneasily. "Why?"

Jared shook his head. "You need to take care of yourself. For Bobby. So you can take care of him when you get him back."

Terrence nodded slowly. "You're right."

"Of course I am," Jared said with a smirk, breaking the serious tone.

Terrence chuckled. "Of course you are." He rolled to his side and pulled Jared to him, pressing their lips together. He didn't want to talk anymore.

\* \* \* \*

A week later, Terrence left Atlantic City behind, fifty thousand dollars richer—even after mailing a money order for

the same amount—without stepping foot inside a casino. And even better, without seeing any detectives or police looking for him. He relaxed in Jared's swank car, kicked back and comfortable, reading a paperback thriller he'd found in a gift shop as they drove toward New York City. It was about a woman with both a vampire and a werewolf for lovers. Seemed a bit of a stretch to him, but it passed the time, and the copious sex wasn't bad, either.

After awhile on the parkway, he rubbed his hand idly over his groin when a low chuckle broke his concentration. The brunette glanced up to see Jared grinning.

"Must be some book," Jared commented, leering at the lump in Terrence's pants.

Terrence grinned and cupped himself. "Not bad," he said, stroking his erection.

"Read me some, then," Jared said. He held a lit cigarette in his left hand and the window was cracked open to let out the smoke. His other hand was slung comfortably over the wheel.

"May not be your thing," Terrence said.

"If it's getting that kind of reaction out of you, it's got to be worth something."

"It's a werewolf and a vampire fucking their woman. At the same time," Terrence explained.

Jared's tongue slid along his lower lip and he shifted in his seat. He flicked the cigarette out the window and closed the glass, then unfastened his seatbelt. Next went his belt, then his fly. Terrence grinned as the zipper parted, revealing the black silk underneath. "Just getting comfortable," Jared said with a shrug.



"Of course," Terrence answered. He flipped back a page and restarted the scene, reading aloud this time.

After a page, they both started stroking themselves. Another page and Terrence undid his pants. Another two pages, and two stiff cocks slid slowly through clutching fingers. Terrence's voice got thicker and huskier as he read the scene that got kinkier. Glancing ahead, he had to pause to groan and grip himself hard. Jared chuckled.

"You've not seen what's coming," the younger man warned.

Jared raised an eyebrow, a dare in his eyes. His cock stood straight up from his lap, rapping against the steering wheel.

Terrence kept reading. The breathing in the car got harsher as the scene got steamier. Then Jared swore and pulled over. The parkway through the state forests was pretty dead and trucks weren't allowed on the road, so it was moderately safe. He shut off the car, kicked the steering wheel up, and laid his seat back as he began pumping himself in earnest. The brunette's voice stuttered as he watched Jared, and he paused when the other man spoke.

"Can you see it?" Jared rasped.

"See it?" Terrence echoed as his fist kept moving.

"Yeah. See it. You on your back. She'd be riding you like a banshee, your hands gripping her hips. Then I kneel behind her and push her down on top of you, smashing her full, ripe tits against you before I push into her from behind..." Jared described, his eyes shut.

Terrence shivered, and his pumping sped as his own eyes fluttered shut.

When he reopened them, it was happening.

Jared's ritzy New York City hotel room ... Terrence on his back, propped against several thick pillows on the luxurious bed ... the bored, rich wife—willingly wined, dined, and seduced—bouncing atop him. Jared pushed her down on Terrence, changing the angle as she rode the brunette's cock.

Terrence slid his arms around her, listening to her grunts and whines of pleasure as he watched Jared fingering her. The blond murmured to her and pulled her up again, sliding one hand over her lush hip and gripping it. Terrence's cock was totally buried in her, and Jared teased and pinched her clit until she came screaming.

"Oh fuck..." Terrence moaned as he felt her hot liquid spill and trickle around his cock, draining down to the base and soaking the springy, dark hair there. Jared pushed her down on him again, bending Terrence's erection up inside her until she was even tighter around him. It made his cock pulse hotly, and the brunette gasped at the feel of it. He pried open his eyes to look at Jared, who smirked as he moved behind her. He pushed down on her lower back with one hand, and Terrence could see the blond's hard cockhead sliding up and down in her cleft. Without warning, Jared pushed forward, and Terrence heard the woman gasp as she clutched at him.

