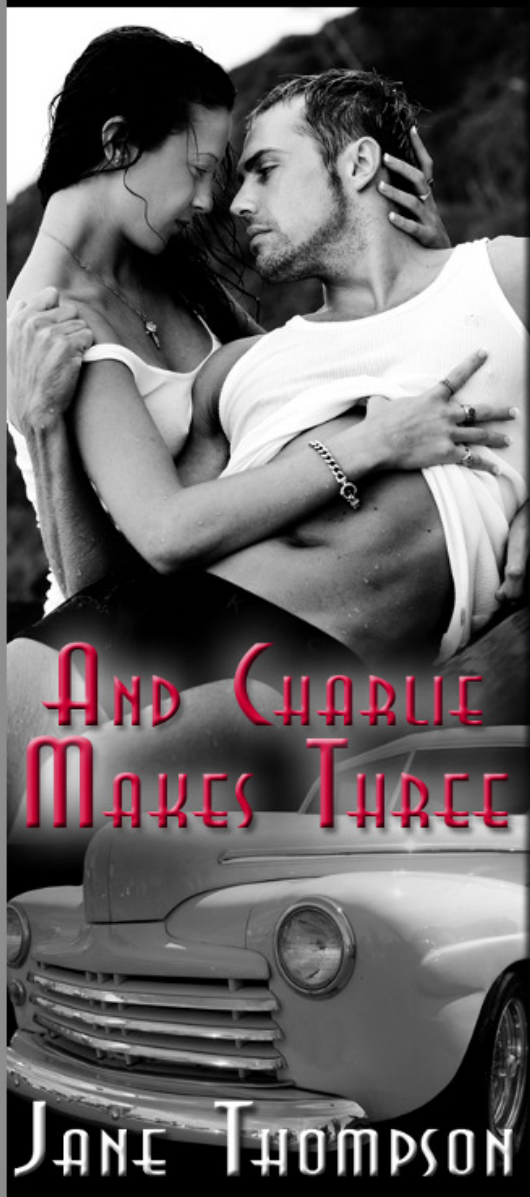


Red Sage Presents



AND CHARLIE  
MAKES THREE

JANE THOMPSON

Three  
Kinds  
of  
Wicked





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Information:

Red Sage Publishing, Inc. P.O. Box 4844 Seminole, FL 33775  
727-391-3847 [eRedSage.com](http://eRedSage.com)

## And Charlie Makes Three

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ISBN: 978-1-60310-398-5 1-60310-398-8 Heartless Adobe PDF  
ISBN: 978-1-60310-399-2 1-60310-399-6 Heartless MobiPocket  
ISBN: 978-1-60310-400-5 1-60310-400-3 Heartless MS Reader  
ISBN: 978-1-60310-401-2 1-60310-401-1 Heartless HTML  
ISBN: 978-1-60310-397-8 1-60310-397-X Heartless ePub

Published by arrangement with the authors and copyright holders of the individual works as follows:

And Charlie Makes Three © 2009 by Jane Thompson

Cover © 2009 by Rae Monet Inc.

Printed in the U.S.A.

ebook layout and conversion by [jimandzetta.com](http://jimandzetta.com)

# *And Charlie Makes Three*

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By Jane Thompson

## TO MY READER:

Charlie began as a modern idea, with minivans and soccer leagues in the background but then someone said, “Why not set it in the fifties?” Oh the difference a few decades make! Charlie became all that much naughtier, and Anne far more interesting for the choices she makes. Now if I could only remember who suggested the time change...

# And Charlie Makes Three:

## Chapter 1

**August, 1953**

The parking lot of Camp Tipai-Ipai looked like an advertisement for Detroit's line of new 1953 family sedans. Smiling children tumbled out of large shiny cars, the girls shrieking and calling to each other while the boys imitated their fathers by shaking hands and slapping each other heartily on the back. Proud fathers stood back in groups of three and four, pointing to each other's vehicles, while mothers in stiff-skirted sundresses and gay straw summer hats bustled and fussed among their broods.

Anne Reynolds sat in her '46 Ford sedan, her thirteen-year-old son Jay gently snoring in the backseat, and watched as her fifteen-year-old son slammed his way out of her ex-husband's brand new Cadillac. With Shane out of the car, Frank's pretty young missus and their darling baby girl made the perfect family for this increasingly perfect decade, all bright and shiny and new.

Shane wrenched open the front passenger side door and flung himself inside.

"*Gurthumphuh?*" Jay muttered.

"Where's Charlie?" Shane stared straight ahead, so tense his hands were shaking.

"Something came up." Anne turned to face him, knowing from heartbreaking experience there was nothing she could do to sooth him.

Shane snorted. "Of course, something *always* comes up," he muttered, his tone somehow both dismissive and scathing. It was the first time

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Shane had ever used that tone when talking about Charlie. He usually reserved it for his father.

“How’s your sister?” Anne glanced back to where the boys’ half-sister was in the process of tangling a spitty teething cookie in her mother’s blonde curls.

“Cried all the way here,” Shane snapped, even as the side of his mouth kicked up at his sister’s antics.

“And how’s Pat?” Anne nodded toward the young woman attempting to get the cookie out of her hair without destroying her carefully arranged hairdo.

“Pregnant.”

“Shit.” There went the limited amount of time Frank spent with the boys.

Jay snickered.

Anne slapped her hand over her mouth when she realized she had said that out loud.

Shane twisted around and punched his brother on the thigh. “Let’s go.” He grabbed for the door handle.

Anne hauled him back into her arms for a quick, fierce hug, kissed the top of his head, and then let him go. Jay leaned forward over the seat, allowing her to smooth his rumpled blonde hair before giving her a smacking kiss on the cheek and following his brother out into the bright afternoon sunlight.

Anne got out of the car and watched as they joined the growing crowd of teenagers assembled in front of a series of faded green buses that would take them the rest of the way to camp. They would spend the next month by the ocean, swimming, sailing, and getting up to all kinds of mischief Anne figured she didn’t really need to know the specifics of.

“I expect more than a couple of soggy postcard from you two this year!” she yelled.

Jay turned and waved before both boys disappeared in the crowd.

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After crawling across the vast front seat of her up-until-a-few-minutes-ago trusty '46 Ford sedan, Anne shouldered open the passenger side door and stepped out into a narrow band of deep green grass that separated the road from the beach. The grass abutted a jumble of giant, sharp rocks whose purpose Anne could only think was to keep ocean creatures from washing onto the highway during a freakishly high tide. Anne slammed the door so hard that the entire car shook, no small feat since the thing was practically the size of a tank. Drove like one, too. Add in the three-shades-of-gray paint job, and there was no mystery why her kids had named it Sherman.

"You couldn't have waited fifteen more miles to break down," Anne said, pointing at the windshield as she walked around the car's bulbous nose. She thought about kicking it but her white ballet flats were no match for the indestructible wonder that was Sherman. She tried to get the hood open, but all she got for her trouble were dirty hands and a smear of grease across the front of her light blue seersucker sundress. Sniffing once, she dragged the back of her wrist over the fresh tears streaming down her face. "And you *know* what an awful couple of days it's been."

Anne had a habit of talking out her concerns while driving, and Sherman was an excellent listener. For a car.

She turned and leaned against the center of the hood, hoping her position directly in front of her car would alert her fellow motorists that she hadn't pulled over to enjoy the view. Sure, the view was stunning, what with the majestic cliffs rising up on one side of the road and the Pacific Ocean sparkling under a bright and cheery summer sun on the other.

"Nothing but blue sky." Anne crossed her arms over her chest. She hated feeling miserable in good weather. It just seemed to make her feel worse, as if the rest of the world had no sympathy for what she was going through. With a mood like this, sleet would have been appreciated, or at least some drizzling rain. Or fog, preferably the thick stuff that

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twisted and swirled and made a person nervous even when they were safe and warm indoors. Unfortunately, it was August in Southern California, so sleet and fog were highly unlikely.

Forgetting about the grease on her hands, Anne rubbed her forehead. It was on the third pass that she remembered her hands were filthy. Normally she would have laughed at herself for having done something so silly. But not today. After what had happened between her and Charlie last night it felt as if there would be nothing to laugh about for quite some time. Telling someone you loved them and then having them stare at you as if you had just told them they had a week to live sort of bled the humor out of life. Anne had spent the time between that moment and this feeling as if she had a blanket wrapped around her head. Everything seemed muffled and indistinct. Luckily Jay had slept most of the way up to camp, and Shane had been so angry about having to spend extra time with his father that neither of them had noticed that their mother wasn't doing too well.

Poor Shane. Frank refused to see that the last thing Shane needed was extra time with the family his father had left him for. Frank was a brilliant lawyer but when it came to being a father, he was clueless.

"And he's having more children," Anne muttered. Of course, if he had stayed with her there would have been zero chance of that. Maybe that was why he had turned to Pat. Anne derailed that train of thought before it could get going. She no longer wasted her time wondering why Frank had left her. Understanding the why of it would never change the fact he had deserted her and the boys for a woman young enough to be his daughter.

The sound of a car coming around a bend in the road a few hundred feet away brought Anne's head up. Half a dozen cars had already passed her by, most of their drivers smirking as they went, which she thought was uncalled for. So Sherman was a heap. It wasn't her fault she couldn't afford anything better.

"Ah, what a difference a divorce makes." Anne pushed off the hood



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and walked around to lean into Sherman's back passenger side window to fetch a sweater. The sun was warm but the breeze coming in off the ocean was downright chilly. Anne dug around, absently tossing aside three baseball bats, two rain coats and a bent aluminum tent pole until finally coming up with a wrinkled, tan cardigan sweater. She held it up to her nose and sniffed. Yes, it was clean.

When she straightened, there was a man standing by Sherman's hood, a motorcycle she hadn't heard arrive shining in the sun behind him. Anne bit back a startled shriek, not wanting to scare off the only Good Samaritan left in Southern California.

"Want me to take a look?" The man gestured to Sherman.

Anne looked him up and down. He appeared to be about thirty, give or take a few years either way, tall and long-limbed with shoulder-length hair so black it flashed blue here and there in the sunlight. His fitted black motorcycle jacket accentuated the difference between his broad shoulders and narrow waist. Aviator sunglasses hid his eyes but the rest of his face was handsome enough to make her wish she didn't have grease smeared across both her dress and her forehead.

Good lord, what a magnificent specimen.

What had he just asked her?

Sherman.

"Right. If it wouldn't be too much trouble." Anne schooled her features into what she hoped was a concerned expression. If he bent over, she silently vowed to keep her eyes trained above his waist.

He stepped up to Sherman, somehow managed to get the hood up, and had a look around. He grunted, adjusted something, sighed, and then let the hood drop with a bang.

"Sherman's dead, isn't he?" Anne wrung her hands. She and Sherman hadn't always had an easy time of it. His steering was such that parallel parking was out of the question, and he was ugly as all get out, but he'd always managed to get her where she was going.

Not this time.

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“If you mean this car,” the man said, “then yes, Sherman’s dead.”

“Poor Sherman.” She patted his hood.

The man raised one eyebrow.

Anne crossed her arms over her chest. “What? He was very loyal.”

“He stranded you.”

“No one’s perfect.”

The man slid his dark glasses back onto his face, obviously done discussing her sentiments regarding Sherman’s demise. “Can I give you a ride into town?”

Anne hated the idea of being rude to the only person that had stopped for her, but the very thought of getting on the back of a motorcycle made her nerves jump.

A police cruiser chose that moment to turn the bend and Anne barely managed to keep from clapping her hands. The young officer was on his way from one disaster to another, and he only had enough time to stick his head out the window and holler, “You folks need a tow?” When Anne nodded, the officer took a minute to assess Sherman’s bulk from behind the wheel of his sleek new cruiser.

“Better bring the big truck,” he said to whoever was on the other end of his radio.

Anne laughed at that.

“You get this thing from Army surplus or something?” the officer joked as he leaned one elbow on the ledge of his open window.

Anne tried sending the officer a repressive look but he just grinned, so young and handsome he practically gleamed in the late afternoon sunlight.

“Lou said it’ll be about fifteen, twenty minutes.” The officer winked at her before driving off. Anne smiled at the back of his car as it disappeared around the bend in the road.

“I can’t remember *ever* being that young,” Anne murmured.

“You can’t be that much older than him,” the man said.

Anne took a page from Shane’s conversational handbook and snorted.

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“While that’s a very chivalrous thing for you to say, I turned thirty-five just yesterday.”

“Man wasn’t a day over twenty-five. What’s ten years difference?”

“Guess it depends on what you’ve been doing with those ten years.”

Anne settled onto the edge of Sherman’s equally vast backseat. When the man followed and peered inside, Anne realized there was no real reason for him to stay. Despite his hooligan’s motorcycle jacket and long hair, he was probably too well-mannered to leave her here by herself.

*Pshaw, if he only knew how many men have felt just fine leaving me all on my own.*

“Thank you so much for stopping to help.” She shaded her eyes against the sunlight streaming over his shoulder. “As you heard, Lou will be here—”

“In fifteen to twenty minutes.” The man crossed his arms over his chest.

