



Changeling Press

# Holiday Howlz

## *Suspicious Surprises*

**CAMILLE ANTHONY**

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## **Camille Anthony**

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## **Holiday Howlz: Suspicious Surprises**

### **Camille Anthony**

**There's a suspicious man in town, asking questions no one wants to answer.**

**Puppy suspects Carly is keeping something from him. When she's not avoiding him, she's busy emptying the contents of her stomach. She can't be pregnant, so her symptoms have Quentin fearing for her health.**

**Carly's sure she has a touch of flu, but to appease her lover, she takes time off from planning the Library's First Annual Christmas Eve party to see the doctor. Shocked at his diagnosis, she stumbles away, only to come face-to-face with her ex-boyfriend, suspiciously here in Barkus to surprise her. Suddenly, she's keeping more than one secret from Quentin.**

**Only trust born of true love will guide these two lovers through this Christmas minefield of suspicious surprises.**

## December 21

"Here, drink this."

Carly Brothers scooted back against a bank of pillows and squinted through blurry eyes at the concerned face hanging over hers. The loving expression in Quentin's large black eyes melted her heart. She accepted the cup of flat ginger ale he offered. "Hmmm... thanks. You're so sweet to me."

He grinned, wagging his eyebrows. "All part of my nefarious plan to fuck you senseless before we both have to leave for work. Speaking of lovemaking -- " Quentin paused and scowled -- "are you trying to tell me something? This queasiness over the last few days is mighty suspicious. Every time I start to make love to you, you get sick. Making you hurl doesn't say much for my skills..."

"Hush!" Carly placed a finger against his lips. "If by making me hurl you mean you give me so much pleasure I explode into a burst of glorious sensation, then yeah, your lovemaking does that every time."

She paused to sip the tart soda. It trickled down to ease her upset tummy, but it was Quentin's dawning smile that helped ease the tight band of muscles. Grimacing, she added, "If I didn't know better, I'd think I was pregnant."

They both knew she wasn't, since being unable to give him children had been one of the many hurdles they'd jumped at the start of their relationship. It still bothered her, but Quentin always reassured her he loved her just as she was. This time was no different.

"Which is why I want you to go to the doctor, get it checked out. The Swine flu is going around and it can be deadly. Humans are so fragile." Quentin's lips compressed as he ran a concerned gaze up and down her torso. "I worry about you all the time."

"I know you do, hon, but it's likely just nerves over the Library Christmas Eve party. I've never done something on this scale before and I'm anxious for it to turn out spectacularly. However, since you're so concerned, I'll make a doctor's appointment and get checked out."

Carly finished the ginger ale and passed back the empty cup. She held up her arms, grinning. "Now come down here and give me a kiss."

"I'll give you more than a kiss, you bossy woman," Quentin said, setting the cup down before bending over to take her lips, uncaring about any possible infection. She was more likely to catch something from him; namely, the fevered passion burning inside his own gut.

"Make love to me, Quen. I need you so much."

Carly opened her legs in blatant invitation, giving Quentin a glimpse of heaven. He went to his knees at the foot of the mattress, staring up the long lines of her splayed legs. "You're so beautiful, Carly. You'll never know how much I love and want you... only and always, you."

Holding his gaze, she reached a hand down to part her labia to reveal the stiff spike of her clit amid the dark pink meat of her sex, which glistened with a sheen of moisture. "Then show me, take me. This is all yours."

A groan tore its way out of his throat as Quentin crawled up between her thighs. One hand held her knee down while he fisted his cock and slowly circled the bulbous crown along the outside rim of her swollen labia, gliding through the copious fluids over-spilling her pussy to dampen her thick bush of curly pubic hair. "I love it when you're wet like this for me."

He brushed against her clit, watching as her eyes slid closed on a long drawn out moan. Her neck tilted back as her nipples stiffened. "You like that, sweetness? You like me teasing your tight little pleasure box?"

Her nails sank into the skin of his back, signaling her tension. "Oh yes! God, Quen, it feels so good. Now stop teasing and fuck me. I need it hard and deep this morning."