Jared's head fell back as he groaned, and Terrence joined him. The pressure pinning Terrence's cock inside her was unbelievable. And when Jared slid farther inside her, Terrence could feel the length of him rubbing against his own cock despite the thin flesh separating them. The woman moaned continuously, almost sounding like she was in pain, but the

dirty words pouring out of her patrician lips begged Jared to fuck her hard. She begged Terrence to fuck her, too. When they both started moving, she screamed for more.

Letting her arch up a bit, Jared held her hips tight as he started fucking her in earnest just as Terrence started to thrust up into her soppy pussy. The brunette would have sworn he'd never felt anything like it. He knew that wasn't true; there wasn't anything he hadn't done except be fucked. But still ... The woman's shrill squeal interrupted his thoughts and suddenly the tightening clamp around his cock had his complete attention.

Terrence carefully pulled one knee up, then the other, to give himself the leverage to push up into her as Jared pulled out. Then Jared thrust back into her, changed his rhythm, and they both mercilessly pounded into her at the same time. Terrence slid his fingers through the sweat and come on his belly to rub at her clit, and she wailed when her body gripped around him dangerously.

"Jared," he ground out.

The other man's thrusts quickened as he slammed his hips against her ass. "Yeah—yeah, do it."

Terrence reached up to twist one of her nipples and rolled her clit between his finger and thumb. She shrieked over and over as he rubbed right on her button until she came, her eyes glazing in ecstasy. And then he climaxed, his thighs straining as he jerked up into her, filling the condom. Jared shook them both as he fucked himself into orgasm, not stopping his pounding thrusts until he yanked himself out of her, ripped off the condom and came in spurts all over her.

The spunk splattered over her ass and back, and Jared knelt up with a groan, pumping himself hard enough to force out enough to spurt over her shoulder and streak Terrence's cheek. The sight must have thrilled him, because the blond choked on a breath and came again, his cock an angry red as it expelled three more heavy jerks of come. Gasping for breath, Jared slapped his cock on her ass several times.

Terrence's eyes fell shut as he floated. He was still hard inside her, though he'd come so strongly he was dizzy and light-headed. The fire-hot desire inside him—not necessarily for her—refused to die. Watching Jared come had done the trick.

The blond man shifted and pulled her off him, seeing Terrence's cock still standing proud. He chuckled and rolled her to her back where she moaned, nearly insensible. With one hand he pulled Terrence up and urged him to his knees and between her legs.

"Fuck her ass, Terrence," Jared drawled as he stripped off the condom on the brunette and replaced it. "It's tight and hot."

She was already begging when Terrence sank balls-deep into her, and after a long moment of savoring how much tighter her ass was than her pussy, he spread her legs and pushed her further up onto her shoulders. He leaned down on her thighs as he began to fuck her into the mattress.

Then he felt it: Jared's long, thick fingers sliding down his back and into his cleft. They were cool and slick with lube, and Terrence couldn't even think to object as Jared prodded and teased before sinking inside the tight hole just a bit. His

fingers pushed in and pulled out, pushed in and pulled out and then sank deeper. Push, pull, and repeat. Terrence gasped as he felt the stretch when one finger sank deep, and he slid slowly in and out of the woman, ignoring her moans for more. She had three of her own fingers in her pussy, and her other palm rubbed over her clit.

Terrence's eyes rolled back into his head as he settled into a rhythm while fucking her ass. The first orgasm meant he could go longer this time, and he hissed as more width pressed into his own ass. He could feel the heat of Jared's breath on the back of his neck. Then more pushed into him, and he grunted when he felt some pain. He slapped into her harder, trying to make up for it as hot tingles of discomfort spread out from his stretching hole. Just when he thought he'd have to say something, Jared twisted his fingers and spread them—Terrence yelled in surprise as skin-melting pleasure flashed inside him. Then again, and again, until the brunette was panting and mewling.