Anne nodded, allowing the subject to drop. She’d spent enough time around men to know when one had made up his mind about something. This man was staying until the tow truck got there.

So, chivalry isn’t dead. It’s just taken up residence in unexpected places.

After using an old shirt of Charlie’s she’d found wadded up under the front seat to get the worst of the grease off her hands and forehead, Anne unearthed a wicker picnic basket and set it on the seat next to her. “I’m hungry. Let’s have a sandwich. There’s even some iced tea if you’re thirsty.”

When the man hesitated, Anne determinedly held up two sandwiches wrapped in wax paper. “Bologna or salami?”

“What’s in the tin foil?” He leaned over to peer into the hamper.

Anne winced. He would ask. “You don’t want that. It’s sardines, pickles and mustard.”

“That’s an insult to food the world over. Why would you make such a thing?”

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“Charlie,” Anne said, as if that explained it. Of course, if the man knew Charlie, that would have been explanation enough.

“Who’s Charlie?”

*The love of my life.*

“My ex-husband’s old golf buddy.” Anne poked through the food she’d packed before she’d admitted to herself that Charlie wasn’t coming with her today. “There’s an apple, a couple of cookies my son somehow missed....”

“The apple’s fine, thanks.”

Anne handed it over and watched as he took a bite. He had nice teeth, white and strong. When the tip of his tongue came out to swipe a drop of juice off his full lower lip, Anne’s toes curled. She went back to digging through the basket, glancing over at him out of the corner of her eye as she wondered at her reaction. Overtly handsome men weren’t to her taste and her heart still ached underneath it all, but there was something about him, something more than the fact he was remarkably attractive, that called to her.

He turned to lean against Sherman’s side, gazing out at the ocean as he slowly worked his way through the apple. Anne picked up one of the two non-revolting sandwiches before getting out of the car to lean next to him. The late afternoon sunlight felt good on her face as she slowly ate her sandwich. His silence was restful, so different from Charlie’s increasingly manic energy. Lately it seemed he’d been in constant motion, always doing something, talking, smoking, fixing something around her house.

Anne balled up the wax paper and tossed it over her shoulder, where it joined the general flotsam on Sherman’s floor. Cleaning out that backseat would take hours. Thanks to Charlie’s reaction to her impromptu little speech last night, the state of Sherman’s interior was the least of her worries. She sighed.

“What’s his name?” the man next to her asked.

“Who?” Anne asked, looking around.

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“The man that has you sighing.”

Anne felt the sting of a blush on her cheeks. “I’m just tired.”

“Ma’am, if there is anything in this world I know, it is the sound of a woman breaking her heart over a man.”

Anne opened her mouth to deny what he’d said, but he wasn’t looking at her. His gaze was fastened on the horizon as he slowly took the last of the apple off the core. For some reason, the sight of him working on that apple made blood rush to the surface of her skin.

“What’s your name?”

“Trey,” He tossed the apple core into the grass before glancing over at her.

“Anne,” she said, realizing she hadn’t introduced herself either.

“Reynolds.”

Trey nodded before returning his attention to the ocean.

“There’s really no one,” Anne lied into the lingering silence.

“Then who’s Charlie?”

“I already told you.”

Trey slowly shook his head. “No one makes a sandwich that awful for someone they don’t care about.”

Anne ran her thumbnail along her bottom lip, the gesture a last vestige of her childhood habit of biting her nails. Trey looked over, his gaze snagging on her mouth. Anne dropped her hand. His gaze met hers. Instead of unnerving her, his look was soothing, rather like his earlier silence.

“Come on, you can tell me,” he said, his voice low and gentle.

“Maybe I can help.”

Anne shook her head. “There’s nothing you, or anyone, can do.”

“So there is someone.”

Anne smiled in spite of herself. “Yes. There’s Charlie. Charlie Atwood.”

Trey turned back to the ocean. Anne mimicked him, staring out at the vast expanse of water tumbling around under that cloudless blue sky.

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“Go on and give me the short version.” Trey crossed his arms over his chest.

Anne realized she suddenly *wanted* to tell someone about her and Charlie. Who better than a stranger that would be gone from her life in less than half an hour? And who knew, maybe telling someone would help her see the truth of what had been going on between her and Charlie all these years.

Good heavens, but where to begin?

“Four years ago,” Anne said, smoothing her hands down the skirt of her dress, “after his wife divorced him for being a perpetually drunk and philandering bastard—”

Trey barked out a laugh. “Are those his words or yours?”

“Exactly his, and he won’t stand anyone saying any different. Perpetually drunk and philandering bastard,” Anne said those last words in a sing-song. “A few months after his divorce, Charlie moved out to Pasadena from Detroit. He and my husband met during a local charity golf event and really hit it off. They got into the habit of playing a few rounds of golf every week at the club and, of course, the round isn’t officially over until you’ve had a few drinks and reviewed, in excruciating detail, exactly what you just finished doing.”

Anne laughed at Trey’s genuinely confused expression. “I know, a crashing bore, but people love it. The problems began when a few drinks turned into four and then six and then suddenly there were rumors that women were involved. At first I didn’t believe it. Charlie had a terrible reputation coming out of Detroit, so I figured Frank was just getting painted with the same brush. I left Frank alone, thinking eventually the shine would wear off and life would go back to the way it had been before Charlie showed up. But it didn’t. It only got worse. Finally I just couldn’t take it anymore so I tracked Charlie down to tell him what I thought of him corrupting a happily married man. I still remember Charlie asking me to explain to him exactly why a happily married man went out messing around every night. There wasn’t a thing I could say.

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A couple months later Frank announced that his law partner's daughter was pregnant and that he was the father. I agreed to give Frank his divorce, and then it seemed that Charlie showed up the next day. Said he'd lost a bet and had to mow my lawn. Since no one else was offering to help I thought, 'Why not? Some of this is his fault.' And he's been around ever since."

Trey slanted her a look. "Bet that caused a lot of talk."

"When people would ask why he was always hanging around my house, Charlie would say I'd gotten him in the divorce settlement along with the dog and a stack of old magazines."

"What reason did Charlie give you for staying?"

"None. At first I was so overwhelmed I didn't care why he was there, I was just glad that someone remembered we existed. My husband's new wife was the daughter of a very prominent legal family. People felt bad for me but most of our friends were in the law in one way or another, and they couldn't afford to be seen as taking my side."

"So they left you, too."

Anne nodded, remembering those lonely, wrenching weeks after Frank had packed up and left her to fend for herself and two bewildered, heartbroken boys. "I can't tell you how many hours I wasted trying to figure out why Frank left, and if there was anything more I could have done to prevent it. It was a massive waste of time and energy because no one ever told me the whole truth of what happened. Oh, people loved to tell me it wasn't anything to do with me but that just made it worse. It's a terrible thing to feel that you had nothing to do with something that completely up-ended your entire life, and that by the end you were nothing but a bystander in your own marriage. I think Charlie blames himself, not that he'd ever tell me."

"How long has Charlie been around?"

"Three years."

Trey whistled. "That's a lot of guilt."

"Well, you'll be glad to know that Charlie is over the worst of it. He

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hightailed it out of my life.” Anne checked the delicate watch strapped to her wrist. “Roughly fifteen hours ago.”

“Wait, what?” Trey abruptly pushed off the side of the car to face her. “You mean he’s not joining you?”

Luckily, Lou showed up with the tow truck and Trey had to go move his motorcycle, sparing Anne from having to finish the rest of the story. Talking about Charlie hadn’t helped. It had only reminded her of what he had looked like standing out in her overgrown front yard trying to start her cantankerous old lawn mower. He’d tried charm and finesse and was about to go get a hammer when Shane went out to help with Jay trailing behind. Both boys had probably been more trouble than they’d been worth, but Charlie had let them help. Anne had been so happy to see her two boys back out in the sunlight she’d instantly and forever forgiven Charlie any part he had played in destroying her marriage.

She wasn’t so sure how long it would take her to forgive him for breaking her heart, but that wasn’t a question she could answer today.

Once Lou got Sherman attached to the back of the biggest tow truck Anne had ever seen, he gestured for her to climb into the cab alongside a decrepit Siberian husky. There was enough dog hair on the seat to make an entire other dog, and the window was coated with drool.

She turned to where Trey was waiting next to his motorcycle, a smile playing around the edges of his mouth. He *knew* she hadn’t wanted to take a ride from him, and now he was enjoying watching her squirm.

The dog barked, drool flew, and Anne stepped forward to accept Trey’s outstretched hand.



# *And Charlie Makes Three:*

## *Chapter 2*

In the sparsely populated seaside town of Malibu, three sisters made a tidy living catering to Los Angeles residents wealthy enough to escape the worst of the summer heat. They had created a rather typical oceanfront escape by turning into a hotel the big old Queen Anne house their aunt left them, and when they'd added a dozen little one-room clapboard cottages throughout the five acres surrounding the house, business really had taken off. And everywhere along the gently curved paths connecting the cottages to the main house and a private stretch of smooth beach were beautifully cultivated beds of roses and geraniums. A multitude of oak and sycamore trees shaded the landscape along with arches and short fences covered over with honeysuckle and morning glories. Despite the sisters not having the most sterling of reputations, The Cottages was fast becoming the fashionable place to while away a few summer weeks by the sea.

Anne had grown up with the sisters back East in Baltimore, had recommended The Cottages to her rich Pasadena friends, and had never once commented on their tarnished reputations. Therefore she was one of the few guests the sisters looked forward to having around the place for longer than a few days.

That having been said they expressed dismay to hear that she was coming to The Cottages for two weeks. The only other time Anne had stayed that long was when Frank had left her. She'd kept the boys with her that time, but this time the kids were scheduled to stay a month at some camp with one of those traditionally silly names.

"Camp Ipaswitcha or something equally stupid," one of the sisters

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reported to the others after getting off the phone with Anne. “The point is she’s staying for two whole weeks. And Charlie *will not* be joining her.”

“Bastard,” the second sister muttered. The third nodded decisively.

But they hadn’t wondered about Charlie anymore than that. Anne’s business was her own and their business was to get her through the first few weeks of whatever heartbreak she had gotten herself into this time. They had hoped rather than believed that Charlie would settle down and ask Anne to marry him, but life and Charlie’s blackened reputation being what they were, it seemed that wasn’t going to happen.

The sisters were understandably surprised when Anne roared into the little gravel parking lot behind The Cottages’ main house on the back of a motorcycle, her arms wrapped around a disreputable looking, albeit handsome, man.

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After Anne managed to get off the motorcycle without exposing her undergarments to the people milling around next to The Cottages’ gravel parking lot, she staggered a little before Trey grabbed her shoulder, bringing her to an abrupt halt against his warm, solid chest.

“That was quite a thing.” She craned her neck to look up at him.

“Want to go again?” he teased.

“No! Not that I’m not grateful for your assistance. It was very kind of you to offer me a ride after staying with me all that time, but I don’t think motorcycles are for me. I like steel all around me when I’m moving that fast.” Anne waved her arms around her head and shoulders. “Especially up here where my brain is.”

He stepped away with a wry smile. Anne had to clench her hands to keep from reaching out to bring him back. That motorcycle was a gruesome death just waiting to happen, but getting to wrap her arms around Trey’s waist had made the experience worth the risk, not to mention the vibration from the bike’s engine went right through her. She was still humming in places nice women pretended didn’t exist. As she

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watched him turn to remove her purse from the back of his bike, she made no effort to keep her gaze above his waist. He truly was a magnificent specimen.

*Maybe motorcycles aren't all bad. Weighing a head injury against getting to wrap myself around him one more time....*

Anne lost track of that thought when Lou lumbered into the lot with Sherman still attached to the truck. He waved her over and Anne went, wondering what else had gone wrong.

"I just remembered that I don't have room for Sherman at my shop so I'll leave him here until I can get to him. You said you'd be here a couple days, right?"

"Weeks, actually. I'm just grateful you're willing to try to revive him."

Lou gave Sherman's rounded behind a fond pat. "Drove one of these myself a few years back. Not the best looking car ever made but dependable as all get out. We won't let old Sherman here go without a fight."

Anne smiled and waved Lou out of the parking lot before climbing back into Sherman. Everything she needed for her trip was still inside. She glanced up when the passenger side door opened and Trey slid in.

"You aren't planning on sleeping in here, are you?" he asked.

Anne narrowed her eyes at him. "Very funny. I happen to have a reservation."

A distinctive, braying laugh erupted from the group on the lawn. Anne winced.

"What was that?" Trey asked, leaning forward to peer around her.

"Minerva Huntington, gossip extraordinaire." Anne muttered.

Trey waved.

Anne turned to see Minerva standing next to a giant black Lincoln Continental. She was stooped over so she could peek into Anne's car, the upper half of her pinched little face covered by a pair of dark glasses that were meant to make her appear glamorous but just made her look like a

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bug.

“Horrible woman.” Anne returned the woman’s limp wave. “She’ll keep everyone back home informed of what everyone here does, as if anyone really cares. Whoa!”

