



Loose Id

ANOTHER DREAM
ANOTHER REALITY
Mechele Armstrong

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eISBN 978-1-60737-533-3

Editor: Georgia A. Woods

Cover Artist: April Martinez

Printed in the United States of America

Loose Id.

Published by

Loose Id LLC

PO Box 425960

San Francisco CA 94142-5960

www.loose-id.com

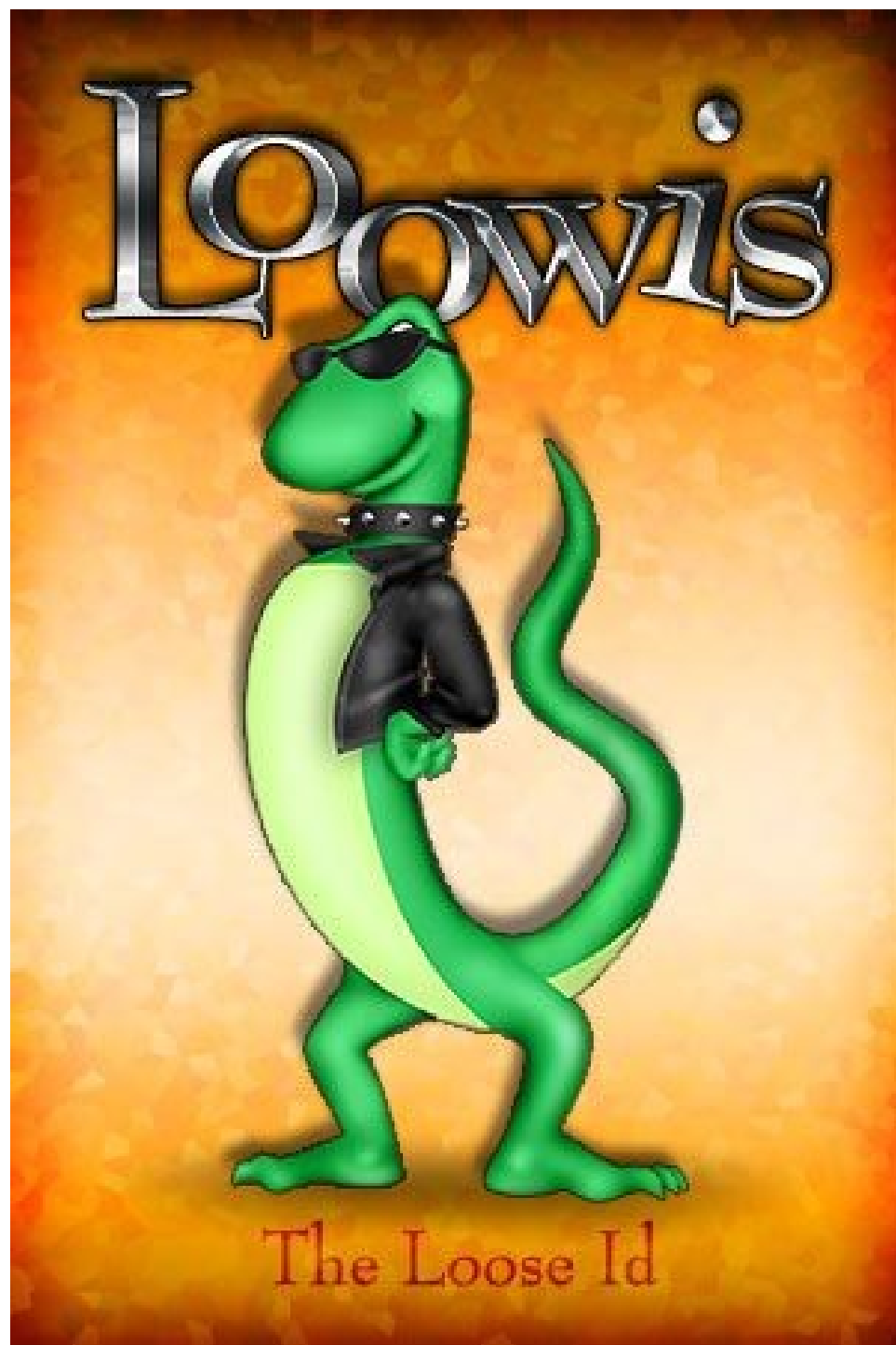
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Chapter One

Cassie widened her mouth, taking in Aden's cock as deeply as she could as he knelt at the top of the bed beside her head. She deep throatied him.