Ignoring her non-subtle hints to hurry, he positioned his cock at her opening and took his own sweet time sinking into the slick gloving depths of Carly's channel. "Uh-uh. We did hard and rough last night. Maybe that's why you're so queasy this morning. We'll take it nice and easy. I'll go deep, rock there a while before pulling out real slow only to do it again and again until you're melting all around me."

He followed up his words with actions, eliciting frantic gasps and pleas interspersed with loud cries of: "Oh my gawd, harder!" and demands of: "Make me come!"

Ignoring her frenzy, Quentin slid his hands under her ample hips and curved her up, rocking deeper into her sweltering pussy, moving languidly, yet powerfully between her quivering thighs.

He dipped his head, engulfed a fat nipple, clamping it between his teeth until it became a hard button. She keened as he commenced to tug on it until it was stiff and full. Her groans of encouragement drove him to slide up and take her mouth hungrily before curling down to suck up her other nipple to give the needy tip the same relentless treatment as its sister.

Intent on rendering her wild with his passionate kisses, Quentin was jarred from his focus by the jolts of sensation ramming through his body when Carly reached between his legs to cup and pet his balls. He shuddered, the pleasure playing havoc with his plan to keep this loving slow and simmering. He lifted his face from her breasts to meet her dogged gaze, saw she was determined to turn up the heat. "Slow down, baby," he warned. "You'll make this end too fast."

In response, Carly arched her back and held him closer, her rounded tummy rubbing against him. "Your slowness is killing me!"

"What'll you give me if I let you come?"

"Anything," she gasped, writhing under him, lifting to meet his steady thrusts. Her dark skin was covered with a fine sheen of sweat and their bodies clung when they slid against each other. "Everything... whatever you want!"

Her hands roved down his back. He felt a sneaky finger snake along the crease of his ass, rimming his puckered entry. Knowing what she planned, Quentin clenched his butt cheeks and rolled, placing himself on the bottom to evade her machinations.

Carly sat up and rocked on him, eager to take control. She pouted down at him, her pretty mouth lush and full when he tightened his hands on her hips to hold her to his pace. Groaning, Quentin closed his eyes, head filling with visions of those lips wrapped around his cock in a tight loving suction.

He lay beneath her, savoring the sensations of being wrapped in her snug embrace, buried in her hot channel. Damn, but he didn't think he'd ever grow tired of fucking this sweet pussy and watching her fall apart in his arms. Loving Carly just kept getting better. Every day, he grew more addicted to her lush, curvy body as well as her quick intelligent mind. He couldn't envision a future without her beside him.

Quentin opened his eyes to find himself the object of her sultry gaze and the plea burst out: "Marry me."

Her rhythm faltered to a stop. He watched her process his demand, watched her eyes wide as she stared down, face slack with surprise. He held his breath until her lips opened in a wide grin. Planting both hands on his chest, she leaned down and pressed her lips to his, chanting, "Yes, yes, yes!" between wet, teary kisses.

Overjoyed at her answer, he used his shifter strength to remain joined to her as he rolled again. Returning Carly to the bottom, he whispered, "You won't regret it."

Coming up on his knees, Quentin lifted Carly's thighs over his forearms and began thrusting in earnest, fucking her with the fast deep rhythm they both needed now. Riding her hard, he flexed his buttock muscles to power the driving thrusts that made her heavy breasts bounce in cadence with the thud-thud-thud of their headboard thumping the bedroom wall.

When Carly convulsed beneath him, crying out her completion, Quentin didn't slow. Reaching between them, he pinched and rolled her swollen clit, fucking her through her orgasm. All the while he stared into her wide brown eyes, relentlessly stroking her G spot over and over.



Eons later, when he finally allowed himself to come, Carly screamed hoarsely as she joined him, voice gone from vocalizing her ecstasy through numerous climaxes.

Fighting the need to shift, a sated Quentin let his body collapse in pleasurable fatigue. He gathered Carly close, feeling her body twitch in spasmodic waves -- the fading ripples of multiple seismic orgasms.