Anne was too surprised to protest more as Trey slid one arm around her shoulders and the other across the front of her waist. He pulled her across the bench seat until she was flush against his side. She got a quick look at his oddly serious expression before he lowered his head and kissed her as casually as if they were lovers of longstanding, rather than two people that had met an hour ago by the side of the road.

His mouth moved over hers, teasing and coaxing until she let him in, not that she’d had any thought of keeping him out. Thirty-five was old enough for a woman to know that kisses like this didn’t come along everyday. Anne could have sworn he smiled when she opened her mouth under his, but then he settled in and things went a bit hazy. He just kept at her, his kisses deepening as they slowed, until she was lazily moving her mouth under his, following his lead, giving herself up to this languid, unexpected seduction. She didn’t protest as he ran one hand down her hip and under her knees, drawing her legs up and over his lap. Anne arched a little, pushing her shoulders more firmly into the curve of his arm, gasping into his mouth as he added just a touch more pressure to his kiss, until she completely forgot both where she was and who was watching her.

When he lifted his head, Anne’s hands were buried in his hair, she was half sitting on his lap, and one of her shoes had gone missing.

Minerva was still standing across the parking lot, her mouth hanging open.

Trey leaned down and whispered in her ear, “Dinner?”

“Yes,” Anne accepted without thinking as she quickly slid off his lap. “*Heavens*,” she breathed, a blush stinging her cheeks. A kiss was one thing but *that*, whatever that had been.... Anne looked up at him, confused and a little frightened, not so much of him as her reaction to

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him. That interesting tingle she'd gotten from the motorcycle had turned into a throbbing ache, but now did not seem the best time to be dealing in aches of a carnal nature.

Anne refused to avoid his heated gaze. If she could kiss him like that then she could very well look at him. "I might have made a—"

He kissed her again, once and hard, silencing her.

"I'll come for you at seven."

She nodded, quickly shifting away from his side, pretty certain she couldn't take another kiss without either passing out or crawling all the way into his lap. He got out of the car, saluted Minerva, and then strode off toward the road, his long, lean body outlined against the rapidly darkening sky.

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In addition to being an unpleasant person, Minerva Huntington was an outstanding storyteller, two personality traits that guaranteed her reputation as Pasadena's most vicious gossip. Standing in the lobby of The Cottages' main house, Minerva allowed her husband to deal with the desk clerk while she tried to decide who to call first if the idiot behind the counter ever managed to get her into a room. She couldn't believe she had to spend two weeks at this cheap excuse for a hotel, but since it had become the *in* place to while away the worst of the summer heat, it was either stay here or hear secondhand what was happening in society. The better class of people stayed up in the house, while people like Anne huddled in those cheap little huts the owners had the nerve to call cottages.

Tapping one index finger against her bottom lip, Minerva watched as two of the three trashy sisters that owned The Cottages took turns embracing "poor Anne" out on the front porch.

"Poor Anne, my left foot," Minerva muttered. Ha! Playing the saint of jilted first wives after her husband left her for a teenager, as if she were the only woman that had ever been thrown over for fresher fare. Oh, how everyone had wrung their hands over Anne, while of course doing

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precious little to actually help her out. That's why no one had ever called her to task for spending so much time with that no-good Charlie Atwood. But now that she'd taken to cavorting with a common thug in broad daylight, all that nonsense would end. Minerva mentally rubbed her hands together. Foolish woman, she obviously had no idea how precarious a good name could be. The community's collective sense of guilt would only stretch so far.

"Charlie," she murmured, a smile flirting with the normally pinched corners of her mouth.

Minerva's husband turned just in time to see his wife smile. He shivered.

"Douglas." She snatched the room key from his limp fingers. "Do you happen to know anyone that has Charlie Atwood's home telephone number?"

"Attaboy Atwood?" he asked, dumbfounded.

Minerva rolled her eyes at the vulgar nickname. The man's sexual prowess was legend, and the whispered rumors that he didn't always care which gender he had under him didn't seem to hurt. But Minerva had too shrewd an eye for human weakness not to know what everyone, including poor Saint Anne, had been missing for years. Attaboy Atwood was hopelessly in love with Anne, and this bit of gossip would surely break his heart. Oh, he'd never admit it but Minerva would know. And that would be delicious, possibly better than a general smear campaign against Anne's sterling reputation.

Minerva laughed and had the pleasure of seeing everyone around her wince.

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The photograph was what did it.

Charlie Atwood gazed down at the black and white image of Anne backed up against the rough bark of a tree trunk, her bare arms wrapped loosely around a man's smooth, broad shoulders. Their mouths were fused, their eyes closed, and their bodies twined around each other.

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Charlie slid the photograph back into the unmarked envelope it had arrived in. His secretary had dropped it on his desk along with the rest of the mail and phone messages he'd missed while away from the office. The lack of return address and postage attested to the fact that envelope had been hand-delivered, but his secretary couldn't say when it had appeared on her desk, let alone who had left it there.

Considering the telephone calls he'd been receiving, it would seem Minerva Huntington was behind the photograph's mysterious appearance. Except Minerva specialized in shredding reputations, and as far as Charlie could tell he was the only one she'd been reporting to regarding Anne's recent "scandalous" behavior. If anyone else in Pasadena knew what Anne was getting up to in Malibu, they either didn't care or weren't talking about it in front of him.

Charlie absently handled the envelope, flipping it over and over as he stared out the window. For the past four days he'd sat through Minerva's oh-so concerned sounding phone calls, making a few noncommittal sounds and comments while silently swearing revenge on whoever had provided the woman his unlisted number.

"Dime-store Lothario." Charlie tapped his desk with the envelope. That was how Minerva had first described the man in the photograph. She had obviously allowed her snobbery to interfere with her descriptive abilities. The man was no dime-store anything. He was a man in his prime, with deep chest, heavy arms, and large hands. A physically powerful man had the only woman he had ever loved pinned to a tree, and Charlie had no way of knowing for sure that she was there of her own free will. Men could be such manipulative shits, especially when chasing down a woman they wanted to get under them.

"I should know," Charlie muttered.

Left on a diet of Minerva's stories Charlie would have gone on believing that Anne was engaged in a harmless, and much deserved, vacation fling. The woman had been without male sexual companionship for over three years and he couldn't begrudge her what he couldn't, no,

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wouldn't provide. And yet....

Charlie pulled the photograph out of the envelope.

Seeing Anne in the arms of another man changed everything.

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Anne twined her fingers into Trey's thick, dark hair, her eyes sliding closed as he opened his mouth over her neck. She shivered in anticipation but there was no tension in it, only languid warmth that made her feel as if she were floating. His lips brushed the base of her throat, followed by the tip of his tongue before he gently sucked the thin skin against his teeth. Anne arched her back at the sharp, unexpected sensation. Her fingers tightened in his hair and he groaned, his arms around her waist and shoulders pulling her harder against his long, solid body.

He whispered something against her neck that sounded like, "Finally." Before she could wonder at his word choice, he set her away from him. Anne realized he had hit his limit, and she let him go without protest. Trey had very old-fashioned ideas when it came to sex. Sure, he kissed her until she couldn't remember her own name, pinned her against hard, vertical surfaces, wrapped her body around his, and they rubbed against each other until she was seconds from orgasm. But then he'd go straight into gentleman mode, pulling back, apologizing, and begging her pardon for taking advantage.

"I brought something for you." He smoothed his palm gently over her hair as he slowly backed away. "I'm going to go get it. I'll be right back."

Anne stood on the porch of her little rented cottage and watched as he walked down the stairs into the dark before turning toward the ocean. The night air was a warm, gentle caress against her bare shoulders as her gaze roamed over the expanse of sand and scrub that ran right up to the foundation of her cozy little cottage. At this time of night, no one was on the beach. Everyone was either in the hotel lobby having drinks, playing cards and gossiping, or tucked up in their rooms for the evening.



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She rubbed her hands over her bare arms, idly wondering if she should go get a sweater. Since Trey refused to go any farther than the porch, Anne decided to wait until he came back. Maybe she could lure him inside on the pretext of fetching something to warm her up, but even if she couldn't, it wouldn't ruin her evening. Being with him was so wonderfully soothing she didn't really care what they did as long as they did it together. This time with Trey was an interlude to be savored before she had to go home and face the rest of her life without Charlie. The nice thing about Trey was that even though she liked him enormously, when it was time for them to go their separate ways there would be no gaping hole where he had been.

"Unlike some people I refuse to mention." She glanced toward where Trey had disappeared, wishing he'd hurry back. It was easier to keep thoughts of Charlie at bay when Trey was near.

Out past the feeble porch light, a figure moved toward her in the dark. Anne narrowed her eyes, knowing instinctively it wasn't Trey. The shadowy figure was leaner and much quicker.

Anne's heart beat out of rhythm as the figure appeared at the foot of the steps, the weak yellow light from the kerosene lantern washing over perpetually messy brown hair, angular features, and a wide, thin mouth.

"Charlie," she breathed, joyful, reaching for him without thinking, forgetting for a split second he preferred that she refrained from touching him. But then she saw the harsh line of his unsmiling mouth and remembered.

She drew back but he was already up the stairs, still so fast on his feet that she had trouble believing he was almost forty. His physical quickness, combined with his wide smile and the spray of freckles across his nose and cheeks, made him look much younger. Laughing, charming Charlie, the life of the party, always ready with a joke and a refill of your drink—yet another one of his carefully constructed lies.

Anne whirled away, ruthlessly crushing her initial joy at seeing him, ashamed that she still hadn't learned that he didn't want her. Thinking

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only of getting away from him, she reached for the screen door.

“No.” His hand flattened against the wooden edge of the door, snapping it closed. His harsh tone was so unfamiliar that it brought her head around. “We have to stay out here.”

Anne drew back into the corner of the porch as he advanced on her, his movements suddenly and uncharacteristically slow and measured, one hand extended as if reaching for something that could go wrong without warning. She focused on his shadowed eyes, a little afraid of the man in front of her. Here was the Charlie she’d seen on only a handful of occasions, his substantial energy focused, his endlessly charming façade discarded for the ill-fitting lie it was.

“Charlie, I don’t—” she began, but her back hit the wall and she forgot what she was going to say. He had her penned in the corner. She half-expected him to back off now that he had her where he obviously wanted her, but he didn’t. His breathing was uneven. His normally laughing eyes narrowed as he kept moving forward, planting his elbows on either side of her head, and his forearms, wrists and hands flattening out against the wall at her back.

“How is he?” Charlie tilted his head a little to the side and fastened his gaze on her neck.

“Who?” Her gaze dropped to his mouth.

“I know about him,” His upper lip curled in what could have been a smile, but wasn’t. “I can see him on you.” He trailed the tip of his longest finger over the path Trey’s mouth had taken a few minutes ago, pausing at the hollow of her throat where he had pulled the skin against his teeth. “He marked you.”

Charlie was on her before she fully understood what was happening, and her body mistakenly interpreted the unexpected, aggressive pressure of his body as a threat. She gasped and struggled. Charlie ignored her response, clasped her head in his hands, and slanted his slightly open mouth over hers.

Heat rushed over her as though she were standing near a fire when it

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flared without warning. Anne's initially confused struggle abruptly ended with a deep-throated groan. She clutched at his back and spread her legs, allowing him to push between her thighs. His knees hit the wall behind her with an audible thud.

This was nothing like the floating bliss Trey inspired. This was blistering heat and coiled tension and driving need. This felt like him lashing out at her, and she didn't care. If this was the only way he would let her have him, then this was the way she would take him.

She tightened her hold, gripping his shoulders and reveling in the tensile strength of his lean body. He was so wound up that he was shivering, but his hands were firm on her hips. He lifted her to make up for the difference in their heights and pinned her to the wall with the pressure of his hips. His hands disappeared, leaving her to determine a way to keep from tipping over.

Typical Charlie, getting her halfway there then leaving her to work the details out for herself. Which was just fine with her. She had no intention of being a bystander. She hooked one leg over his hip and left the other down. Her foot arched almost painfully, keeping in touch with the somewhat solid ground of the porch with just the tips of her toes. But it worked, and it only got better when he finished pulling the skirt of her dress up around her waist until just a few thin layers of cotton cloth remained between them. Anne broke the kiss, needing air, needing to see the place where he was moving against her. Their foreheads met, both of them gasping for air as he ground his still fully covered cock against her barely covered mound. Her thoughts whirled at having Charlie here with her like this. For three years they had barely touched, both careful to keep an arm's length distance between them, a distance Charlie himself had wordlessly prescribed almost from the start.

She shivered and pushed her hips toward him when her bodice abruptly slid down to join her skirt in a bunch around her waist.

"Charlie," she scolded, but her voice was so breathless it came out sounding more like a plea. She hadn't even felt his hands on the zipper

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running down her side. Despite her shock, she couldn't help the grin that flickered across her lips. No caveman tactics for Charlie. His quick and nimble fingers made tearing fabric seem like overkill. Charlie glanced up and, catching her grin, he flashed her one of his trademark roguish smiles before lowering his eyes back to what he had uncovered.