Of course, he was pumping into her willing mouth, which helped her take him down. Otherwise she'd have gagged on his member.

Her jaw ached from the play, but she kept tuned to his relentless assault, sometimes pausing to revel in the sensations roaring across her body.

Leopold sprawled on top of her, slowly sliding his cock in and out of her wetness. Going down and then drawing out again as if he had all the time in the world, until she shook with the want of him inside of her. He drove her nuts with his actions.

Trying to keep pace with Aden and enjoy Leopold was a challenge. One she was up for. Always. Though this time she pushed her limits as she tried to hold off her orgasm as long as possible.

She thought about shopping and the things she'd buy. On their trip to the Bahamas for a weekend. She could see them in tiny little bathing suits, sipping on fruity little drinks before they spread sunscreen over her pale back. They'd keep her slathered in the stuff, much to her delight.

Her body shook with the visions swimming before her eyes. Wrong image to project when she didn't want to come yet. Thinking of them in bathing suits didn't help her stave off the inevitable. So close. A little push and she'd go over the precipice.

No.

She'd stay strong. Get through this. A groan pirated out of her, running down the length of Aden's long cock.

His body tensed at the reverberations cascading around him. He shook his head in denial, but his hips bucked, driving him deeper still into her mouth. He was as close to orgasm as she was. Lucky thing. That might make him go over first.

She concentrated. *Keep him close to that edge.* If she could push him over, she'd only have one man to outlast.

Leopold's chuckle sounded magnanimous to her roaring ears. But his face had taken on a tight, pinched look. He was in no way unaffected by what was going on around him, no matter how much he tried to pretend. She knew him too well for that. "How long are we going to keep this up?" He pushed down deep into Cassie's core. Ground his body against her.

"Until. One of. Us. Comes." Sweat poured down Aden's face. His lips trembled under the sheen of liquid. He jerked up, his face thoughtful. The lamp from the bedside table cast a faint glow.

Cassie shivered, flickers of feeling buzzing all over her body. Heat multiplied over every nerve ending, even as she tried to bring the lamp into focus as something to concentrate on. Couldn't keep an eye on the two men. Or that would push her over. The looks on their faces alone might be the catalyst. She was that close.

She wasn't going to last much longer, no matter how much she tried. Dammit. She needed to hold this off awhile longer. Couldn't be the first one. Wanted to be the last one.

They weren't going to last much longer either. They were both close. One little push, or maybe pull of her tongue in Aden's case, and they'd come. They both hovered on that cliff with her.

She'd be the winner. Had to be champion. She'd take the prize in more ways than one. All she had to do was hold on.

It had been Aden's idea.

Hold off coming as long as possible. The first one to come owed the other two what they asked. The one to come last, well, they got to pick where they were going for a weekend getaway in a couple of weekends.

Cassie wanted to pick that destination. Wanted to outlast the boys. *Men.* Her men.

Gah, another bad thought. Every time she thought of them as hers, things exploded in her, even when she wasn't stuffed with both of their cocks.

She shuddered as Aden rammed his cock farther inside her grasping mouth. So firm and smooth. Large.

Even though she couldn't see his member, she could picture it. Dark brown. Bulbous. Engorged.

Her head flipped back as if to escape him, but there was nowhere to go. The pillow lay against her head on the other side.

She groaned against him.

His eyes rolled back in his head, and he jerked.