"My God, Puppy," she rasped, breathing raggedly, "that was unbelievable. You've never brought it like that before."

Quentin smiled. "You've never promised to marry me before."

"So you've been holding out on me?"

"Saving something for my wife," he drawled, twisting enough to drop a kiss on her brow. "If you like, I'll promise to fuck you like that every day for the rest of our lives."

She snorted, "Much as I'd love it... I'd better pass."

Rolling over to cuddle closer, she draped a leg over his torso and he slid a hand under her thigh to hold it there, loving the hot sultry feel of her splayed pussy pressed against his belly.

"What? No super-doooper loving every day?"

"Babe, I'm only human. Fine as it is, too much of your super-doooper loving would kill me."

"It'd probably kill me, too, but what a way to go!"

Carly sighed happily. "Amen!"

## December 22

"Ola, jefe! Mighty suspicious finding you here. I thought you worked capitol city."

Curtis Roberts' heartbeat jump started into fast forward at the quasi-friendly greeting, knowing it was his death knell. Damn it to hell. How had Manolito Contreras, known on the street as the Bloodhound, found him? Better yet, how had he recognized him under a full beard and mustache and a low brimmed hat?

Hiding his misgivings, Curtis bared his teeth in a false grin. He held up his fisted right hand, offering the other man a fist bump. "What brings you here, Manny?"

The short Hispanic reciprocated bumps, his sly smile revealing glints of gold. "Same thing prolly brought you... I'm looking to score."

Curtis cleared his throat. "I... uh... had to expand my field of operations."

For some reason, Manny thought that was hilarious. "Funny thing, *mi hermano*. My field suddenly... expanded, too."

Curtis hid a grimace at Manny's braying cackles. He needed to lose this joker before being seen with him screwed the scam he was setting up. "Well, it was nice running into you, man, but I gotta run..."

"Not so fast, jefe. You still with that hot *mamacita* you used to hang with? What her name... Curly, Shirley?"

*Why the fuck would his info broker mention his old girlfriend?* "Carly. Short for Carlisle. I haven't seen her since I broke up with her. Word's out she nuttied up after hearing her brother bought it in Iraq."

Manny clicked his teeth. "Too bad you split with her. Word's out on you, too. Some seriously impatient mo-fuckers are offering a juicy reward for your current

whereabouts. Plenty bloodhounds sniffing around" -- he jabbed his chest -- "but I'm talking to you 'cause I'm the best."

Fear was an ice flow sliding down Curtis's back, chilling him. "Fuck!" He ran shaking fingers through his dreads, ravaging his Do in his agitation. "Is it the Salonos?"

Manolito's nod made his pulse race.

"Listen Manny, we go way back. Cut me some slack. I got a sweet scam in the making I can deal you in on..."

The shorter man waved off his offer, shaking his head. "I like you, *hombre mio*, but you know it don't work like that. Besides, your name's on too many lips for you to score a deal around here. Your mark's been spooked."

Curtis cursed under his breath, his shoulders slumping. He didn't question the truth of the Bloodhound's statements. The man's honesty was legend and his ability to ferret out information was uncanny. "I'm dead, Man."

Manolito pursed his lips. "Hell, we been through so much shit we almost brothers, but I make my money in the information business and your whereabouts is lucrative business." He shrugged. "Why don't you hit up your ex? She got more'n enough to bail your ass out of hock."

Curtis stared at him, unable to process what he was hearing. "Why do you keep going on about Carly? She's a fucking librarian. She don't make near the amount of money I need."

"Dude, the families of them three soldiers killed during a leaked combat raid got handed over two million dollars tax free, courtesy of *Tio Sam's* guilty conscience. Carly's the only family her brother had."

Curtis shook his head. "How the fuck do you get your hands on all this information?"

"It's what I do -- my primo talent, *mi amigo*." Manny sobered. "And since I really do like you, I'll tell you where you can put your hands on Carly Brothers for a small finder's fee."

Curtis noted he got the name right. "Man, I got no duckies. I'm tapped out..."