"Arch." He lowered his head, curving his spine, as flexible as a cat. He licked the upper curve of her bared breast. Anne obeyed without protest, arching her back, giving him access to whatever he wanted. And what he wanted was his mouth on her breast, his cock riding between her spread thighs and his hands up under where those thighs gave way to her ass. The fingers of his left hand dug in with just the tips slipping under the elastic edge and curling into where she was moist and warm. That last felt as if he couldn't quite help himself, the touch oddly timid considering the strength with which he had come after her.

His body heat was incredible. The thin cotton shirt covering his shoulders clung to his damp back. His entire body practically vibrated as he suckled one breast, ground his hips into hers, and made not a single sound. It was his utter silence that got to her, that made her clutch him even tighter, wanting him even as she had him, feeling a distance no amount of physical contact could make up for, no matter how incredible it felt.

When she broke and cried out, his body seemed to freeze. He did not stutter or slow, but stopped completely as if someone had ordered him to cease all function. Anne couldn't stop, couldn't keep herself from flexing her hips and rubbing against him, wringing the last of her orgasm from the body shoved hard and immobile against her own writhing, panting self.

"Come inside." She tried to urge his head up from where it was still buried in her neck. He licked her, once, just where her neck gave way to her shoulder, before he jerked back so fast that she stumbled forward, barely catching her dress before it slipped down. His gaze met hers. His mouth was swollen, his eyelids heavy, but his gaze was sharp and cold—

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no, not cold.

Detached.

Anne turned sharply away as Charlie launched himself over the railing into the darkness, just as Trey strode into the outer reaches of light pooling at the foot of the porch stairs.

# And Charlie Makes Three:

## Chapter 3

Anne waved Trey away from the railing. “Don’t bother. You won’t find him, let alone catch him.”

Trey turned to her, one eyebrow raised.

Anne shrugged, too wiped out to worry if she had hurt his ego. The truth was the truth. Charlie didn’t want her. No one knew that better than her.

“I’m going inside.” Her hips were loose, her back smarted, and her body hummed deep down inside. Rather than leaving her satisfied, the orgasm left her feeling primed for more. She briefly wondered if he had done it on purpose, but that head-wrapped-in-a-blanket feeling was descending, and she wanted nothing more than to go lie down.

Anne looked out into the darkness as she zipped her dress, strangely unembarrassed about having been caught getting worked over by another man. Damn Charlie for ruining her vacation, anyway. What had he come here for? She knew for a fact he hadn’t driven all this way just to get her off. If he’d wanted that, she would have let him do anything he wanted to her in the comfort of her own home. That’s why he’d run from her the last time, because she’d dared to speak aloud the truth neither of them had been willing to face. She wanted more and he didn’t. But why come out here? Why do this to her? It had felt as if he couldn’t help himself, but then at the end that detached look....

“Anne?”

Anne started. She was standing right where Charlie had thrown himself over the railing, still staring out into the darkness, her arms wrapped tightly around her own bare shoulders. At least she wasn’t

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crying.

“Sorry.” She looked at him over her shoulder. He was standing by the door with his hands at his sides and his eyes in shadow.

Trey lifted his powerful shoulders. “You love him. Nothing’s easy about that.”

Anne looked back into the darkness. “I can’t have any more children.”

The unexpected brush of warm fingertips across the back of her neck made Anne shiver. Trey curled his arms around her waist, holding her loosely, just close enough that she could feel his body heat all down her back, but not so close she felt smothered. She honestly hadn’t meant to say that, but something about this man made her feel safe examining some of the truths she’d been burying these past three years.

“Is that why you think Frank left you? Because you can’t have children?”

“Yes. It’s also why Charlie won’t stay with me. Of course he would never say it, but I think that’s ultimately why. The night before I met you I told him I loved him. He walked out on me while I was in the middle of telling him he didn’t have to marry me. See, in his mind, if we have a sexual relationship without benefit of marriage he would be taking advantage of me. But he won’t marry me because I can’t have children, and then we’re back where we started. I can’t begin to imagine what he was doing here or why he—” Anne cut herself off, disgusted with her attempt to figure out what had just happened when she was clearly not the only injured party. “I’m so sorry you had to see that. God, what you must think of me.”

“I think you’re wonderful.” He gently cupped her jaw. “And I think Charlie’s breaking his heart over you more than you realize.”

Anne felt her eyes fill with tears. “Please don’t say that.”

“What? That you’re wonderful? You are and that is what’s killing him.”

Anne put her hand over his mouth. She didn’t want to hear anything that might give her hope when there was clearly none to be had.

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Trey licked her. The feel of his tongue swiping over her palm went straight between her legs. Anne snatched her hand back. The reaction would have embarrassed her if he hadn't been staring intently down into her face with his mouth slightly open, his breath coming deep and slow. Now that Charlie had arrived, something between her and Trey had altered. Trey had held himself off her for the past week, but now he'd removed the restraints. Distantly, she thought she should probably push him away, but she'd done everything she *should* for the whole of her life and look what it had gotten her.

Abandoned.

Twice.

To hell with *should*. She would have this man and, come to think of it, if Charlie ever came anywhere near her ever again, she would do everything in her power to have him, too.

Trey grinned as if he'd read her mind. "You let me know if there's anything I can do to help with whatever it is you're thinking about."

Anne pushed up on her toes and kissed him, opening his mouth with hers, going deep with her tongue. The mingled taste of two men in her mouth slid into her bloodstream like alcohol, warming and loosening her muscles, easing the tension that had been building in her chest. Trey kissed her back, his usual casual, almost indolent mouth suddenly direct and hard. Whatever had kept him from her was well and truly gone. For a brief second she thought it must be his respect for her, but then she shoved that idiotic thought into the trash bin with all those damn *shoulds* and slammed the lid on the lot.

Anne broke from Trey's loose hold and walked to the door. He was right behind her, so close his body brushed hers. His hands shaped her waist as she got past the screen and shoved open the door. It was dark inside, the bedspread's color washed out by the moonlight. Trey pushed the door closed with one hand as he pulled his shirt over his head with the other. Anne had spent a good portion of the past week looking at him in nothing more than swim trunks, but this was different. In the



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moonlight he looked otherworldly. His strange tattoo of a heart and chain links appeared somehow sinister in the shadows. His head was lowered and she couldn't see his eyes. He pushed his pants down over his hips and then stepped out of them. He stood before her naked, his hands loose at his sides. His chest rose and fell in increasingly quick, shallow breaths. He lifted one arm and curled his fingers toward his palm, once, to beckon her.

She unzipped her dress as she went to him, letting it slide down and stepping out of it as she covered the short distance between them. She wore only her damp panties, which clung between her legs from Charlie's touch and the sight of this man, naked and ready with a bed not two steps behind him. She slid out of those next, kicking them aside.

When she reached him, he swung her around and rolled her onto the bed underneath him, opening her legs as he slanted his mouth over hers. His tongue pushed into her mouth as his cock slid into her body. Anne arched to accept the smooth double penetration with a grateful groan. Oh, God, what an incredible relief it was to be filled, to have the solid weight of a man over her after so many years of going without. Trey set up a firm, steady rhythm before sliding his hand down between their bodies. As his fingertips brushed her sensitive clit, she pulled her mouth away on a gasp.

"Too sensitive?" Trey asked.

Anne reached down and clamped her hand over his wrist. "Don't you dare move that hand."

Anne heard his breath leave him on a gentle laugh, but then his touch firmed as he sought out and finally found a spot just to the left of her clit that went beyond sensitive into a whole other realm of sensation. She jammed her hips up against his and came.

"Yeah," Trey breathed, losing his rhythm for a couple of strokes. "Right there, then?"

Anne could only gasp and wrap her calves around his lower back. She wanted more, just one more.

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Trey removed his hand before settling back into his pace. He thrust twice as hard, each impact of his body sending a jangling current through her clit and deep into her body.

“More,” Anne groaned, completely losing any sense of what she was doing with her body or how much noise she was making or anything that didn’t have to do with attaining the peak Trey was shoving them toward. And then she reached it. Her back bowed up off the bed as seemingly every muscle in her body locked down before she flew apart.

Trey came after her, going up just as she was coming down. His body tensed into hers and then he released with a deep-throated groan. Anne ran her hands up and down his spine as they both tried to catch their breath.

Trey rolled to his side but made no effort to take her with him. Anne lay there, enjoying the cool air as it brushed over her sweat dampened skin. She blinked once. Twice.

Trey propped up on one elbow and looked down at her. She returned his steady regard.

“Don’t worry,” she whispered. “I’m not about to start in crying.”

Trey flopped over onto his back with a short laugh. “The only person who’ll be crying tonight is not in this room.”

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Charlie staggered into his hotel room, shut the door, and moved through the darkness like an overly careful drunk. He peeled off his clothes as he went, favoring his left hand as if it hurt. After lying down on crisp white sheets that glowed slightly blue in the moonlight, Charlie crossed his arms over his chest and concentrated on evening out his breathing and slowing his rabbiting heart rate. God, what a cock-up that had been.

He hadn’t meant to approach her, but her lover had disappeared after kissing her nearly senseless, and Charlie hadn’t been able to keep from drawing closer. And then she’s spotted him, inadvertently making eye contact in the dark, and he’d been lost. He could no longer control

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himself around her. That much was obvious. It had started the night he went over to see her on her birthday. Charlie tried to shove the memory away but couldn't. Instead he shuddered to remember her standing in her kitchen, dressed in one of those prim little white blouses and flowery, full skirts she favored, earnestly telling him she not only loved him but wanted him in her bed. He hadn't stayed around for the rest, but he'd heard it anyway, heard her say she didn't expect him to marry her, even as he bolted for the door.

As if he would have just had sex with her as though she were no different than all the others before her. He knew now he shouldn't have left her house so abruptly, but he'd been so tempted to take her up on all of her offers. The love, the sex—hell, if he'd stayed for the sex he would have proposed to her by dawn, and that would have been inexcusable. He loved her too much to do that. She just didn't understand. In her world a marriage proposal was proof of a man's love, but in his it was the opposite.

Permanently polluting her and her boys' lives with his presence was not an option. He'd stayed around too long as it was. So he'd left and he'd done it in such a way that she would have no question that it was over between them. He'd taken a quick, particularly nasty assignment out of town just to make sure he kept away and gave her enough time to get up to The Cottages. And it would have worked, he would have stayed put in Pasadena, but then Minerva had started in with her solicitous telephone calls, and then that picture had short circuited his common sense, and now he had the scent of her all over his goddamn body and no intention of washing it away until morning.

What was really bothering him now was that big fucker she'd been with had *marked* her, and instead of sending him into a jealous fit the mark had cranked him up so much he'd wanted to stay and fuck the man *along with* Anne. Anne already knew he was as twisted as a corkscrew when it came to sex. Did she really need proof that he was an old hand when it came to ménage à trois? No, and he should have been ashamed

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to even think of taking both of them together. Of course, since he was a sick bastard, the thought did exactly the opposite. Reaching down between his legs, Charlie began to stroke his cock, slow and firm, deliberately using the hand he had pushed between Anne's legs. He came, muffling his shout behind his own wrist.

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Just before dawn Anne rolled over and found the spot next to her empty. She lifted her head and saw Trey standing by one of the windows that faced the ocean. Naked, he had one hand braced on top of the window frame, the other slowly, absently rubbing the tattoo on his chest. He was obviously deep in thought, so Anne rested her head back on the pillow and let her eyes slide closed. Her body was so loose it felt almost as if it didn't belong to her. She'd been tense for so long that she'd come to believe it was her normal physical state.

Maybe losing Charlie wasn't such a bad thing.

Anne bit her lip but the tears came anyway, slow and silent, running out the corners of her eyes into her hair. She laid the back of her wrist across her eyes, but the pressure only made it worse. She choked a little, trying to get in a complete breath.

The mattress dipped and Anne rolled toward the pressure. Trey rubbed her back and made soothing sounds.

"It isn't the sex," she finally gasped out.

"I know. Don't worry about me. Just go on and cry for a while."

Anne nodded. Aside from the few frustrated tears that had managed to escape her by the side of the road, it had been a very long time since she'd let herself really cry. Her shoulders shook and she accepted the box of scratchy tissues Trey placed in her hands. The pressure on the mattress eased as Trey resumed his posture by the window.

After she'd quieted, Trey cleared his throat. "Tell me something."

Anne sat up and mopped her face with a handful of tissues.

"What did Charlie do during the war?"

"Spy."

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“That makes sense.”

“Not if you’d met him under normal circumstances.”

Trey went back to rubbing his chest.

“Does it hurt? The tattoo?”

“Sometimes,” Trey murmured, but his mind was obviously elsewhere.

Anne drew her knees up and wrapped her arms around them. “From what I’ve pieced together, Charlie was the kind of spy they sent out without ever expecting to see him again. I think he specialized in getting close to people, important people, getting to know them and then getting them to tell him things they shouldn’t or show him things that were better left hidden, at least for them.”

“You think he’s capable of that level of deception?”