Their orgasms started in tandem. She didn't know if his started first, because her own wrapped around her, taking her body in a shimmery, shaky ascent to the heavens above, before dropping her trembling psyche back to the form on the bed with her mouth full of Aden's come.

He still pumped against her, spending the last of his climax as he rolled his hips, trying to get as much of the feel as he could.

She slurped up his come and swallowed the salty treat. Always made her thirsty with its aftertaste, but she rather liked the flavor sliding down her throat. Knowing where it came from didn't hurt.

Her eyes widened and shot to Leopold.

He hadn't come yet.

He didn't smile or grin but instead groaned, his face pinched as his orgasm rolled across him after theirs were already done. He pounded into her as deeply as he could, rolling his body across hers, seemingly desperate to get as close to her as possible.

As his sweaty body came down at the finale of his orgasm, he lay there across her, spent. He pressed a quick kiss to her cheek.

Her hands gripped the sheet by her body as the orgasm glow faded. Wrenched her fingers up in the soft, dark cloth. She noticed her surroundings again.

Aden's room was done in dark colors. Reds and black. They bathed her now in their deep, rich colors.

She resisted the urge to pull the covers up over her body.

The dark room made her look even paler. She wasn't sure if she liked the room's effect on her looks or not. Hadn't decided. Maybe it made her look like the white whale from *Moby Dick*. Or maybe it made her look like a Rubens painting. Hard to say.

Her hands wrung in the many-fibered sheets he had across his huge bed. Soft and luxurious.

Probably why they spent more time at his house than their own. He had the biggest bed too. The better to accommodate three people comfortably for sex and sleeping.

Leopold pulled out of her and grasped himself to pull off the full condom. A grin did light his mouth then.

As it should. He'd won.

Dammit. Cassie frowned. She'd looked forward to the guys in skimpy bathing suits. On a beach. Bringing her drinks with little umbrellas in them. 'Course that would have knocked her into a bathing suit. She shuddered, and not in the aftermath of her orgasm either. Maybe it was a good thing she hadn't won.

Aden flopped on the bed by Cassie as he huffed out a deep breath. "Don't look so smug."

"Who, me?" Leopold wrapped up the condom in a tissue and stashed it in a dark leopard-print trash can by the black nightstand. He tried for an innocent look and failed miserably.

"Yes. You." Cassie looked up at the white ceiling, the only light-colored object in the room except for clothes that were sprinkled about.

He shrugged his huge shoulders. "Couldn't help it."

Leopold was usually the last to come. Maybe that had given him an unfair advantage. Not that he would ever give them leeway on that. Leopold would claim his prize.

She sighed. Good-bye to a Caribbean weekend. She didn't see Leopold as the type. Maybe he'd pick a spa? She chortled at that thought. He wasn't that type of guy either. "So where are we going anyway?"

His grin intensified. "Now, that I have to think on."

They both groaned at the words and the grin. Couldn't be good. Not when Leopold had to "think on it."

"You know. I think I have an exam that Monday. Don't think I can go away for the weekend." Aden put a hand over his face in mock distress.

"You don't even know what weekend we're going." Leopold's brows knit together, but he still managed to look calm.

Only Leopold could manage that trick. She watched the guys play and idly stroked the sheets. There was a wet spot near her leg. Probably from her. Leopold usually chose that space to sleep.

“I'm sure I have lot of Monday exams.” Aden blinked at Leopold in rapid succession.

“You're so full of shit.” Leopold cuffed his shoulder good-naturedly. “Besides, it's not like you study.”

Aden didn't study a lot. He did assignments and attended class like it was his religion. But he rarely studied on nights before his tests.

Aden shook his head and cursed mildly under his breath. “Fucking man is too smart for his own good.”

“I'll make it a good trip. I promise.” Leopold climbed in the bed and snuggled up to them both, with warm, sweaty bodies turning into one giant pile instead of three separate parts.