"I'm gonna fuck you blind, Terrence," Jared growled against his ear. "I'm gonna fuck you boneless," he taunted. "I've wanted it ever since I laid eyes on you. And now I'm gonna fuck you while you scream for more."

Terrence's thrusts faltered as his belly clutched with fear, but in an instant the swamping heat and pleasure surrounding his cock buried it—then he saw stars again as Jared screwed his fingers further into him. The woman shifted under him as she gasped and came again with a wail. Her fingers continued to slide in and out of herself as his cock reamed her ass.

"Do it," Terrence said, finding the courage somewhere in the fireworks that exploded behind his eyes each time Jared rubbed him inside. And Jared didn't wait—he pushed in hard, and Terrence did scream as he pounded into her, riding the momentum, his ass on fire. The blinding pain mixed with volcanic pleasure into a demented cocktail of sex.

He found he didn't have to flex his hips anymore; Jared's long, steady movements pushed him into her, his hands pulled Terrence's hips back. The blond's erection was like a steel bar ramming up inside him, and Terrence felt crazily balanced between the heaven of her clutching ass and the hell of Jared's driving cock.

Then he saw stars again, and they were all yelling, the sounds echoing off the richly textured walls. With a sobbing squeal, she came one last time, dry now as she quaked, and her eyes rolled back into her head as she passed out. Jared pushed Terrence down on top of her and fucked him energetically, hitting his prostate most of the time until the brunette yelled and jerked into orgasm. His virgin-tight ass clamped down on Jared, who bellowed and clutched at the man under him.

"Turn your chin and look at me," Jared ordered as he grunted through more thrusts.

Mindless and aching, Terrence obeyed. Jared pulled out of his ass and stripped off the condom, cock already jerking. The milky streams streaked Terrence's back, and Jared climbed over the brunette's legs to pump out his come onto the younger man's face and lips. The blond's eyes turned vacant as he jerked two more times, and he let go of his cock. It

landed against Terrence's shoulder, and Jared reached with a shaking hand to smear his spunk over the dark-haired man's lips.

"Now lick it up," Jared rasped. He groaned and clutched at his cock as Terrence's red tongue slid out to taste the other man's come. Driven over the edge, Jared shuffled up the bed and pressed his fingers between the brunette's lips, opening his mouth so he could shove his come-covered, half-hard cock between them.

"Suck me clean," the blond breathed, cursing under his breath when Terrence obeyed. "Yeah..." Jared dragged out. "Suck me and swallow it down, Pretty," he murmured, rolling his hips. After a bit of that, he pulled himself free, his cock twitching. He climbed off the bed before leaning over to pull Terrence bodily out of the woman, giving Terrence just enough time to strip off the used condom before he dragged him off the bed and out of the room, across the suite, and into the other bedroom. Kicking the door shut behind them, he pushed Terrence onto the cool duvet, climbed up next to him, and shoved his cock back between Terrence's lips.

Terrence didn't fight. He'd learned weeks ago that this was how Jared got off, by ordering him around, especially during sex. He didn't mind so much, especially considering said sex was always mind-blowing. But tonight ... his head spun, and his ass ached, and he felt hollow. Hollow both in his ass and his chest. And he reveled in it.

So he sucked. This was their last night, after all. They were in New York City now, and tomorrow Terrence would be gone, likely before Jared even woke up. That was his habit. A

dark, uneasy feeling filled the brunette, but Jared's voice brought his attention back to the now.

"No one's ever affected me like this," Jared said. "No one's ever made me stay this hard. I can't get enough of you—and now that I've had your ass, I know I'm gonna want it again and again."

Terrence flushed with some twisted sense of pride. No one had ever said they wanted him—truly wanted him. Yeah, he made his marks by trading on people wanting him for sex. But the thought jarred him, and he shook his head a bit to clear it. Those memories were marred. He remembered; she always said how bad he was in bed. That he was happy to just lay there while she fucked herself on his embarrassingly small penis. Terrence twitched in shame at the memory ... Memory? The feel of Jared's re-hardened erection pulling out of his mouth surprised him and he opened his eyes. Jared was talking again.