"The hell with it, consider this an early Christmas present."

"Why are you doing this for me?"

"It's not for you, it's for me. See, I get paid double. Once for giving you an extension, then again three days later when I give the Salanos your position. By then, you'll have the money to pay or they'll take it out of your hide."

Curtis nodded. He'd have done the same. "I kinda screwed the pooch the way I dumped her, but it's not like I beat her or nothing. Besides, Carly's so soft-hearted she can't carry a grudge in a bucket."

"What you gonna hit little mama up for?"

Curtis ran the figures in his head, then said, "I figure a hundred grand. That way, I can pay the Salanos their eighty-five grand, you, your five, and still have ten grand for me."

He laughed out loud as he envisioned his prospects taking an upward turn. "I'll enjoy fucking her, convincing her I've changed my mind." Curtis screwed his face up. "Boohoo, I miss you so much, I don't care that you can't have no babies." He sneered. "She'll probably thank me for taking her defective ass back."

Manny frowned. "*Amigo*, don't piss her off before..."

Curtis's sharp chopping motion cut the other man off mid-sentence. "You might be the god of information, but I'm the king of schmooze. Just tell me where she's. I'll handle the rest."

"An out-of-the-way town called Barkus, Kansas. You blink you'll miss it."

## December 23

"I'm *what*?" Carly stared at the doctor, in shocked disbelief. In prairie dog form, Timmy sat up on his hind legs to stare at her with blatant fascination. He stretched one paw out to pet the curve of her belly, trilling happily. She absentmindedly patted him on his head.

"You're at least two months pregnant, m'dear."

She felt lightheaded. "That's impossible."

"The way I hear it, what's impossible is the number of times you and Puppy have been going at it. What else did you expect?" The doctor gazed at her over his steel rimmed glasses, the merry twinkle in his periwinkle blue eyes softening his comments.

A flush of scalding heat burned her cheeks. Carly lowered her gaze, seeking a suitable comeback. "The last doctor I saw told me..."

"That you couldn't get pregnant due to internal swelling, bruising and scarring from the accident," Dr. LeRoy finished her sentence. He came around his desk to hold and pat her hand. "Yes, I know. When I sent for your records after I did your new employee exam, he said he'd tried contacting you. All his letters were returned undeliverable."

"I wanted to leave all the unpleasantness behind me so I didn't leave a forwarding address."

"Well you should have. You'd have learned your barrenness was only temporary."

Carly was still trying to catch up. She stared at the short, white haired, Elf-slim doctor, struck again by how much he resembled the drawing of Professor Cornelius from the book *Prince Caspian*. "What do you mean temporary?"

"Not lasting long... finite... reversible. I don't understand why you're so shocked when I told you that you were completely healthy when I finished examining you."

She sucked her teeth. "I thought you meant as healthy as could be expected."

"Don't think. It's dangerous when you don't know what you're doing."

She raised her eyebrows, unsure if she'd just been insulted. "Did you just call me stupid?"

"Are you thinking again?"

"Dr. LeRoy!"

He cackled. "Call me Bones and lighten up. I'm just having fun with you. Look, Carlisle, you're healthy and pregnant. It's what you wanted with all your heart. Now go tell your mate so the two of you can celebrate."

She had a thousand questions, but he made shooing motions. "Git. I have other patients, you know..."

Carly stumbled out of the office, blinded by happy tears. Her first thought was to tell Quentin. Halfway to the school she paused, thinking, *wouldn't it be wonderful if, instead of announcing the good news of our engagement at the Christmas party tomorrow night, we also revealed that Quen is going to be a father, after all?*

Timmy's high trill alerted her to danger. With a gasp, she jumped back, barely avoiding a car. She reached up and stroked the baby with a trembling hand, laughing shakily. "You must think I'm crazy, stopping in the middle of the street, and I am. Oh, but Timmy, I'm so happy I can't tell up from down!"

Carly swiped at her streaming eyes. "Let's go home before I get us both killed. Your mom would bite my ankles off and I wouldn't blame her. Now remember, this is our surprise. You can't tell anyone, especially not Reba."