Cassie's last conscious thought before she drifted off to sleep was that Leopold had indeed chosen the wet spot and that his ideas of good were usually different from Aden's and hers.

* * *

“You want to go where?” Cassie paused with her bite of chocolate chip pancake still on her fork and halfway to her mouth. Her favorite breakfast had been fixed this morning by two men in robes, flirting with each other and grabbing each other's asses. They'd even made washing their hands seem sensual as Aden lathered up Leopold's hands before they'd mixed the batter.

Leopold didn't seem to notice her trepidation. Either that or he was ignoring it. “I have a buddy with a cabin in the mountains. That's where I want to go in two weeks. He said it was fine, and it'd be well stocked.”

“Well stocked?” Cassie put the forkful in her mouth. Leopold did make the best chocolate chip pancakes.

“You know, with firewood and stuff.”

Cassie groaned inwardly. She pictured a shack on the side of a mountain with an ancient fireplace. “How rustic is this cabin?” She'd gone camping once, an experience she didn't want to repeat. She'd known that Leopold wouldn't pick the Bahamas or someplace like that. But she'd been hopeful he'd pick something that she liked.

Leopold frowned. "I dunno. It's got electricity. A fireplace." He moved his jaw side to side, a habit.

Mentioning electricity couldn't be a good thing. If it had amenities, like say a Jacuzzi, the bud would have mentioned those and not electricity. She shuddered to think what else the cabin didn't have. "Running water?"

"I'm sure there's an outhouse, at least."

Cassie stopped her fork in midlift. "Outhouse?" Her voice squeaked like a mouse's. She hated that sound.

Leopold started laughing. "I'm kidding. It's got running water. In fact, my bud said it's real nice."

Aden took a bite from his pancake. "Sounds like fun."

Cassie looked at him. Had he sprouted another head? Been taken over by pod people? What on earth was he thinking? Was he into camping? Not anything she would have expected from Aden.

What else didn't she know about the two men who shared her bed?

Leopold looked at him with a smile. "There's apparently a creek nearby. With a waterfall. It's a short hike away."

A hike? In the woods? With ticks and bugs? Snakes? Bears? There were still bears in the mountains of Virginia. Black ones. They came down every so often to Richmond along the James River and scared the hell out of anyone who saw them. Hell, there'd been one at a local warehouse store one day.

Leopold's gaze appraised her. "Course, if you don't want to go..."

Aden jumped in, swinging his fork around. "It is Leo's choice where we travel." He cocked his head, watching her.

Leave it to the future lawyer to remind her of all their agreements. He might be a bad-boy stripper, but he liked to live by the law occasionally. Especially when it didn't suit her.

Leopold shrugged. "It doesn't matter. We don't have to go." He looked down into his orange juice. "It was a stupid bet."

It had been a stupid game of truth or dare that had gotten them all together in the first place when they'd spent a night stuck in a stairwell. So that didn't fly as an excuse not to abide by the decision Leopold had made.

"No, Leopold, I'll go." She took another bite of pancake and chewed. "It sounds like it will be interesting." She couldn't go so far as to call the expected experience fun.

Leopold's face lit up like a Christmas tree. "It will be fun. We'll relax. We'll have to leave our cell phones at home. And computers. No coverage anyway." He took a long swig of his juice and wiped his mouth.

Aden's face tightened and then relaxed. He'd be over halfway through the semester by then. He had a bunch of papers listed on the calendar already. "I'll have to get work done before we go. Which means you two will need to let me." He drummed his fingers. "Will also have to make sure I'm off from work."

"Me too."

Aden and Leopold worked together. Aden was a stripper, and Leopold was a bodyguard who went out with strippers on calls. That was how they'd all met, when her friends had hired Aden for a striptease and Leopold had traveled with him. Trapped in a stairwell for hours, truth or dare had brought them all to the point where they'd come together. Literally. In more ways than one.