"Gorgeous eyes, gorgeous face, gorgeous body. Absolutely gorgeous cock that I want to suck over and over, and now this unbelievably gorgeous ass ... I'm gonna have to fuck it again, and I'm gonna leave you with a hell of a memory."

Shivering as Jared moved off him, Terrence straightened his back against the bed. Jared turned back to him and slid his hand through the come clinging to Terrence's belly before slicking it onto his bared cock, groaning as he slowly masturbated, working to get his cock hard yet again.

"Can't remember the last time I was hard three times in one night," Jared growling, hitching his hips into his fist. "I'm so hooked on you. You're like a damn drug. I'm gonna ream



your ass so long and hard you'll think my name is branded inside you."

Terrence's eyes rolled back into his head and he bit his lip on a whimper. He knew he'd had an important thought just a bit ago, but Jared's hands kept wiping it away.

"You know how we had that discussion about being clean?" Jared growled as he moved between Terrence's knees.

"Yeah," Terrence answered raggedly.

"I'm fucking you this time without a condom. I want to feel you and just you. I want you to feel me. I want you to feel my hot come leaking out of your ass when I'm done. I want to watch it drip out of your red, stretched hole and know that I'm the only one who's had you that way."

Terrence stared at him—stared at the fierce possessiveness in Jared's eyes, at Jared's hands curled into fists, at Jared's cock standing up hard as ever, at the lean, muscular lines of Jared's sexy-as-sin body. Then he met those glittering green eyes with his own. "The only one who ever will," he rasped.

The blond's eyes darkened and dilated as intense passion flashed in them. There, kneeling back on his heels between Terrence's sprawled thighs, Jared reached for his shoulders and pulled the brunette up. Terrence blinked in surprise as their chests brushed, their faces mere inches apart. "Jared?" he asked uncertainly. Then Jared shocked him by lifting both hands to clasp Terrence's face gently and kiss him.

The younger man shuddered, the mix of passion and tenderness throwing him so far off balance he didn't know what to do. Jared just kept kissing him, and finally the blond

spoke in a throbbing voice. "Fuck, how I've wanted you. Wanted you for my own, knowing I couldn't have you. If all I get is this, I'm going to make the best of it."

When Jared's hands loosened, Terrence leaned back and looked up into Jared's eyes. He knew he felt the same way. He took Jared's hand and guided them both down onto the bed, where Jared captured his lips again.

\* \* \* \*

Sliding the envelope into the outgoing mail chute, Terrence picked his garment bag up and slung it over his shoulder. Things to see, people to do, he reminded himself sharply. Time to move on.

Waking up that morning had reminded him that those were his safest bets. He'd awakened in Jared's arms, and he almost hadn't been able to make himself get up at all. The terrible impulse sent him running.

So now, ready to make his way out of the hotel, Terrence paused long enough to pick up a hotel phone, planning to make a reservation at another place so he could continue with business as usual. Never mind the fact that he felt nothing like usual.

"Terrence, wait."

His fears returned in a rush as he put down the phone receiver and turned to watch Jared pad down the stairs, barefoot, wearing jeans and a white undershirt. He'd never looked so good.

"I'm glad I caught you," Jared said.

"How did you..."

"I saw you'd taken your bag. I just wanted to ask you something before you went, so I threw on some clothes and came down here. I figured you'd be mailing one of those checks," Jared said.

Terrence frowned. His heart was beating so hard it was giving him a terrible headache. "I really don't have..."

"You have time for this," Jared insisted, moving two more steps to grasp Terrence's upper arms gently. Oh, his voice, that gorgeous, husky, wrap-around-you-like-velvet voice. "I need to ask you..."

"Alan!"

Terrence froze where he stood with Jared's hands on his upper arms. He raised frightened eyes to the other man, eyes that didn't belong to him.

"Terrence?" Jared asked, an odd inflection of worry in his voice.

A blonde woman stalked up, grabbed Terrence's arm and yanked him around. When he turned, he saw her and three police officers. "Alan?" the woman said again stridently. "What the hell do you think you're doing?"