It was only later she realized she'd never told the doctor her most secret, cherished dream, hidden deep within her wounded heart.

**Meanwhile...**

"Puppy, need to talk with you a minute."

"Stay right there, Arson, I mean it!" Quentin turned from dealing with his class problem child to see Taylor Mackeller, trademark long black hair slicked-back into a ponytail, standing at the edge of the playground. He swallowed a smile, noting the unease on Taylor's face. The man faced down drug lords and vicious criminals with stoic mien, yet present him with anything ten years and under and he froze up.

"Hey, Deputy, when they gonna make you shave off that heavy beard?"

The six foot, five inch tall officer glared down at him. "Never, if they want me to keep working for them."

Quentin laughed softly, keeping his eye on the kids playing in the yard. "What can I do for you?"

"There's a man in town, asking after your mate. Looked like trouble so Mike is running a background on him. So far, no one knows anything. Want us to keep it that way?"

"What's his name?"

"Curtis Roberts."

Quentin's lip curled. "That's the shmuck that dumped Carly because she couldn't have babies."

Taylor spat, careful to keep it off the school walk. "Low life."

"Next time he asks, direct him to Reba. She'll keep him on ice till I can get off."

Mackeller laughed. "Dude, no one deserves being handed over to your sister. Your brother-in-law, Edison, must have balls of steel!"

"Not any more. Reba's got 'em."

## December 24

"The library closed early. Why are you still there? Are you avoiding me, babe? You have another escort to the party?"

"No! I'm tied up here at the library with some last minute details."

"How much longer are you going to be?" He hated the whine in his voice, but damn it, with a stranger in town asking after his woman, Quen wanted her home with him. "I miss you."

"You only want to screw me before the party."

"That's not true," Quentin disagreed. "I also want to suck on your nipples, lick your clit and eat your pussy before sharing another bout of super-doooper-keep-my-woman-happy-sex."

Carly groaned. "Heck, baby, with incentive like that, I won't linger here. I just have a few more things to tweak. By the way, did you know Bucky promised to play Santa, but now he's refusing to wear the outfit?"

"Huh. It's probably because the Dawgs are teasing him unmercifully."

"I'll make them his Elves next year." She paused. "Are you teasing him, too?"

Quentin quickly lied, "Wouldn't dream of it, honey."

"Why do I not believe you?"

"You should. I am pure as the driven snow."

Carly's chuckle carried clearly over the receiver. Something crashed in the background, making her cuss. "Okay, gotta go, sweet."

After he hung up Quentin realized she'd never once called him Puppy and she'd substituted screw for fuck. Carly had no problem talking dirty with him, but she wouldn't do it when others were around. And Puppy was her private name for him. When she used it, he felt ten feet tall. He called the bar.



"Dawgs bark here. Talk to me."

"Mobilize and meet me at the library!"

Bucky grunted. "Puppy, whatever the hell you chewing on better be urgent. I'm trying to stuff my ass in this red clown suit."

"Carly might be in trouble."

A second later he was listening to dial tone.

\* \* \*

Carly hung up the phone and turned back to face Curtis, fists on her hips. "As you heard, I have a man, but if I was in the market for one, I wouldn't be interested in a man who has proven he's only concerned with my reproduction organs. Now, like I told you earlier, the library is closed."

Curtis shook his head. "You didn't use to be so mean, Carly."

She kept the counter between them, not liking the cold expression in her ex-boyfriend's eyes. "What do you want, Curtis? We both know you didn't come all this way to make up with me."

"Why you gotta be like that, Carly? Don't act like I'm gonna hurt you or nothing. Did I ever hit you when you wuz my bitch?"

Carly rocked back, eyebrows on the rise. "Uh... no, cause if you had ever hit me I would have tossed a pot of hot grits on your ass. Now speak your piece and hit the bricks. I got a party to plan and a man to get home to."

Curtis tilted his head and gazed down on Carly, a soft look in his eyes. "I shouldn't have broken up with you, Carly girl. You wuz a freak in the bedroom and a good cook, too. And you never put my business in the street. I'm sorry I did you like I did."