Cassie had tried to leave them behind but found she couldn't. Some days, she wondered if her rash decision made one lonely night had been too quick. Too rushed. Like when the two men obviously had so many different issues and lead such different lives than she did. She'd agreed to try this relationship with them. That was all. Try.

Leopold eyed Cassie. "And you too."

She opened her mouth to say she didn't work weekends, but couldn't get it out. After all, she did have work to do outside of the office. She was an executive of a huge retail business. There was often research or schmoozing to do. After hours. She didn't disconnect from technology often. "Are you sure there's no coverage?"

Leopold's mouth pinched.

“Regardless of whether there is or not, I think we should declare it an out-of-touch weekend. For us all. The only things touching should be us.” Aden waggled his brows with a suggestive glint in his eye.

Now that would be something interesting. Going to a place where there'd be nothing to do but them. Could be fun.

Or it could be a disaster. Unmitigated.

Three different people. Alone. Without technology to distract them from how different they were.

She scraped the last bite off her plate, looked at the clock, and bounced to her feet. “Oh my God, look at the time. I've got to go home and get dressed.” Saved by having to run to work. She quickly applied two kisses to two cheeks. Didn't have time for any more chitchat or an embrace. She'd only just make it to work on time. Couldn't wear these clothes again a second day. That would have everyone talking.

“You know if you left stuff here...” Aden's face had “that look.” With words she'd heard many times before.

She ignored him and raced to Aden's bedroom to finish getting ready.

* * *

At work, she stumbled into her office, and her secretary, Jenna, brought her a cup of coffee as if sensing she needed it. Cassie sipped, pulling the heady aroma into her nostrils.

“You know if you left stuff here...”

The words had echoed in her head since she'd left Aden's. She couldn't shake them. It was a long-standing argument that she should leave clothes at Aden's, which was where they spent most of their time. They kept insisting, but she wouldn't.

And never would.

She adjusted the new skirt she'd bought recently from a sale at Daisy's, a local plus-size women's shop.

Jenna clambered in to drop off some reports on her desk. “New skirt?”

Cassie took another long sip before nodding.

“Pretty. Did it come from Daisy's?”

Cassie blew out a sigh. “Yes.” Daisy's was one of the best plus-size shops and one of the only ones in town. Made sense Jenna would know the item came from there. Not that Jenna shopped there. But she had a sister who was plus size. Cassie had seen her come to lunch with Jenna a few times. Still, it bit to have people know where she shopped. Why that bothered her, she didn't know. But it always had.

“It's nice. You had a hot date last night.” Jenna beamed, looking at Cassie with a look of happiness.

Cassie's brows came together. It was a statement, not a question. “What do you mean?”

Jenna shrugged. “I've noticed. You leave earlier some days. Dressed up. With a happy look.” Her mouth piled up in a genuine smile. “It's nice to see. You work so hard. You should do what you want with your personal life.” With a spring in her step, Jenna advanced from the room.

Leaving a darkening face on Cassie as her brows knit together.

How many others had noticed her behavior? What did that crack mean about her personal life? How many others had chalked it up to a man?

Singular man.

Not double men.

The guys had one advantage over her. In their line of work, a threesome wasn't the complete oddity it would be for her coworkers. If her status came out, well, the conservative board where she worked would have her job pulled in a nanosecond. Lawsuits schmawsuits. Without her job, where would she be? She'd still have lost every ounce of credibility she'd built up over her career with any hint of impropriety.

Fucking two men—definite impropriety.

Her pen scratched on the proposals she had to sign. Unlike Aden, she had chicken scratch for a signature. His careful letters always looked precise. Leopold's signature was free-flowing and huge.

Even their penmanship was different.

Why wouldn't she leave anything at Aden's place? Not even a toothbrush, for heaven's sake. Accidentally left-behind clothing had all been retrieved within a couple of days of its going

missing. There was no evidence she was more than a passing visitor in Aden's life. Which was probably why he kept encouraging her to leave more at his house. As if proof that was more.