The room began to swim, and he wobbled as intense pain exploded behind his eyes. Terrence heard Jared's voice call his name from far away as he collapsed into Jared's arms on his way to the floor.

\* \* \* \*

He'd been there a couple of days now, resting, tolerating tests to make sure his head wasn't even more cracked.

Alan sighed and turned his chin to look out the window. At least his head didn't hurt anymore. Just his heart.

It had taken the better part of those two days for his last couple of weeks to all come back. For him to remember Terrence. At first, he was horrified and ashamed. Then surprised he'd found it in himself to do all those things. Slowly, some odd sense of pride began to grow. Not in what he'd done exactly, but that he'd found the strength inside—that Terrence had found a strength inside that Alan never knew existed.

After a quiet day of thinking—quiet because the doctors decreed no visitors, and Alan asserted that should include Danielle (hadn't that caused a squawk!)—he didn't feel like two people anymore. Alan thought he might be able to live with Terrence sticking around. After all, he owed Terrence some thanks. Alan thought it was quite funny that he'd gotten more sexual experience in the last two weeks than in the entirety of his life. Wouldn't Danielle love that? And just like every other time he'd thought about the last few weeks, he thought about Jared.

Jared.

Alan sighed. How he'd taken advantage of him. Granted, Jared let him and evidently enjoyed it. But Alan knew full well what Terrence had been thinking at first—to take all he could get and enjoy every bit of it.

But in the end, Terrence ... Alan ... left. He ran. Alan had been taking over, and the intimacy of the night spent in Jared's arms frightened both the men inside Alan's head. Alan remembered it so clearly.

They'd curled against each other after the slow, steamy lovemaking—that was all he could think to call it—languidly kissing and touching. Being close. Not thinking. Just feeling. And Terrence had thought very clearly: I would stay with him if he asked me to. Stay and never leave. Stay and never stray.

For Terrence, it was a very sobering thought. Alan's fears weren't far behind.

In the mussed bed, Jared had sighed and slid one hand along Terrence's sweat-slick skin. They hadn't spoken, because there was nothing to say. There was just being together, finally together. All of it had come full circle and clicked into place. The casual friendship that warmed to companionship; the teasing and prodding and making fun that grew into affection before morphing into possessive wanting; the mutual sexual satisfaction that burned its way into a thrilling show of fireworks before exploding into serious, addictive passion.

Terrence—Alan—had met the embodiment of his dreams.

He'd met him and had the pleasure of his company and his body, and because he'd been afraid, he'd lost him. By running away, he'd let Danielle catch him and shatter the illusions he'd escaped into.

Alan would have given almost anything to be back in that bed and in Jared's arms. But he wasn't the man Jared had made love to. He wasn't the man who'd slept and charmed his way across the country, making hundreds of thousands of dollars along the way. He just wasn't that man.

Was he?

A knock on the door interrupted his thoughts and he looked up. He blinked in surprise—had he summoned Jared from his thoughts?

"Hey," Jared greeted quietly as he shut the door behind him and walked over to the bed.

"Hi," Alan said weakly.

Jared stopped at the bedside. "How are you doing?" he asked, setting one hand on the railing.

"Head doesn't hurt any more," Alan offered.

Jared nodded. "That's good. But how are you doing?"

Alan met green eyes with his own, wondering how he'd ever had the courage to pick up this man. "I'm okay. Getting better."

"I'm glad."

It was awkward, and Alan fought the urge to squirm under Jared's eyes. "I'm sorry," Alan said.

"What for?" Jared asked.

"For ... taking advantage. For dragging you across the country."

Jared chuckled, a warm, velvety sound that Alan remembered distinctly, particularly how it felt when he laid against Jared's chest when he did that. "You hardly were the only one taking advantage," Jared said. "I certainly did my share."

Alan actually blushed. But instead of laughing, Jared leaned over and stroked Alan's cheek. "You're charming," the older man said. "I like you like this, too."

The brunette looked up at him. "I'm married," he blurted.

"I know," Jared said easily, fingers still moving on Alan's skin.