Carly took in a deep breath, softening toward her ex-lover. This was more like the Curtis she'd known, but their time was over. She'd been infatuated, now she was in love. "I appreciate what you're saying, Curt, but it's too late for us. I have a wonderful man who loves me for me. He couldn't care less about babies or the fact I'm ten years older than him."

"Damn, girl!" Curtis laughed and then shrugged. "You frisky enough for a youngun, that's for sure." He sighed. "I came here ready to fake you out and get you to cut loose of some money. Things have kinda gone south for me since we split. I got back into my gambling habit and borrowed from some folk I shouldn't have. Now they've got contracts out on me."

Carly leaned on the counter and clasped her head, shaking it in exasperation. "Oh, Curtis, how many times did we go through this?"

A lopsided grin answered her. "Not too many, actually. I was more grounded when we were together. You were good for me, Carly." His voice dropped to a sexy register. "In more ways than one..."

She felt nothing. "Cut the schmooze and tell me how much you need."

"Ninety thousand dollars. Even."

Carly gasped. "So much?" She caught herself. "Huh. I guess you found out about the money I got from the government. Do you really need that much, or are you feathering your nest?"

Curtis shrugged. "I was going to ask for a hundred grand, so I could have ten for myself." His smile was rueful. "You know me, Carly... always the opportunist."

She returned his smile. "Yeah, but this time you didn't try to take advantage."

He frowned. "For some reason, I couldn't bring myself to do it."

Carly squared her shoulders. "There's a party taking place here in a few hours and I've got to go home and change clothes. You need to leave, but I promise I'll talk to my fiancée and we'll give you an answer. I refuse to keep secrets from him."

"You might not keep secrets, but you sure are full of suspicious surprises!"

Carly jumped at the unexpected voice. "Quentin!"

"... Plus a whole lot more." He didn't sound too happy as he came around the counter and tucked her under his shoulder. He leaned down and whispered, "I ought to spank your luscious ass."

The sheriff and two deputies crowded through the door behind Quentin, followed closely by a horde of Dawg bikers. "Everything okay here, Ms. Brothers?"

Carly gave Quentin a speaking look before answering the man who'd once locked her in a jail cell with Quentin, thereby proving himself a good friend. "Yes, everything's fine, Mike. Hi Taylor, Darren... guys." She nodded at the two deputies and the more than fifteen bikers making the large library look small.

"Ma'am." They all tipped their caps or nodded.

"We've been keeping an eye on this fellow. He's been around town the last day or so, asking after you, which seemed suspicious so we ran him through NICS. He's got a few dings, but no majors to his name."

Carly glanced up into Quentin's black eyes, her own narrowing. "So you've known Curtis was here and didn't say anything to me?"

"I didn't think you'd want to know the low-life was sniffing after you."

"Hey, man! You got no call talking about me like that! All I've done is buy three sodas and ask if anyone knew Carly's whereabouts. In fact, I asked you," he pointed toward Taylor Mackeller, "and you claimed you didn't know shit, but here you are."

The big deputy, who was also a member of the biker gang, took a step forward. "Yep, here I am." A slow smile curved his lips as he eyed Curtis up and down. "Only, now I know shit."

Curtis turned to glare angrily at Carly. "You gonna stand there and let these white boys treat me like this just because you're fucking one?"

At her side, Quentin bristled. One of the black bikers growled, "You really want to go there, thug?"

Fearful things would escalate out of control, Carly squeezed Quentin's arm before holding out both hands, pressing down on the air in a gesture meant to calm. "Okay guys, let's take a step back and chill out. Sheriff and Dawgs, I appreciate this wonderful service from the town's finest, but Curtis is not a problem. You should all be home dressing for the party. Especially you, Bucky."

"We'll just escort Mr. Roberts out, seeing the library is closed."

Carly sighed, knowing that hadn't been a request. "Good idea. Curtis, grab a meal and get a room. I'll see you tomorrow."