Was that all she was? A passing visitor?

Not exactly. But she was hardly any more than that by her own admission and estimation.

Leopold had left his stuff at Aden's from the start.

Despite her entering into a quasi relationship with them, she hadn't given up her misgivings, which had made her run from them after their night spent together. Only a lonely fit in the dead of night had brought her rushing back to them after a few weeks. Maybe too quickly. Things like a weekend destination so different from what she would have picked drove home how different they all were.

How could three very different people have a life together that melded in any way? She didn't think they could. She'd entered into this because she couldn't get them out of her system.

So far, she hadn't found an exit from the train she was riding with them. But eventually the end would come. She knew it. They had to know it too.

Three people didn't commit to each other for a lifetime.

Her brain reverted back to Aden coming into her mouth. Leopold coming into her pussy with strong, gentle motions.

Her pussy clenched in remembrance.

Why did they have to be so damn good at making her climax? At bringing her satisfaction?

At making her laugh? Keeping her distracted from the evils of the world? Listening to her?

Being her boyfriends?

They should have been terrible at those things. After all, there was double the number of people to leave up the toilet seat. To leave the socks on the floor. To have skid marks in underwear in the laundry, not that she did their laundry yet.

But instead they were good at being with her. They made her live life and not miss out on any of it. They took her places she'd never been before, and not just sexually. But emotionally. Her soul felt full. Of them.

Her eyes closed.

It couldn't last.

How could she be in love with two men at the same time? It was impossible. All the sonnets were about love and duos, not trios.

Yet here they were.

Her show of not leaving anything at Aden's was a symbol of so much, she didn't need a therapist to tell her about the whys.

If she didn't leave anything there, she wasn't committed to them. If she didn't commit to them, she wasn't really in a relationship with two men.

They were on to her game.

They hadn't called her on it fully yet.

But they would. What then?

Her work would never allow her to be involved in a public relationship so far outside the norm. Not to mention, it wasn't like she could marry them both. Or they could all marry each other. Hell, those who were gay were just getting those rights in hotly contested debates. Some still felt that interracial couples shouldn't have the right to marry. That three people should be able to marry wasn't even on the table.

No one had mentioned marriage. Or forever. Or even the future.

Now there was the promise of a weekend away with them.

Somehow that seemed like something that committed lovers did. That boyfriends and girlfriends did.

She tapped her pen on her desk.

Maybe she would have to work that weekend after all.

Chapter Two

Aden listened to the professor drone on and on in a monotone, flat voice. God, the subject of law interested him intensely and even he couldn't keep his mind on the lecture. He might have to study for this class. All because the professor lectured endlessly and had the voice of a robot.

Fuck.

He shook his head and took another sip of his triple-shot espresso. Even that wasn't helping. He swished the liquid around his mouth before he swallowed, hoping the pain of the heat would trigger some interest.

Nada.

His eyes still fluttered, wanting to close and getting heavier and heavier.

Maybe if you hadn't been up all last night getting it on, maybe you could pay attention now. It's not the professor; it's you.

Much as he tried to deny that voice, he couldn't. It was his late class tonight, one of only two nights he wasn't working, and he'd spent that other free night fucking. A fun activity but it didn't a degree make.

Which was why he'd been keeping himself away from relationships prior to Leo and Cassie.

He blew out a frustrated breath, earning a glare from his seatmate. Aden was tempted to toss him the finger.

He tried scribbling some notes, but he had a hard time picking out the important parts in the lecture. Probably because the man's voice never gave away what would be an important part.

Leo, his cock buried in Cassie's pussy, looked seriously at him as he made furious love to the woman in their lives.

Aden got lost in the vision.

The cords standing out on Leo's neck. The grim determination as he sought to outlast the woman. The measured thrusting that was all about bringing her as much pleasure as he could.

All the muscles rippling on his sweaty torso in glorious abandon as he lifted his head to smile that rare smile at Aden.