Alan tipped his chin down. "I'm..."

"Don't say you're sorry again. Alan. It's Alan, right?" Jared's voice had turned gentle, not its usual confident burr or cocky snap. It was comforting.

"Yeah," Alan confirmed.

Jared nodded slowly and stepped back when Alan wouldn't look up at him. "I just wanted to make sure you were okay and give this to you." He reached inside his suit jacket, pulled out an envelope, and offered it to Alan.

"What's this?"

"It's for you. Open it later. You'll know what it's for. I just wanted to thank you—I had a great time," Jared said seriously.

Alan winced and glanced up at the blond, which just made his chest hurt. Jared was heart-breakingly handsome. "You can't really thank who you need to."

"I just did."

Alan looked away, unable to face the man with whom he'd been so intimate. It was like some sort of dream, one he wanted to go back to so, so badly. Were he alone, he thought he'd cry from the pain of it. Despite the incredible charade and his wild behavior when he was Terrence, Alan remembered that he'd been happy. So happy. For the first time he could ever remember. Happy. With this man.

"I'm not Terrence," Alan said quietly, regretfully, painfully. "It was all ... a dream."

Jared watched him for a long moment. "There's more of Terrence in you than you think."

The door snapped open, and Danielle cleared her throat impatiently. Alan looked over at her, his face blank. He didn't want her in here; he didn't want her at all. Not now that he knew he could make it on his own. He deserved more. Alan shifted his eyes back to Jared.

The blond gave him a ghost of a smile, leaned over purposefully and pressed the lightest of kisses to the corner of Alan's mouth. "Goodbye, Pretty," he murmured. He left the room, walking past Danielle confidently, and she slammed the door shut behind him.

"Alan, I don't know what you've been up to, but it's obviously not good," she accused.

Alan drew a slow, easy breath. "What do you want, Danielle?"

"What the hell were you thinking? Running off like that and then running away across the country with that ... man?" she stormed.

"Jared," he said.

Danielle pulled up straight. "What?"

"Jared. His name is Jared."

"I don't care if his name is Donald Trump. You've got no business going across the country fucking around with some kind of playboy! You've got responsibilities, like I've said over and over." She sat down hard in the chair next to the bed.

Alan didn't bother to answer her. It would just make her more angry.



"This was just too much, Alan. I've contacted a lawyer. I can't let you risk Bobby like this," she stated flatly.

Tipping his head, Alan stared at her. His stomach gripped with fear, but he had to do this. He had to try. His own self-worth and self-respect was at stake. "How?"

"What do you mean, how?" Danielle snapped.

"How did my being gone risk Bobby?" Alan asked as calmly as he could.

His wife looked at him blankly before spluttering. "Alan, you abandoned him!"

"No, I didn't. He was with his mother."

"That's not the point!"

"So how did it risk him? Tell me, Danielle? Did it risk his well-being? Was he in any danger? Or was it just that you were put out because you had to take care of him for a change?" Alan said.

"How dare you!" Danielle stood and walked madly around the room, her heels clacking. "I have a job, an important job! And it's your job to take care of Bobby!"

"Everyone gets vacation time, Danielle," Alan said in a logical voice. It was much clearer now how much she'd taken advantage of him, how unrealistic she was. "Even me."

Her face turned dark red. "You can't do this! It's totally childish and irresponsible and..."

Alan interrupted her. "You know how many times you've told me that, Danielle? That and other things? Over and over since high school. That I'm not good enough for anything else. That I can't hold a job. That I can barely look after my son. Some people call that emotional abuse," he said flatly.

Danielle just stared at him. Under her eyes, Alan felt the pressure of his immediate decision. Could he go back home with Danielle to have life settle as it was before? Could it even be how it was before, with his new experiences and new awareness?

Or could he meld himself and Terrence together, to be his own man and make his way? To support himself and have what he wanted by the work of his own hands? Could he do it alone?

Yes. He'd proven it. Now he just had to prove it to Danielle ... or finish their debacle of a marriage once and for all. He just had to figure out how to keep Bobby with him.