Anne began to shrug but then stopped. The truth wasn’t always pleasant but it was better than the lies she’d been wading through when it came to Charlie. “Yes, like I said, you don’t know him the way I do. He’s...God, what is he? He’s everything anyone wants him to be.”

Trey tipped his head to the side and waited for her to continue. Anne thought for a minute then grinned and leaned forward.

“Okay, last month there was this big charity event at the club. Charlie volunteered to emcee and of course everyone agreed that no one could do it better. So, the night of the event everyone is there and Charlie’s up front. There’s a microphone but he absolutely ignores it, just talks to the crowd and they can hear him just fine because he doesn’t stay up front. He’s all over the place, making jokes and being charming, and everyone is having a wonderful time because no one feels ignored. There isn’t a cheap seat in the house because Charlie visits every table. Throughout the evening there are a few song and dance numbers. The girls in the chorus get Charlie to dance with them, and it’s all good fun. At the end of the night, I heard people in the parking lot talking about how it was the best charity event they’d ever been to because it’d been entertaining and there hadn’t been a hard sell to give up a bunch of money.”

“So Charlie turned a charity event into a party and everyone was

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happy but the charity?”

Anne snorted. “Charlie raised more money during the first hour than that charity normally sees in a year. By the time everyone had signed their checks and gone home, he’d raised nearly thirty thousand dollars.”

“Is that a lot?” Trey asked.

“It’s an *unheard of* amount for an event that small. It was as though he’d picked every single pocket in that room, and no one felt a thing.”

Trey nodded. “So he’s a con man.”

“Of the first order.”

“Except he refuses to con you.”

“The bastard.”

“Okay, that helps.” Trey turned back to the window.

“Helps what?”

“Nothing. What do you think he’ll do next?”

Anne tilted her head back to watch the gray light of early morning creep across the ceiling. “He’ll come here, probably sometime around eight. He’ll have asked around and found out that I go up to breakfast early, and he’ll catch me on the path somewhere between the hotel and here. I’ll have already eaten so he’ll feel free to offer to have breakfast with me, knowing that I won’t accept.” Anne stopped as she felt tension creep back into her body. “He’ll apologize without saying he’s sorry. I’ll forgive him and he’ll leave and I’ll probably never see him again. I’ve heard that his old bosses have been pressuring him to revive his wartime career. God, and he’ll probably do it, too.”

“And what about you? What will you do?”

“Go home. Do some laundry.” Anne shook her head. “I’ll do the next thing, and then the thing after that, and then the next thing after that, and call it a life and it’ll be fine. People have lived through worse.”

“Come here,” Trey said.

Anne lowered her head, seeing in some surprise that the light at the window had turned from light gray to a glowing, delicate pink. She crawled out of bed and took the hand he held out to her, turning her face

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up to him as she leaned into his chest. Trey's teeth flashed white in the weak morning light.

"What are you smiling at?" Anne teased, enjoying the wave of calm she felt at being so close to him.

"A con man, huh?"

Anne nodded. When this had all started by the side of the road a mere week ago, she'd thought she'd wanted to tell someone the entire truth about her and Charlie, and had she ever. Suddenly, as she stood there looking up at Trey, she had a bad few seconds wondering if he was what Charlie had been, someone sent by a hostile agency to ferret out secrets better kept. Catching her narrowed gaze, Trey shook his head.

"I haven't lied to you," he said. "And I never will. You will have your pound of flesh from Charlie Atwood. That's only fair. And then we'll see what's left when we're done."

Before Anne could reply, Trey covered her mouth with his in another hard kiss. He slid one hand along her shoulder to her collar bone before trailing the tips of his fingers between her breasts, over her stomach and down between her thighs. Anne breathed in through her nose as Trey began to stroke slowly between her legs. She was damp and swollen and sensitive, twitching a little when he slid his longest finger deep into her body.

"Whatever you're planning," she began, but then stopped when he dropped to his knees, shouldered her legs apart and licked once, firmly, between her thighs.

"Quiet," he teased. "I'm working here."

Anne twined her fingers in his hair and grinned. "I love a man with a strong work ethic."

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The next morning, Charlie parked on a small side road and hiked through low scrub brush and under wild growth oaks until he slipped into the system of paths that connected the cottages to the hotel. The staff members told him that she normally had breakfast early, so Charlie

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planned on catching Anne on her way back to her cottage. In the bright sunshine he would get her to forget about what he had done to her last night, and then he would leave her to her fling. She was obviously with the man of her own free will. There was no need for him to linger. He'd signed up for a travel assignment this morning, something that would take him out of Southern California for a good, long while. He hadn't immersed himself in a long-term assignment since before Frank left, and it was time he got back into it. With the Korean War winding down into a stalemate, there would be plenty of need for men like him. He spoke more Russian than Korean, but he was a quick study and it wasn't as if he had anything else to do.

Charlie raised his fist to knock on the edge of Anne's wooden screen door before he even realized what he was doing, let alone where he was. Shit. He wasn't supposed to have walked this far. He knew he was more scrambled than he wanted to admit, but to have failed to notice that he'd gone too far....

The door swung open, and the man known simply as Trey stood bare-chested at eight a.m. in Anne's cottage. The faint markings Charlie had found on her last night were one thing, but this was something altogether different.

Charlie had the screen open and one foot over the threshold before his brain knew what his body was doing. Not smart. Up close certain details about the man came into clear focus. First off, he didn't seem particularly upset about Charlie barging in. Instead he backed up past where the door swung into the room. Charlie followed even though he knew he was no match for the man's strength and size, but he didn't care since he had no clear idea what the fuck he was doing anyway.

"Anne?" Charlie's gaze skittered around the room before settling on the narrow doorway that led to the bathroom.

"Up at the main hotel getting breakfast," Trey replied, a smile flirting with one corner of his full lipped mouth. "She's a little later than usual this morning."



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Charlie's gaze zeroed in on that mouth, noting instantly the swollen, flushed lips. And he suddenly knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that the smug bastard had had that mouth between Anne's legs not half an hour ago.

"That's right." Trey swiped his thumb across his bottom lip.

Charlie didn't bother wondering how Trey knew what he'd been thinking. He often did the same thing, answering unasked questions, saying aloud what his mark was often too frightened or guilty to admit.

"Keep coming." Trey slowly backed farther into the room. Charlie followed, stumbling over one of Anne's shoes as he went. Trey reached out and clasped Charlie's narrow waist, his thumbs burrowing under clothing to brush the taut skin over his hipbones, a caress that sent a hard, borderline painful shudder down the front of Charlie's thighs. Charlie checked the urge to plant a fist in the other man's face by reasoning that Anne wouldn't thank him for bloodying her lover. Anyway, he was intrigued by the aggressive move. The laying on of hands between men was a serious business. When a man put his hands on another man there was rarely any going back to the way things had been before. Locking his gaze with Trey's, Charlie laid his hand on the other man's throat, his thumb riding the front of Trey's neck, his fingers digging into the muscular nape.

Trey abruptly pulled Charlie's hips flush with his. Both men were hard but only Charlie flinched at the contact.

Trey licked his lips. "Go ahead. Take what you want from me."

Charlie didn't hesitate. He hadn't kissed a man in years but it all came back, the initial aggression settling down more quickly now that he was older and didn't care who was in charge of the encounter. All he wanted was a taste of Anne. Charlie groaned, every muscle loosening as the kiss deepened. He leaned in to Trey as his head spun. His fingers relaxed and began a rhythmic kneading at Trey's nape as his thumb stroked a strong, steady pulse. He could just taste a woman, Anne, as he worked deeper into the recesses of Trey's mouth. Instead of ratcheting up, his pleasure

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rose in a billow, like opium smoke, heavy and intoxicating. He could have stayed like that for hours, but a shift of the light coming in through the open door caught his attention, and he opened his eyes to see Anne standing on the porch, her expression obscured by the screen door.

“No.” He snatched his hands off Trey’s body and tried to jerk away. But he was caught, by both Trey’s firm grip and the determined look in the other man’s dark eyes.

“Easy,” Trey whispered into his ear, the iron grip transferring from his hips to his wrists. Charlie tensed the muscles down his spine, getting ready to sling-shot himself out of Trey’s hold. Seconds before he made his move, Trey’s voice hissed in his ear, “It’s too late.”

“Let go,” Charlie ground out between his teeth.

Trey slowly shook his head. “It all ends here.”

# *And Charlie Makes Three:*

## *Chapter 4*

Anne stood on the porch and watched through the screen as Trey and Charlie ate at each other's mouths. Charlie had wound himself around Trey's solid body, a slender, pliable vine with one hand splayed over Trey's bare lower back, the other wrapped around his throat. As Anne watched, Trey purposefully pushed one leg between Charlie's. Both men groaned when Charlie, obviously welcoming the intrusion, hitched up higher on Trey's thigh and rolled his hips until there wasn't a millimeter of space between their bodies. A light sheen of sweat broke out across Trey's shoulders, and Anne felt a sympathetic wash of moisture between her legs. They were the same height but Charlie was narrower, much paler, and he looked as if he'd slept in his clothes. In the arms of a man as physically beautiful and powerful as Trey, he should have appeared the lesser of the two, but that just wasn't the case.

Their movements were subtle, their hips shoved so tightly together that Anne would have thought the pressure painful. But they seemed determined to keep each other's lower bodies exactly where they were, especially Trey, who had a grip on Charlie's hips tight enough to turn his knuckles white. Charlie shuddered, eased away a fraction of an inch, and drew in a deep breath. His lips were open and slick. With his eyes closed, he remained blissfully unaware that she was watching him. When he slid his tongue back into Trey's mouth, Anne shuffled her feet, so agitated by what she was witnessing she literally couldn't keep still.

Charlie swung his head toward her, met her gaze through the screen, and jerked out of Trey's arms.

"Don't let him go," Anne said, but Trey didn't need to be told not to

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let Charlie go. As Anne shut the door she could hear the men murmuring to each other. Trey had his hands wrapped around Charlie's wrists. There was now about a foot of space between them, with Charlie standing in front of Trey, staring at a spot over her shoulder while Trey blinked a couple of times, looking dazed. Anne sympathized. Charlie in full rut was something no one person should try to handle alone. She should know. She'd failed to hold onto him the only time he'd turned all that sexual energy in her direction. But this time she had help. No matter how wily Charlie was, Trey was bigger.

She didn't hesitate, didn't allow rational thought a chance to intrude on the physical. Trey's comment about her getting her pound of flesh suddenly made sense, and as long as Charlie didn't say no, she was going to get as much of him as possible. Anne approached them, hardening herself against the detached look in Charlie's eyes. No one could wipe away that fast the level of arousal she'd just witnessed. Anyway, the thick shape of his cock in the front of his trousers sort of gave him away.

She set to unbuttoning his shirt. When she got halfway down, she glanced up into his face.

He cleared his throat but his voice still came out hoarse. "What do you think you're doing?"

"You." She returned her attention to his buttons and what was being revealed. His skin was so pale that it should have seemed delicate or even pasty, but it didn't. His slender frame was deceptive. Stripped of his shirt, his upper body had all the softness and give of steel cable strung tight over a metal frame. In his clothes he had an urbane slenderness most people tended to admire, but stripped of his expensive, tailored garments, his thinness had a hard edge that spoke of a hunger impossible to appease. Thin, pale, freckled, and yet irresistible. As usual, nothing about him added up. Anne leaned forward and brushed her lips across his throat. When he swallowed, she followed the motion with her mouth, feeling his throat work. His shoulders twitched, and she smiled at

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the obviously uncontrollable reaction.

For as wrinkled as his clothes were, his skin smelled like hotel soap and something elusive she vaguely recognized as him. Never before had she been allowed to get close enough to really smell him. Last night didn't count. She'd been so overwhelmed by him she could barely remember any of the finer details. She dragged the tip of her nose up his throat, inhaling as deeply as she could, feeling a primal sense of satisfaction at knowing something as simple as what he smelled like. Over the past three years they'd gotten to know each other very well, but they had scant physical knowledge of each other. She knew his moods, how to make him laugh, even a few of his fears and regrets, but up until now she'd only had a vague notion of what he smelled like underneath the cologne he sometimes wore or the detergent his clothing was washed in.

"Delicious," she said, more to herself than him.

"Destructive," he replied, his voice distorted by his clenched teeth.

"Hush." She took a little nip at his lobe before pushing his open shirt off his shoulders. It whispered as it slid down his arms and obscured Trey's grip on his wrists. Anne leaned in, and Charlie leaned back to keep some small distance between their bodies. When Charlie's bare back met Trey's bare chest, both men couldn't keep from reacting.

"Feels like he's got a fever." Trey lowered his head to brush his lips across the flesh where Charlie's neck met his shoulder. Anne was about to make a silly comment, something light and teasing, but paused when she saw Charlie's eyes. Anne realized she'd never been close enough long enough to see that his eyes were a true hazel, green and brown and even some yellow that looked like flecks of gold shifting around in a mountain stream.

"Your eyes are beautiful," she whispered. "I never knew."

Charlie shuddered, closed his eyes, but then quickly opened them.