The tortured look on his face as his climax spilled over the gates he'd so artfully erected in a blaze that took Leo's breath away. And Aden's.

Aden shook his head. Tried to clear the swirling erotic images that were taking over in place of the boring lecture.

Cassie's face looked mischievously up at him with adoring eyes as she took his cock into her mouth and sucked him in like he was a sucker of the best variety. Her favorite flavor.

Her mouth puckered around him as she took him as far as he would go and began to hum around his engorged cock. She moved her jaw so that she could take him farther, then pushed him out before taking him down again. Her warm, wet mouth pooled around him.

He shifted in his seat. His cock was now heavy and aching. Thanks to visions he couldn't act upon. Not to mention he'd zoned on several parts of the lecture.

He couldn't keep doing this. Thinking of his two lovers when he was supposed to be reading. Or listening to a lecture. No matter how boring the speaker or subject material was.

He pinched the bridge of his nose.

He'd gotten this far in his college career despite others' misgivings about him because he'd done one thing and one thing only. Kept his eyes on the prize. He'd cut himself off from anything that would distract him from getting his degree and becoming a lawyer.

Now he was a mere year away. Actually less than that. The payoff was in reach.

But he kept finding himself distracted by the lovers in his life. This wasn't the first time his mind had wandered in class. Wouldn't be the last either. He found it hard to keep his thoughts away from the fun he had with his lovers.

Unacceptable.

The lecture finished, and Aden packed up his stuff. He scurried down to the bottom of the stadium-style seating in the lecture hall. "Professor Currington?" He waited for the older, wizened man to acknowledge him.

The man looked over his glasses at Aden. “Yes?”

“I know some of the other professors record their lectures. I was wondering if there were copies of your lectures?” He'd need to hear the talk again to make it stick in his brain. Maybe if he could listen at his own speed, then he could stop being so distracted.

Currington sneered. “I don't. If you can't get a simple lecture the first time I give it or can't be bothered to come to my class, you have no business in law school.” He snapped up his briefcase with a resounding *click*.

Aden nodded, gritting his teeth together. “I see. Thought I'd check. Thank you for your time.”

“Mr...Dupres. May I offer a suggestion?”

“Yes, sir?” He almost hated to hear what the codger's suggestion would be. He steeled himself to listen.

“Don't take naps in my class. Then you won't need recordings of me. Whatever is keeping you from sleep...get rid of it. Good day.” The man stalked off without a backward glance.

Aden glowered after him. He hadn't been sleeping. He'd been daydreaming. About two people who were starting to mean more to him than they should.

You were going to keep it simple, remember? No entanglements until you graduated. No relationships until you were practicing law. Not only did you start one relationship, you jumped into two. At the same time.

Yeah, one night in a stairwell had captivated him. Captured him. Now he was paying the price.

* * *

Aden turned the page of the heavy textbook. His hands gripped the sides of the book tightly. He'd read the same page again. Dammit. He flipped back and read the material a second time. Maybe flipping on the light would help. He turned on his desk light at the small black particleboard desk.

He read the same page again with no greater success at deciphering what it said. Frustrated, he got up and paced the room.

Get some sleep, indeed. Geezer.

At this rate, he was never going to get his reading done and begin to start on his papers. Not in time to be ready for the weekend away with Leo and Cassie.

Was that a bad or a good thing? It would disappoint Leo. Cassie was more ambivalent about the weekend. Not only because of Leo's choice of where they were going either.

She had come to them in a fit of panic after being away from them for a while. But she still wasn't sure she wanted to be with them. He could see that in her face. In the absence of any of her things at his house.

Leo's stuff was all over. Aden picked up a sock from his comforter and tossed it to the floor. Case in point.

As if on cue, Leo sauntered in. "Hi." He walked slowly to the bed where Aden stood and plunked a kiss on Aden's lips. "How was school?"