Alan took a deep breath, summoning everything of Terrence inside him. "I've called a lawyer, too, Danielle. You'll have the papers tomorrow."

\* \* \* \*

Watching Bobby on the playground equipment, Alan grinned and waved at his son. The smile was new. He'd smiled so rarely before he'd run off. Now it came more naturally. Terrence had smiled without reservation. The echo of him inside Alan's head thought it wasn't a bad idea for Alan to try, too.

He sat on the park bench with his laptop, using the nearby café's wireless access, and watched Bobby while checking his investments. That was something else Jared taught him that he'd remembered after he got his head back on straight. With all the money he'd obtained—legally—on his trip cross-country, multiplied by the stock market trades, he'd had more

than enough to get well settled with Bobby in Denver, a far cry from the sunny California climate.

After sorting through Danielle's mess of accusations and seeing the proof of the money Alan provided for Bobby's support, a judge granted Alan's request for a divorce. In a snit and determined to punish Alan, Danielle actually signed away her rights to keep Bobby, although she'd reserved the choice to visit on holidays. Some of the things Bobby told him and the lawyer about how she'd treated him while Alan was gone still made him furious. Nothing really bad, but the emotional neglect had been clear. She didn't have time for Bobby the way she worked. She thought Alan would be lost without her. But Alan had already known he didn't want a life with her.

Now he had plenty of money, plenty of time. He had a new house in a gorgeous, upscale neighborhood, a new SUV, new clothes, new outlook ... a new life. All bought and paid for with that money and his own ingenuity.

Alan spent some time during the divorce proceedings talking to his lawyer about how he "earned" the money. Gifts and payment for services, mostly, and the lawyer hadn't asked for details. The check Jared left with him in the hospital went straight into a trust fund for Bobby with full approval from the judge. Danielle couldn't touch it. Alan had no idea what his son would do with a million dollars, but he was sure Bobby would enjoy it. He thought Jared would approve.

As for himself, he enrolled in an undergrad program in finance at the University of Denver and really enjoyed it. He

never thought he would do well in college, but he was proving himself wrong.

He made friends, a circle of men and women from the university, from the neighborhood, from Bobby's school. They visited a lot, had barbecues, watched sports, arranged play dates for the kids, and saw movies. It was more socializing than he'd done in his entire life. There were other mothers who volunteered to baby sit, other fathers who invited him to hang out, other students who asked him to study with them.

Alan discovered that having people in his life was a wonderful thing. He'd never had that before. It was the part of him that was Terrence that made it happen. He introduced himself to a fellow student one time, and after that it got easier. He was much more outgoing now. His friends called him an extrovert, and he just laughed.

Last week he'd seen the new Terrence Whitehead novel in Barnes & Noble. Bobby brought it to him. Alan just smiled.

It stayed in the bookstore, while *Thomas the Tank Engine* went home with them.

Replacing the laptop in his backpack, Alan stood and shaded his eyes with one hand as he looked out over the playground. "Let's go, champ," he called out, slinging his backpack over one shoulder. Bobby came running pell-mell, and Alan smiled again, catching the boy up in his arms and spinning him around to the sound of happy giggles. "How about a snack when we get home?" Alan asked as he turned toward the entrance of the park. They'd walked the six blocks from the house; this park and the small independent café had

been the deciding factors to buy in the semi-rural neighborhood he chose.

"Yeah! How about some M&Ms?" Bobby chirped from where he was slung over Alan's shoulder, waving goodbye to the other kids.

"How about a popsicle?" Alan countered.

"Okay," Bobby agreed. "A purple one!"

"A purple one," Alan agreed. He walked out of the park, veering right onto the sidewalk with a whistle.

"Wow! What a cool car!"

"A cool car? Where?" Alan asked, pulling playfully on Bobby's ankle.

"I'm looking at it."

Alan paused and turned to look, and he blinked several times. It was a Mercedes. A stunning, silver blue Mercedes.

"Dad! I wanna see the car!"

Alan let Bobby down carefully, and as soon as he let go, the boy ran off toward it. "Bobby! Don't touch!" he called out as he hurried after the boy. His son got to the driver's side window and knocked before Alan could grab his hand.