"Feels too good when you leave them closed?" Anne teased.

He shook his head.

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“Liar,” she said, but he remained stubbornly silent.

She ran her hands over his chest, tense and firm under her splayed fingers. He shuddered when Anne leaned her cheek against his breastbone and wrapped her arms around his waist. Anne looked up into his face and felt a little dizzy. There was no doubt that Trey was much better looking, but Charlie was stunning in his own peculiar way, in a way that demanded a person look twice, and then keep looking to figure out what exactly it was about his angular face that made him so hard to ignore. Of course, the answer wasn’t in what he looked like, but rather in what he had on the inside, a little something extra he’d brought with him into this world.

“There isn’t anything about you I don’t adore.” She placed a gentle kiss over his heart.

“*Fuck.*” He suddenly hunched over her as much as Trey’s hold on him would allow. “I want you, but I don’t want to do this to you.”

“Don’t worry. In case you haven’t figured it out yet, you won’t be doing anything to me,” she whispered. “This is for me. My pound of flesh.”

Charlie cracked a smile. “Pound of flesh, huh? I’m flattered.”

Anne rolled her eyes, but she was so glad to see a smile on his face that she decided she would say no more about her love and hide what was left of her hopes for a future with him. Those hopes had been dying since her birthday, but they weren’t dead yet. He didn’t need to know that. Luckily, he’d taught her well the art of misdirection.

Speaking of which—she cupped her hand over his cock and gently squeezed, curling her fingers toward her palm one by one, slow enough that he would feel each one. He choked on a startled groan. Trey laughed an evil chuckle that had Charlie twisting, which had the bad luck, at least for Charlie, of jamming his cock more firmly into Anne’s hand. Anne worked on Charlie’s pants, slowly opening the fly and trying to keep her breathing slow and even.

“Nervous?” Charlie pushed his hips out at her. Ah, aggression. That

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was a tactic he'd never used on her. She rather liked it.

"With all honesty, yes." No need to hide this truth from him.

His long exhalation stirred her hair but she didn't look up. "These are too loose." Anne pulled the waistband away from his body. "You've lost at least five pounds since the last time I saw you."

"I've been busy," he muttered.

Anne bit back the scolding she used to give him over his abysmal eating habits. Taking care of him was no longer her job. Instead, she slid her hands inside his waistband and shoved the pants down until she was kneeling at his feet. With a startled grunt, Charlie plastered himself back against Trey. Trey gave him a step but then stopped him, both men shifting and grappling before Trey got him back under control.

"Maybe we should just tie him," Trey muttered.

"No, there's no way he'd allow that." Anne looked at Charlie's legs. Here, he was beautiful. Perfectly formed narrow ankles, muscled calves, thighs heavier than expected, and a long, wine-red cock with a subtle sideways curve. Anne licked her lips. So the rumors were true, he was bent. She reached out and gripped him where he deviated from true. His skin was soft and surprisingly tight over the hard center of his cock. She slowly pulled toward the pulsing head, leaning up to get a better look. He was meatier than she expected, and she wondered if he seemed larger just because his hips were so narrow. His was only the third cock she'd ever handled, and something inside her thrilled at the sudden thought that there were so many, many different shapes and sizes of cocks in the world.

"And I can have as many as I want," she whispered, a strange thought for someone as sexually circumspect as she had been up until yesterday. But it was the truth, especially since Charlie would soon be gone. She only realized she'd spoken aloud when Charlie cursed, and Trey barked out a laugh.

"You most certainly can, sweetheart," Trey said as he licked the rapidly reddening shell of Charlie's ear. "You can have as many cocks as

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you want.”

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Charlie saw red.

He'd heard that phrase before but thought it was just some meaningless saying. He'd always thought it was a stupid phrase because people didn't see red when they got blood in their eyes from fighting. They couldn't really see much at all, too sticky and blurry.

But no, this was as if someone had flipped on a darkroom light. The shadows went true black, Anne's pale skin glowed garnet, and he didn't think it was her hand on his dick that had him in a red haze. It was Trey, telling her she could have all the cocks she wanted.

His mind tried to grab onto that thought and pull it apart so he could start working on a solution to the problem of Anne having as many men as she wanted. But her hand on his cock short-circuited the process. Her fingers slid almost to the end and then her mouth, her moist warm mouth, engulfed the head. The red flared higher as she swiped her tongue over just the tip before curling under to catch the nerve-rich ridge between head and shaft. His knees gave out and it was more than likely he blacked out for a second, because the next thing he knew, strong hands gripped his upper arms and pulled them back until his elbows almost met. The pain brought him out of his near fucking *swoon*.

“Jesus.” Charlie blinked, glad when all the colors of the rainbow returned to his vision, but then Anne took him deeper in her mouth and his body got away from him again. Chills shot up his legs from the soles of his feet and met the chills racing down from his scalp. They crashed together at his crotch, where Anne slowly and carefully worked him over. Hers wasn't the most talented mouth he'd ever had on him, but there was something about the way she handled him, the way she kissed and licked and sucked him before leaning back to examine her handiwork, that made him want to scream.

“How you doing? Need to lie down yet?” Trey asked, his tone pitched low for Charlie's ears only.



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“As long as she doesn’t go for my balls.”

Anne went back to her slow, thoughtful examination of his cock. Charlie squeezed his eyes shut, but not before a tear got loose and ran down his cheek. He rubbed the offending cheek on his shoulder until the moisture was obliterated, and then rested the back of his head on Trey’s broad shoulder, trying to settle in to Anne’s diabolical punishment. He’d been tortured once during the early years of the war, so surely he could get through this. He got his breathing under control with a few deep breaths, and he was just thinking that maybe he was going to make it through this with his dignity intact when Trey craned his head forward and said, “Don’t neglect his balls.”

“Oh!” Anne said, the pleased little word a mere puff of air against his crotch before she turned her attention to his now twitching scrotum.

“Fucker. You’ll pay for that.”

Trey tightened his grip.

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Fascinating. No matter what she did, Charlie’s cock twitched and wept. Just to check his sensitivity outside the bathing suit zone, Anne scratched her nails gently down the insides of his thighs. Charlie made a noise as if he’d been held under water a few seconds too long. His head came up from where it had been rolling mindlessly back and forth on Trey’s shoulder, and he spit out a heartfelt, “Fuck!”

“I never knew.” Her knees protested as she stood. When she was on her feet, she realized what her time working on his body had done to hers. He filled her senses, his taste in her mouth, his scent in her nose, the varied textures of his body a tingling on her hands and tongue. Her knees went from achy to wobbly, and she had to grab onto Charlie’s hips to steady herself. She swayed forward, the full skirt of her dress wrapping around his bare legs. She was startled to realize she was still dressed and that Charlie was the only naked person in the room. Her skin suddenly felt hot and itchy and she let Charlie go, her hands searching out the zipper down the side of her dress. Charlie quickly ducked his

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head. His freckles stood out in sharp contrast to his deeply flushed face, and his lips pressed together so tightly they were nearly white.

*He's barely hanging on.* She noted the increased tension throughout his body. Anne thought about how he had been in Trey's arms, his shoulders loose, his hips rolling easily against Trey's. That was how she wanted him, eager and reaching for pleasure rather than fighting to keep some semblance of control.

"Is it so terrible, giving in to me?" Anne slid her hands up over his shoulders until her elbows rested on his chest. Her fingers tangled behind his neck. "Haven't I been good all these years? Haven't I behaved myself? Don't I deserve to have what I want, just this once?"

When Charlie didn't respond, didn't even meet her gaze, she pushed back from him with a sharp exhalation of breath. She ran her thumbnail along her bottom lip as she stared at Charlie's bare feet, noting that even his toes were tense, curled against the hardwood floor. Then his feet shifted, and she felt his tongue swiping over where she was tracing her lower lip.

"You did that the first time I saw you," Charlie whispered against her mouth and then laughed softly. "At first I thought you were teasing me, but I figured out pretty quick you weren't the type. Of course, that didn't stop me from wanting to lick your mouth. Even after I knew who you were, I still wanted that."

A vague picture of him that day, arrogant and drunk at four in the afternoon, flitted through her memory. *No wonder*, she'd thought as she'd walked out of the trees to accost him on one of the few stretches of golf course not visible from the clubhouse, *no wonder so many people have fallen prey to his charms*. Her steps had faltered as she'd gotten closer, and she'd been angry at herself for her reaction to him. She briefly wondered if knowing about his attraction would have changed her behavior. Probably not, especially since she'd still believed her marriage was going to weather his storm.

"A putter in one hand and a brunette in the other," Anne teased.

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“What was her name, you never did introduce us.”

“It was a nine iron, and I don’t remember her name.”

“Liar. You never forget anything.” Anne laughed a little when he scowled. Tilting her head up, she brushed her mouth over his.

“That’s the second time you’ve called me that,” he replied before swiping his tongue over her bottom lip then sliding his lips over hers. The nearly frictionless sensation sent a quick, hard shiver down her spine.

Anne didn’t respond past one raised brow. Finally Charlie gave in with a slight shake of his head. “Her name was Janet. Outstanding golfer, drank like a sailor on leave, and barely said three words together.”

“The perfect woman,” Anne joked even though she didn’t find the thought particularly funny.

“At the time. She was the perfect woman at the time.”

Anne looked up and their gazes locked, and suddenly he was there, all of him, the way he was when they were surrounded by people and he deemed it safe to open up and let her in. Public emotional intimacy was one thing, but this was utterly different.

“Tell me what you want.” She cupped his cheek. “Just this once, let me give to you.”

“You” he replied, his voice hoarse. “I want you.”

“Silly man.” Anne pushed the slender straps of her dress off her shoulders before letting it fall to her ankles, leaving her in panties and a smile.

Both Trey and Charlie grunted. Anne decided to take their sounds as a compliment.

“You’ve had me all along.” She curled her arms around Charlie’s shoulders and pressed her naked body flush against his, rubbing and enjoying the feel of his hair-roughened flesh against her own much smoother skin.

She felt his resistance break down all through his body. He moaned as he lowered his head and gave his mouth to her, his lips soft and pliant,

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receiving her kiss as his eyes finally, *finally* slid closed. After that his body relaxed. He leaned in to take her mouth, kissing as she had always dreamed they would kiss, deep and lush, slow and thorough, until she was breathless and shivering and had to break the kiss or risk passing out.

“Lay her down.” Charlie’s hands curled over her shoulders to push her back a step.

Anne shook her head, confused for a second from the heat and lack of oxygen. Something wasn’t right about Charlie telling Trey what to do. Something really wasn’t right about his hands on her shoulders. Trey moved out from behind Charlie, his eyes hooded and dark, and Anne realized that with his surrender Charlie had somehow managed to take control.

“Wait,” Anne muttered, but Trey was pressing her down onto her back as Charlie crawled toward her from the other side of the bed. Trey and Charlie began to work together, arranging her on her side with Trey behind her, Charlie in front. Anne tried to think but a haze descended, clouding her reason and leaving only a biting need that sharpened as she accustomed herself to the feel of two pairs of hands moving over her body.

She wasn’t familiar enough with either of them to know for sure whose hands were whose, until a hand slid between her legs and she knew by the angle of entry that it was Charlie. She lifted her leg and hooked it over his narrow hip, giving him more room to work. He smiled against her shoulder.

“So generous,” he whispered.

Then he lifted his head and said in a hard, clear voice, “Take her.”

Trey gripped her hips, tilted her hipbones toward Charlie, and slid into her from behind. Anne arched. Her breath left her on a startled gasp that Charlie quickly took into his mouth. He kissed her deeply as Trey worked in and out of her body in a languorous pace that had Anne groaning into Charlie’s mouth.

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“Good?” she heard Trey’s voice in her ear.

Anne pulled her mouth from Charlie’s, intending to look over her shoulder at Trey, but Charlie slanted his mouth even more aggressively over hers. He sucked her tongue into his mouth and kissed her until she felt herself surrendering a level of control to him she hadn’t realized she would ever give to another.

Charlie pulled back and smiled down into her glazed, heavy-lidded eyes. “There now.” He rubbed his thumb over her swollen lower lip. “You just keep those eyes forward, hear?”

Anne nodded as Trey continued to slowly and surely fuck her from behind. She felt his presence deep in her pussy, his hand on her hip, and his easy, steady breath in her ear.

“Yes, Charlie.” Charlie’s gaze held hers. “We’ll go ahead and have you say that whenever I tell you to do something.”

Anne blinked, even as a strange new heat blossomed behind her breastbone. “Tell? Don’t you mean ask?”

Charlie was shaking his head well before all the words were out of her mouth. “Tell. And you’ll say...?”

“Yes, Charlie.” Her pussy fluttered in agreement with the idea of obediently doing whatever Charlie told her to do.

Trey grunted.

“She like the idea?” Charlie asked.

“More than a little,” Trey replied, his voice a little strangled.