His quick grimace stopped her words. He needed money, so he obviously didn't have the funds for a room. Thinking back over their conversation she recalled he'd only bought sodas, not even a burger or fries. Frantically scrambling for a way to save Curtis embarrassment, she turned to Quentin for help. "Instead of traveling to the hotel, maybe Curtis could come to the party and then stay with Reba for the night. She's got plenty of room, right?"

At mention of Reba's name, the three officers and all the Dawgs started laughing.

"That sounds like a swell idea, Puppy. Your sister loves company." Glancing at Curtis, still wearing a shit-eating grin, Sheriff Winslow added, "Reba runs a bakery and restaurant. She'll feed ya till your belly pops."

With a final round of waves, the uniform brigade vacated the library, followed shortly by the rough looking bikers who hid hearts of gold beneath their leathers. That left Quentin and Curtis staring at each other over Carly's head.

Curtis spoke first.

"Dude, why you glaring at me when you da man with the prize? Carly would never cheat on you. You don't know that by now, you don't deserve her."

Quentin nodded. "I trust Carly. I'm here as backup."

"Yeah, riiiiight," she drawled, one hand on her hip. "That's why you gang-busted in here with your posse?"

Quentin's direct gaze made her squirm. "This isn't about doubting your faithfulness. Did you think I wouldn't be concerned? You were keeping something from me and then this guy shows up. He could be blackmailing you or something."

"He's not." Carly backed into Quent's embrace to face Curtis. His arms came around her, caging her in heated support. "He's here because his gambling got him in hot water. He needs ninety grand to buy his way out of trouble."

Longing gaze naked with regret, Curtis sighed. "I'd forget the money and take my chances with the Solanos if it meant another chance with you, Carly."

Quentin growled. His arms tightened around her ribcage. "No way in hell that will ever happen. I may not look it, but I'm a lot deadlier to you than the Solanos. The

gang that just walked out of here would gladly help me bury you in a thousand different places before returning home to untroubled sleep."

Twisting, Carly gazed up at her lover's implacable expression. "Quentin, was that necessary?"

It wasn't her he looked at when he asked, "Was it...?"

Curtis blew out a breath. "It's not, now."

"Good." Quentin eased Carly out of his embrace. "Let's get you home so you can dress for the party." He turned his head and addressed Curtis. "And let's get you to Reba's because I'm not taking you home with us. I don't want you anywhere near my woman while she's naked, or almost naked, or about to get naked."

Carly laughed. "You're giving my ego a major boost. This round body isn't that exciting."

Curtis slanted a look at Quentin. "I see you haven't cured her of that."

"I'm trying. One day she'll believe me."

"Guys, I'm still in here."

"We know, dear. You're the only Goddess in the room."

Curtis chuckled. "She's blushing."

Quentin's nostrils flared. "And not just on her cheeks."

## After the Party

"It went well, don't you think?"

Quentin unzipped Carly's dress, easing the silky material down, trailing his lips over the smooth dark skin of her back. "You were magnificent."

"Not me, silly, the party."

"I only had eyes for you." He unhooked her bra.

"Then you didn't see Curtis's face when he opened the envelope with the check for one hundred thousand dollars?"

"He was in shock. I got him a whiskey." The slip slid down to pool on the floor.

"And you didn't see Reba sit on Santa's lap? Or see Edison yank her up and march her out to the patio?"

He spoke between kisses. "Reba used to date Bucky. Whenever Edison gets too comfortable, she reminds him how lucky he is to have her. I'd have marched her further than the patio and spanked her behind." He eased her panties down her legs, running his hand back up to cup her between her thighs.

"What would you do if I sat on some man's knee?"

He nipped her shoulder, soothed the bite with his tongue. "I'd whip your ass, and then fuck it until the only man you dared look at was me." His fingers delved into her hot corridor.

"You keep threatening me with spankings."

He lifted his head and met her eyes. "You sound intrigued." Another finger entered her.

"I'm wet thinking about it."

"I just went hard." He grabbed her hand. "Feel."

"Hmm... just the way I like you."

“What do you want: a spanking or a super-doooper fuck?”