After a moment, the window slid down soundlessly. "Hey, mister, nice car!" Bobby piped. Alan stared.

Jared smiled, looking from the little boy up to his father. "Thanks, I like it." He tilted his head up to meet Alan's eyes.

"Can we have a ride?" the little boy asked eagerly.

Alan startled and looked down at his son. "Bobby, that's rude," he chastised, catching the boy's small hand in his own as his eyes flew right back to Jared.

"You certainly may have a ride," the blond man answered smoothly. He opened the door and climbed out. "Go ahead," he said to Bobby, gesturing into the vehicle as he pocketed the keys. "How about you drive while I talk to your dad?"

"Wow! Cool! Awesome!" Bobby scrambled into the driver's seat, and Jared closed the door. Little engine rumbling sounds soon came out the window.

"Hi," Jared said.

Alan nervously licked his lower lip. "Hi," he answered.

Jared nodded slowly. "You look great."

"So do you," Alan said honestly.

"Not bad for a man who's forty-seven, you think?"

"Forty-seven?" Alan asked.

"Yeah. Today's my birthday."

"Happy birthday," came out weakly.

"I started thinking about what I wanted for my birthday a month ago. It didn't take but a moment to decide. But finding it took quite a bit longer," Jared said, looking at the other man intently.

Alan tapped some of that new inner courage. "Did you have any luck?"

Jared smiled. "Yeah," he said quietly. "I found you."

Alan couldn't hear anything but the pounding of his heart. "You found me."

"Yeah," Jared said, stepping close enough to put a hand on each of Alan's hips.

"You want ... me?"

"Yeah," Jared said, voice huskier. "I'm hooked, and good. Not to mention horny."

Choking on a soft laugh, Alan couldn't help but smile brilliantly. "Hooked, huh? What if you want loose?"

Jared shook his head. "Don't want loose. Not now. Not ever."

Alan searched the blond's face. "You're getting a package deal," he warned.

"Hell, I'm already letting him drive my car. How much more do you want?" Jared retorted.

Laughing, Alan tipped his head so he could fit his lips against Jared's as they closed their arms around each other.

"Hey, who are you, and why are you kissing my Dad?" Bobby asked from where he was hanging out the window.

Alan pulled back from Jared's kiss to look at his son. "This is Jared. He ... he's coming home with us. He makes me happy."

"Cool!" Bobby answered with a young child's innocence.

"Cool," Jared agreed, his eyes sparkling. "I understand you have a new house," he said to Alan.

"Yeah!" Bobby rushed to explain. "It's cool and we're on a mountain and we have a back yard with a pond and I have a bike on the driveway!"

"Does it have a guest room?" Jared asked.

"Two," Bobby answered importantly as Alan said, "Doesn't matter."

"Why not?" Jared asked.

"Cause there's plenty of space in my room," Alan said, curling his fingers through Jared's. "That sound okay to you?"

"Sounds great, Pretty," Jared said in that velvet voice Alan recognized as pleased. They both turned to look into the car,

where Bobby sat at the wheel with Jared's sunglasses perched on his nose—they were much too large for his face.

"Who are you supposed to be, Bobby?" Alan asked, hand tightening around Jared's. He sure wasn't letting go anytime soon. Or ever.

"I'm Terrence Whitehead, Man of Mystery!"

Jared snickered. "Like father, like son?" he asked, nuzzling Alan's temple.

The brunette happily accepted the gesture of affection by lightly bumping his cheekbone against Jared's lips. "Jesus. I hope not; one of us is enough. Let's go home," Alan answered.

The doors to the Mercedes shut solidly, the engine purred, and they drove away to a happy ending. There was surely a sequel on the horizon.



*Man of Mystery*  
*by Madeleine Urban*

**Madeleine Urban** is a down-home Kentucky girl who's been writing since she could hold a crayon. A longtime science fiction and fantasy fan, she loves to mix those genres with romance to get explosive, satisfying results. She lives with a partner and two canine kids, visits Disney World twice a year, and still believes dreams can come true.

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