“Good.” Then, before Anne could complain about being talked about as if she weren’t there, Charlie ducked his head and kissed first her throat then her shoulder, one nipple then the other. Short, quick kisses continued down the lower curve of her rib cage. A quick swipe of his tongue at her belly button made her jump and giggle. She felt his breath, warm and even, on her skin, felt his hands skimming over her body, heard his muttered compliments as he slowly slid down. He widened the space between her legs as he draped her thigh over his shoulder. Her inner thigh slid to rest where his neck gave way to his shoulder, and his

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breath struck her pussy, and she realized somewhere in the haze of her mind that he could see Trey's cock pushing in and out of her body.

"So beautiful." He combed just the tips of his fingers through her hair. "You're so good to me, letting me see you like this. So fucking good," he muttered, his worshipful tone darkening.

Anne's eyes snapped open and she looked at Charlie with his head resting on one of her thighs, her other leg curled over his shoulder, her heel resting on his lower back. Pointing her toes, she nudged the curve of his ass. He glanced up, and she grinned.

"Naughty," he mouthed the word, and she couldn't help laughing.

Trey grunted and slung his hips a little harder into her. Charlie arched away with a quiet snicker, barely avoiding having his nose smacked by her hipbone.

"Sorry." Trey tightened his grip on her hip before settling back into his leisurely pace.

"She has a sexy laugh." Charlie nuzzled her pubic hair. "You should see the jackals at the club when I get her going, you know, that way women get when they're laughing and their heads are back and they can't quite catch their breath. Grown men acting like horny teenagers, all of them thinking what a ripe jackass Frank was for letting her go."

Anne only listened with half an ear. She focused on the feel of just the tip of his nose burrowing between her legs, the contact just enough to make her shiver in anticipation.

Trey released his hold on her hip and trailed his fingers up her body before settling over one distended nipple. Anne arched into the touch. Charlie replaced Trey's hand with his own firmer grip, tilting her hips back even more, until she felt the lengthening of the delicate folds of tissue surrounding Trey's cock. Trey slid a half an inch deeper on his next inward thrust and groaned in reaction.

"Keep her like this," Charlie said, and Anne noticed Trey wasn't required to say 'yes, Charlie.' It was probably enough that Trey was allowing himself to be ordered around in the first place. Trey returned

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his hand to her hip, and his fingers dug into her flesh. The strength of his grip was the only sign he wasn't as calm as his even breathing made him sound.

And then Charlie slid both thumbs up either side of her clit, and began to lick what he'd revealed, up from where Trey's cock was sliding in and out, up to her straining clit and everywhere in between.

Anne's body convulsed. It felt as if everything she had ever physically experienced up until this moment had to be reassessed based on this latest sensation. Charlie had a softer mouth than she expected, his tongue avid and yet gentle, slipping and sliding over tissues already so sensitive that anything firmer would have tipped over into pain. She slid her hands into his hair, not to hold him against her so much as to feel him there between her legs. Her Charlie, right where she'd never expected to have him.

Anne came again, unexpectedly, shocking herself with the bright intensity of her orgasm.

"Go on and fuck her a little harder." Charlie backed off and turned his attention to the sensitive skin stretched over her hipbone. He licked between Trey's splayed fingers, and something about that part of her body was electrified, shooting sensation down her thighs as Trey thrust harder if not faster from behind. Anne opened her eyes to see Charlie swipe his tongue over Trey's thumb before quickly sucking it into his mouth, his cheeks hollowing out as he did.

Trey barked out a curse word Anne didn't recognize as he jerked his hand away. Charlie drew back, but he must have been up to something down there because Trey's hips stuttered. He lost his rhythm and began to fuck her in short, hard strokes that rubbed the ridge under the head of his cock repeatedly and firmly over a crazily sensitive cushion just inside Anne's pussy.

"Bastard." Trey dug his damp forehead into her shoulder. "He wants you and he doesn't want to—" Trey gagged on what he was going to say for a second before he cursed some more. "Fucking wait. Come on. Just

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give me a little longer.”

*He’s hurrying Trey so he can have me.*

The thought of Charlie being impatient to have her set her off, her body bearing down in a quick forceful orgasm that proved Trey’s undoing. He came with yet another muttered curse, his body straining hard against her back.

Charlie eased up her body as Trey pulled away, his lips sliding over his teeth in a sly grin that had Anne flushing and Trey muttering.

“Selfish bastard.” Trey rolled to sit up on the side of the bed. His feet hit the floor with an audible thud. There was just enough grudging respect in his tone so that Anne didn’t worry about truly hurt feelings. But when she reached over to smooth her hand down Trey’s spine, Charlie rolled her under him, using one knee to push her unresisting legs apart. He caught and held her gaze with his own. There was nothing playful about his expression, and Anne swallowed, a little nervous, as if something was about to happen that would change her in ways she did not yet comprehend. Sex with Trey had been easy—not meaningless, but simple, mutual pleasure freely given and received. But this....

“Put your arms around me,” Charlie whispered as his lower body settled between her thighs. His skin felt feverish again, but he wasn’t tense the way he had been before. “Hold onto me.”

Anne curled her arms up around his shoulders and pushed her fingers into the hair at the base of his neck. He closed his eyes for a second and bowed his head, rolling his body against hers and making a sound like an animal being rubbed in just the spot he favored. She felt his cock sliding between her folds, each pass easier than the last as her moisture coated his shaft until it was a near frictionless slide that teased more than it relieved.

“Charlie,” she moaned, trying to catch his mouth, surprised when he let her, even more surprised when he allowed her to lead the kiss, allowed her to learn his mouth, the texture and taste of him, the uneven edges of his lower teeth, and oh, the way his hips shoved a little closer to



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hers when she suddenly sucked his tongue into her mouth. He was indeed delicious, his mouth as agile and as avid as it had been between her legs. Reminded of all he had done to her over the past twenty-four hours, Anne arched up and kissed him harder, suddenly impatient to have him.

He pulled his mouth from hers by straightening his arms until she had to drop back onto the pillow, gasping, frustrated.

“You’ll not rush me.” He bent his elbows and lowered himself back over her.

She frowned, lust making her grouchy. “You rushed Trey.”

“Don’t you worry about ol’ Trey,” Charlie said, his voice losing its teasing tone.

Anne thought to look around for Trey but Charlie shook his head. “Best thing about that man, he sure knows when to get lost.”

Anne felt a little stab of concern for Trey’s having been summarily kicked out of bed, but Charlie dipped down and swiped the flat of his tongue over her right nipple. Anne arched in surprise as the sensation went straight between her legs. He did it again and then again. By the fourth pass Anne was gripping his head and her knees were gripping his ribs. The normally disjointed thoughts and feelings that made up her normal, everyday self swirled together, creating a cohesive being that strained toward one impossible goal, joining herself to this man.

“Want,” she managed to gasp out, even as her body undulated under him and her fingers curled into claws and she raked her nails across his shoulders, her passion edged with a terrible frustration many years in the making.

“Yes, Anne.” Charlie put his hand down between their bodies and aimed his cock for her entrance. He slipped a few times because she was so wet and agitated. She scratched him again, a little harder this time, a minor punishment for his failure to immediately give her what she wanted. A hard shudder went down his spine. She gripped the back of his rapidly dampening neck, pleased at his response.

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He slid inside with a harsh grunt, seating himself on the first thrust and staying there for one breathless instant.

“*Finally*,” she hissed and just because he had made her wait so long, she delicately nipped the skin under his chin.

“Yes, Anne.” He drew back enough so that they could see each other. Anne smiled, so joyous to see him above her that she forgot to keep a tight control on her expression. Some of her love for him must have shone through, because he tensed. But he was too far gone to leave her, and they both knew it.

Anne cradled his jaw in her hand and moved against him, loving him the only way he would let her, with her body. She lifted her hips then withdrew, adjusting the angle until each stroke felt just a little better than the last. As pleasure coiled tighter in her lower body, Charlie’s breath caught and then rushed out. She twisted under him, her frustration building as she realized she couldn’t do more than wind herself up from this position.

“Please,” she whispered, her eyelids sliding closed as she began to pant, the tension drawn so tight she was close to pain.

“No,” he gasped, cradling her head in his hands. “Don’t look away.”

“Yes, Charlie.” Anne forced her eyes open to meet his anguished gaze. He settled onto his elbows and then he began to move, deep, firm strokes that hit her at the angle she had worked up to.

Staring up into Charlie’s clear hazel eyes, she came after ten steady strokes. Before she had finished coming, his even rhythm broke down, turning fast and hard, angled specifically to give him the most pleasure, but he was honest in this and kept his gaze on hers as he followed her down, both of them gasping and shaking in each others arms, gazes locked, hearts aching even as their bodies soared.

# And Charlie Makes Three:

## Chapter 5

When Charlie woke, it was early afternoon. Anne slept draped over him, her thigh wedged between his, her palm over his heart, her hair concealing the lower half of her face. In the quiet of that little room, with the sunlight loitering out past the overhang of the porch and the sound of the guests on the beach muted by the closed windows and white sheers, Charlie allowed a deep sense of satisfaction to filter through his soul.

Closing his eyes, he slid one palm down her spine, curling his fingers over her bottom. She shifted, rubbing herself against his thigh clamped between her own.

“Charlie,” she moaned, tipping her chin up even as she clung to sleep. Her hair slid away to reveal her swollen, slightly parted lips. He covered her mouth with his, kissing her awake, something he honestly never thought he’d get to do. Guilt pinched at his chest and he drew back to stare up at the ceiling.

“Are you okay?” Anne’s fingers traced his damp lower lip.

Charlie laughed as he glanced down at her. “I think that’s my line.”

“Well, I’m fine.”

And she looked fine, her eyes bright, her lips curling into a welcoming smile, her head resting on the same pillow as his own.

“God damn,” he muttered. “How the hell did I let this happen?”

“What?”

“This. You and me in the same bed.”

“You don’t have to sound so upset about it.” Anne rolled over onto her back.

“You don’t get it, do you?” Charlie propped himself up on one elbow

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so he could look down at her.

“I don’t get what? That when morning comes you’ll be long gone? Trust me Charlie, I get it.” She crossed her arms over her chest and tipped her chin into the air.

“You’re so tough.”

“Shut up,” she muttered, rolling onto her side away from him.

With one finger Charlie followed the curve of her shoulder down her arm, thinking through what he was about to say and hoping it was the right thing. He only had one chance here, and he really didn’t want to fuck it up.

“I left you on your birthday because I was afraid. Afraid that if I took you up on your offer of a sexual relationship it wouldn’t be enough, and I would ruin the rest of your life by asking you to marry me.”

Anne threw him a sharp, disbelieving look over her shoulder. “You don’t have to do this. I’m okay with the fact that this is your way of saying good-bye.”

Charlie slowly shook his head, keeping eye-contact so there could be no question that he meant what he was saying. “This is more my way of saying hello.”

Anne narrowed her eyes as she searched his face. “I don’t understand.”

She obediently fell silent when he held up his hand. Then, after clearing his throat, he told her something he’d been regretting for the past three years. “The night after you ambushed me on the golf course, I asked Frank if it was ever awkward that his law partner’s teenage daughter had a crush on him.”

Anne abruptly rolled back over onto her back. “What? Why would you say that?”

“Because it was true. You never noticed Pat had a thing for Frank?”

Anne shook her head. “No, to be honest, I never really noticed her.”

“I saw it plain as day the first time I saw them together. But it was only after I put the thought into Frank’s head that he realized she was his

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for the taking.”

Anne nodded her head in that slow way of a person unaware of what she was doing. After a few seconds she said, “Wow.”

Charlie felt himself blink. “That’s all you have to say? I tell you I purposely set out to destroy your marriage, and all you have to say is, ‘wow?’”

Anne waved that away. “Nonsense. It wasn’t your fault Frank acted on the information you gave him. Also, you were right that day I accosted you on the golf course.”

Charlie shook his head. “I was an ass that day on the golf course.”

“Yes, you were but that doesn’t change the fact that you were right to ask what a happily married man was doing going out every night. Frank wasn’t happy, for whatever reason, and so he went looking for someone that could make him happy.”

“He pursued her because she worshiped him. That kind of devotion is nearly impossible for a man to resist.”

“She worshipped while I nagged. No contest.”

“Trust me. Pat no longer worships the ground Frank walks on.”

“How do you—?” Anne stopped when Charlie just lifted one eyebrow. “Don’t tell me Frank still talks to you.”

“People talk, I listen, and Frank thinks I’ve been sleeping with you for the past three years. So, no, he most definitely does not talk to me.”

“Oh.”

“Not long after the divorce, he accused me of telling him about Pat so that I could get to you.”

Anne laughed. “That’s silly.” But then she sobered and looked down. Charlie followed her gaze and watched as she began to carefully smooth the sheet over her stomach.

“What?” He put his hand over hers.

She shrugged. “I just wanted to thank you for telling me the truth about that. I always believed he left me because....” Her gaze lifted to his then veered quickly toward the window. “You know.”

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“No, I don’t know.”

“Because I can’t have children,” she said, her voice so soft he had to lean down a little to catch the last word.

“I think Shane and Jay would argue with that.”