“Why not both?”

“Why not now?”

“Yes, please!”

## Christmas Day

"Ginger ale." A cup came into focus.

Carly scooted back against a bank of pillows and squinted through blurry eyes at the concerned face hanging over hers. The loving expression in Quentin's large black eyes melted her heart. "Have I told you lately that I love you?"

Quentin sat on the bed at her side. "Carly, I caught up with Doctor LeRoy at the party. I asked him how your exam went and he told me to tell you he was ashamed of you. He also said I had a blue, blue day coming in the near future."

He paused to take a deep breath. When he spoke again, his voice shook with tears. "Baby, tell me what the doctor said. Whatever is wrong, I'll stand by you. I'll love you all the days you may have left."

"Oh, no, Puppy, it's nothing like that!" Carly's eyes watered. She'd never meant for Quentin to wait so long for their miraculous news, but first the party prep, then dealing with Curtis, and later the party, itself, had combined to push her wonderful surprise to the background. Now her honey was dreading the worst and she felt guilty.

She leaned to the side, placed the cup on the bedside table. Straightening up, she took both Quentin's hands in hers. "I do have something to tell you, but it's not bad news, it's the most glorious news you could think of." She stopped and swallowed, pulled his hands to her waist. "Puppy, we're having a baby."

He fell off the bed and she laughed until she cried, eyes wet with happy tears. When his face, shining with ecstatic hope, eyes wary, appeared over the edge of the bed, she saw how ruthlessly he'd buried his dream of fathering children. "Oh, Quentin... you've been lying to me."



His eyes flooded with tears. "Not about loving you. Not about ever entertaining the thought of living without you just to have children. But about wanting them... oh, Carly, are you sure?"

"Doctor LeRoy is. He said, 'Carlisle, you're healthy and pregnant. It's what you wanted with all your heart.' Only, I never told him that."

Quentin crawled onto the bed and flopped down beside her. He started laughing and didn't quit even when Carly poked him in the side. "Stop that."

"I can't," he howled, rocking back and forth with hilarity. "I'm a fool. I should have thought about talking to the doctor months ago."

Carly was lost. "Why?"

Quentin struggled to calm down, wiping his eyes. "Carly, have you noticed there is no hospital in Barkus?"

"There isn't?"

"No. We don't need one because there are no sick people here. Bones is a healer."

"Well, duh, he's a doctor."

"No, honey, he's a healer... as in magic. He's part Elf -- Lord of The Rings, not Santa's -- and part prairie dog. He can't shift because his *Shidhe* blood is stronger than ours. If he says you're healthy, you are." His grin grew. "And if he says you're pregnant, we are!"

#### **Fourth of July, the next year**

“Bones, instead of blathering on about a blue, blue day, couldn’t you have just said I was pregnant with twin boys?”

The healer patted her hand. “Now, where’s the fun in that? Did you see the look on Puppy’s face when I told him to catch the next one?”

Carly laughed softly, careful of her aching belly. “That was hilarious, but the emotional stress wore him out.”

She gazed down into the sleeping faces of her children, heart overflowing with love for them and their father, who lay curled up beside them in prairie dog form.

## **Camille Anthony**

A funny thing happened on the way to the grave...

In 2006, I was diagnosed with Pulmonary Sarcoidosis and given two weeks to live, whereupon I promptly discharged myself against medical advice, since -- as I stubbornly informed the doctors -- I could die at home far more comfortably than at the hospital. Resigned, I prepared to meet my maker but then...

I got an idea for a new story. No way could I check out before finishing it. So I did. Then, another idea came, and another...

Now, three years after the doctors' two week dead-line, I'm still coming up with new story ideas. I figure I've found the fountain of youth. I don't plan on cocking up my toes until I've shared the last story whispering in my mind's ear! My goal is to share my imaginary joys and endless possibilities with you, the reader.

I encourage you to embrace adventure, even if the only journey you undertake is through the pages of a book. Enjoy every moment of this life we're gifted with. Whatever you do, keep reading!

Peace!

Cammy

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