“Any more. That I can’t have any more children.” She took a deep breath and Charlie got a real bad feeling. “I know it’s why you can’t stay with me and I...well, I want you to know that I understand. I don’t like it but I do understand.”

“Understand what? Anne, look at me.”

She shook her head as she pulled her hand out from under his. “I’m hungry. Let’s get something to eat.”

Charlie let her roll away from him. He even let her take the sheet with her as she stood up to retrieve the dress she had left crumpled on the floor in the middle of the room. It wasn’t until she had her hand on the bathroom door that he realized what she’d been getting at.

He laughed. She glared at him over her shoulder, the sheet dipping down her back making her look like an angry goddess. He waved her over to him, but she just stuck her nose in the air and would have sailed into the bathroom if he hadn’t cleared his throat and said in his gentlest, most coaxing voice, “That wasn’t a request.”

She huffed out an annoyed breath but obeyed. But instead of climbing in next to him, she sat at the foot of the bed with her back to him and her arms crossed tightly over her chest.

“You think I haven’t married you because you can’t have children.”

Anne flinched but nodded. Charlie shook his head.

“What an idiot,” he muttered.

She whipped around, planting her hand on the bed between his bare feet. “There is no need to resort to name-calling.”

“I meant me. I’m the idiot for not realizing—oh, Anne.”

She sniffed. “Well, it seems obvious, doesn’t it? Don’t all men want their own children?”

“I don’t. Christ, the last thing this world needs is more of me.”

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Anne bit her lip and Charlie thought she was trying not to laugh, but then a tear rolled down her cheek. “Then why?” she whispered. “Is it because you don’t love me?”

“What?” Charlie yelped. “I love you. Of course I love you! Why the hell else would I have hung around all these years, sitting through those travesties Shane calls baseball games, and mowing that field you call a lawn, and going to all those boring parties at the club, and keeping away from you even though I’ve fallen more and more in love with you with each year, because, Christ, what could be worse for you than having me in your life on a permanent basis?” Charlie stopped, embarrassed, when he realized he was kind of shouting.

“But that’s exactly what I want,” she whispered.

“Even after today?” His heart raced.

“Yes, Charlie. I loved what we did. I love you. As long as you’re with me—”

“I’ll behave,” he whispered, reaching down to grab her under the arms and dragging her close, pressing his face against where her neck met her shoulder. “I swear it.”

“Behave? Oh Charlie, I don’t doubt that.”

“Well, you’re the only one.” He lifted his head. “But we haven’t even discussed my past. How can you just trust me like this?”

“Do you love me?”

“Yes, damn it. Stop asking that!”

“Then stop asking me whether or not I trust you!”

That made a twisted sort of sense. She would trust him, and he would love her, and they would live happily ever after.

Charlie looked down into her flushed face and all of a sudden it occurred to him that he might have left out the most important part.

“You’re going to marry me,” he ordered.

She grinned as she petted his cheek. “Yes, Charlie.”

He exhaled so loudly she giggled.

“Oh sure, you’re laughing now. Just wait until we get home and I hold

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you to all this.”

She rested her cheek on his breastbone and let out a soft, contented sigh.

“Yes, Charlie.”

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The next morning Trey and Charlie stood next to each other at the edge of the little gravel parking lot and watched as Anne divided her affection between a blushing Lou and a miraculously revived Sherman.

“Oh! Oh, you’ve saved him!” Anne placed a smacking kiss on Lou’s cheek before turning to pat Sherman’s gleaming hood. She was so happy she even spared a wave for Lou’s nearly dead dog.

“Unbelievable,” Charlie muttered. “Now she’ll never agree to a new car.”

“She’s remarkably loyal.” Trey bit back a smile. Poor Charlie, Sherman was just the first of many compromises waiting for him in his new life, but there was no doubt he was looking forward to the rewards of being a family man.

“Thank God for that,” Charlie said, sending Trey a narrow eyed look. “And yes, I’m very aware that I almost lost her.”

Now Trey really had to fight back a grin. Charlie hadn’t minded rolling around in bed with him for a few hours, but now that things were set for a trip down the aisle, Trey got the feeling Charlie wasn’t too thrilled at the idea of anyone ever joining the two of them again. Of course, if Anne ever decided she wanted to experiment some more....

Then Charlie awkwardly cleared his throat, and Trey looked over to see the other man crossing his arms over his chest and shifting his weight from one foot to the other. For someone as carefully in control of his body as Charlie Atwood, this was practically a nervous fit. “I know you had a lot to do with how this turned out, and even though I don’t know why you helped me... *us*, I do want to say thank you.”

Trey held out his hand and Charlie took it, nodded and then, breaking out into a wide grin he hauled Trey into his arms for a quick, full body



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contact hug that sent Trey's blood racing just a little bit quicker through his veins. Charlie pulled back, pounded Trey on the back a couple times, and then loped off to join Anne and Lou and the crowd of people that had gathered around to admire the miracle that was Sherman's full recovery.

And there in the bright August sunlight, with Minerva Huntington scowling down at everyone from the porch, obviously annoyed at the news that Anne and Charlie were going to be married as soon as they picked Shane and Jay up from camp, Trey felt yet another of the links from his tattoo fade away. Absently rubbing his chest, he took one last look at Anne beaming up at Charlie before slipping away down one of the paths, following it to his motorcycle. He'd left it on a side street far enough away from the parking lot so that when he started it up no one would notice. Everyone seemed willing to pretend that his and Anne's relationship over the past week hadn't gone anywhere past friendship, and he wanted to keep it that way. As he threw one leg over his bike, he remembered the look on Anne's face as she'd climbed on behind him a little over a week ago. What a sweetheart she was. And brave. Charlie was a handful, and Anne was probably the only woman alive capable of handling him.

Charlie didn't deserve her, but hey, it wasn't his place to decide whether or not a man deserved to have the woman he loved. Trey didn't deserve the woman he wanted, but that didn't stop him from wanting. Nothing would.

## About The Author:

Jane Thompson is the pseudonym of a fabulously wealthy, stunningly beautiful New York socialite who spends her days shopping, having lunch with her scores of equally fabulous friends and dodging marriage proposals from tall, dark and sinfully handsome men. ...

Ah, the joy of fantasy, eh? I'm actually a housewife and mother who spends a ridiculous amount of my time either standing in line at the supermarket or peeling my cats off my furniture.

# *Special Bonus Section*

Three Kinds of Wicked  
Will Trey save the human timeline?

## About "Three Kinds of Wicked"

Trey, a time-striding demigod, spends his life skipping through the human timeline and reuniting couples torn apart by evil forces. Sworn to chastity, sworn to protect those he serves, Trey's own desires must never be expressed.

But on a mission to the Summer of Love, Trey meets Sage, a free spirit with a broken heart, and Russ, a scarred POW with a broken mind. His mission is to reunite Sage and Russ. But passion claims them, and their love triggers a destruction and chaos unmatched by any evil. By rights, Trey should be executed for breaking his vows.

Instead, he is sentenced to a new kind of servitude. With his chastity no longer an issue, he must find broken human couples and heal them sexually. Only after healing these broken bonds of love will Trey heal the broken human timeline. Only after reuniting these predestined pairs through his physical love will Trey be reunited with Sage.

Watch each month for a new "Three Kinds of Wicked" release, starting in July 2009, from Red Sage Publishing. The first story in the series, "Wicked Temptation," unleashes the dangerous passion between Trey, Sage, and Russ. Each following stand-alone story explores Trey's efforts to physically reunite another couple in the preordained human timeline. The series ends with "Wicked Redemption," the companion to "Wicked Temptation," which brings Trey, Russ, and Sage together again.

## Available Now:

### **"To Touch a Woman" by Alice Gaines**

Edward and Margaret Sinclair are very much in love and would be deliriously happy in their marriage except for one thing—as good

Victorians, neither have had much experience with the marital act. As a result, sex is painful for Margaret and frustrating for Edward. They encounter a mysterious stranger named Trey who may be able to help them solve their problem. Can Trey teach Edward how to touch a woman?

## **Excerpt:**

### **Chapter One**

Why did love have to be so bloody hard? As the carriage rattled over country roads, Edward Sinclair gazed across the narrow space that separated him from his wife of three months. With nothing but the lanterns outside for illumination, she resembled a fae creature of fragile beauty. The shifting light played over her amber curls, pale skin, and deep green eyes. Even in near darkness he could read her fear. Fear she tried to hide behind a brave but faltering smile. Fear of him, for the love of God. Fear that he'd want carnal knowledge of her body again and that he'd muck it up. Again.

"Are you quite well, Margaret?" he asked.

She gave him the pleasant expression she always did, an upward curl to her lips that masked the trepidation in her eyes. "I'm very well, my darling."

"You seem...." Oh hell, what word would he use tonight? "Out of sorts."

"A bit tired. It's been a long day."

"We should reach Baresford soon. The inn there is clean and sets a decent table."

"There you are," she said. "I'll be fine."

If only he could believe that. They'd shared such happiness before their marriage. Such joy at falling hopelessly, madly in love with each other. Such excitement when their parents had approved the match.

Then, on their wedding night, when they could finally make the ultimate commitment to each other, he'd hurt her with his clumsiness. Things hadn't gotten any better since.

"I want you to be happy, Margaret," he said.

She leaned across the seat they shared and put her hand on his. "I am, my darling. Truly."

He lifted her fingers to his mouth and kissed the backs. "I'll make that other thing good. I don't know how, but I will."

Mistake, that. She stiffened. Not much, only enough for a loving eye to catch. She smiled as she pulled away and settled back against her seat.

"We should talk about this," he said. "Other couples must have faced the same problem. They'd have worked through it somehow."

"We will, too."

"Only if you help me. I need to know how to please you. I need to know what makes you feel good." Damn him, he already knew what hurt her.

"Everything you do feels good."

Now, she'd started lying outright. She couldn't think she'd fool him with that. She only hoped to put off the conversation. Well, he wouldn't allow that any longer. His body craved hers like a drug. If they didn't do something soon, he'd go mad with wanting her.

"My darling, I know you're reluctant to talk about this, but—"

The coach stopped suddenly, nearly throwing him across the seat and onto her lap. Outside, tack jangled, and the horses whinnied and stamped their feet. He regained his balance and stuck his head out the window.

"Ned, what's going on out there?"

"A stranger, Mr. Sinclair. I swear, he jumped out at us."

"Make yourself known," Edward called. Most likely, the fellow wasn't a highwayman. If he had been, he'd be issuing orders by now. More likely a farmer who'd drunk too much and had gotten himself lost.

The man who approached the carriage was no farmer, though. He wore a finely cut suit of black wool, every bit as expensive as Edward's

own. When he removed his hat, he revealed dark eyes and gleaming black hair a bit too long for fashion.

## **Also Available in This Series!**

### **“Wicked Temptation” by Liane Gentry Skye**

Beyond the bounds of pleasure, a single chance for redemption...

Trey, a demigod, is sworn to guard the fates of human couples on whose relationships hinge the course of history. Over the eons, his affection for mortals has left him yearning for the one thing he can never have—a heart mate to call his own. When a ruthless goddess resorts to an aphrodisiac to force him to break his vow of chastity, his heart is instead claimed by the mortal woman who is destined to help her human lover save the world. Can a ménage possibly help him undo the damage he’s done?

### **“Reckless Exposure” by Anne Rainey**

As fashion photographer, Rand Miller listens to all the reasons why his sexy lover must move out of not only his apartment but also his life, he decides to give her the going away party of a lifetime. The list of party goodies includes: massage oil, margaritas and their mysterious neighbor, Trey Madison. But when dawn creeps over the horizon, will Rand be able to watch the only woman capable of taming his wicked ways walk out of his life forever?

## **“Renegade and His Rebel” by Titania Ladley**

When her deserting cad of a husband Renegade LaMarr reappears in Moose Junction, tomboy Cassandra “Rebel” Thatcher’s as spitting mad as a peeled rattler and prepared to shoot the handsome coward right out of his boots. She’s got her rifle at the ready and a fine-looking, mysterious drifter named Trey to warm her between the sheets and guard her jaded heart against Renegade. Armed with a secret and determined to get rid of Trey, Renegade plots to finally claim Rebel, chaps, spurs, boy breeches and all. Only problem is, before he can draw his six-shooter and declare a challenge, Renegade finds himself falling under Trey’s magical spell right along with his passionate, spitfire wife.

## **“Triple Threat” by Mia Varano**

Vegas showgirl, Brandy Tate, is on the run from the mob and the FBI. When stoic FBI agent, Ridge Coltrane, tracks her down he puts them both in danger until a mysterious stranger named Trey rescues them. Brandy opens her heart... and her bed... to both men. Will her desire to trust end in heartache, or will it introduce her to a world of seductive delights at the hands of two men?

**Check the “Coming Soon” page at [www.eRedSage.com](http://www.eRedSage.com) for more previews of upcoming stories in the *Three Kinds of Wicked* series! And check Trey’s website at [www.threekindsofwicked.com](http://www.threekindsofwicked.com) for inside information, letters from Trey, sneak peeks, and other deliciously wicked treats!**



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