"Great." He'd managed to alert an important teacher that he wasn't paying attention. "How was work?"

Leo shrugged. "About the same." His mouth softened. "Not like watching you dance."

Aden snorted. "I am the best." He winked at Leo, who put his hands around Aden's waist.

"That you are." Leo plastered his body against Aden's as if it were a second skin. His cock poked against Aden's hip. Heavy and strong. Excited as usual. Ready for action.

That Aden couldn't give to him. Despite his own cock's hardness, Aden wouldn't press back against him. Instead, he pulled back. He didn't have time for this. He had reading to do and a paper to research. "Was the new schedule up?"

Leo released him, though he looked reluctant. "Yep. We both have weekend after next off. I talked to Danny, and the cabin's at our disposal."

Aden rubbed his chin. Best to jump right in with both feet. "I'm trying to get my work done before we go, but I can't promise right now that I can go."

Leo didn't react. Didn't look annoyed but kept his face bland, which probably meant he was mad. "You're off work that weekend." He knew what Aden meant but was stalling so he didn't have to react.

“Schoolwork. I have finals coming up and a few papers due. I think I can get far enough ahead to go away for a couple of days, though.” Provided he pulled his head from his own ass and buckled down.

Leo nodded noncommittally.

“Even if I can't go, you and Cassie should.” Aden moved over to the desk toward his books. Despite the fact that Leo looked like he didn't care about Aden going, this trip was important to him.

Aden took a deep breath. He'd have to keep his mind on what he was doing. Maybe focusing on the weekend would help him get back on track and able to go with them. If Cassie even went.

“Where is Cassie?”

“There was a message from her. Don't hold dinner. She'll be over when she can.” It had sounded rushed and breathless. Like she was running.

Leo nodded again. “Oh.” He took off his shoes by the bed and picked up the errant sock to place it in a mesh hamper. The clothes were a mix of Aden's and Leo's. They alternated doing laundry.

It was Aden's turn. He frowned at the fullness of the hamper. His turn to do dishes tonight too, and the sink was full. Not to mention a couple of hundred pages of reading to go. *Sleep, my ass.*

Leo looked around the messy room, probably contemplating a cleaning. He didn't pick up anything, though, knowing it would irritate Aden. After all, this was his room. He'd clean it when he had time. Which would be about never.

Aden turned back to his reading. “I probably will grab something to eat later. Lots of work to do.” He turned back to his page, determined to glean what he was supposed to learn this time.

“Kay.”

Aden read two paragraphs.

Rustling. More rustling. Footsteps.

Aden turned to find a shirtless Leo. A sight to behold. His cock resumed its previous course, poking up with blood pulsing through the length. He bit his lip. “Whatcha doing?”

“Going to take a shower.” Leo undid his pants, and his cock poked up through the V. No underwear.

Aden silently groaned. Hadn't the man ever heard of protecting one's jewels? What jewels he had. A thick, long cock. Two heavy balls. A dick that stuffed Aden up the right way.

Leo shimmied down the pants over his legs and stood in his full naked glory. What a glory he was. His roped muscles bulged even when he was at rest. His broad chest tapered to surprisingly lean hips above thighs like tree trunks. That cock. A flat ass that made the muscles move deliciously as he walked.

An ass that Aden could take a bite from and often had.

“I'll be in the shower.” Leo turned and walked toward the master bathroom. “Out in a few.”

Aden watched him walk, that ass switching, those legs marching. A sudden peek of balls and maybe a cock hanging down between his legs.

Not that Aden needed the visuals. They'd been ingrained upon his brain for all time. He didn't have to be in view of Leo to know what he looked like. To know what that cock felt like.

He swallowed, mouth dry. Throat constricted.

The water started in the bathroom.

He turned around to face the heavy book in front of him. The reading that he should do. He swallowed again.

Leo would be under the spray. Wet. Blond hair hugging his head. He'd have pulled down the soap and be lathering his hands. Sudsing up that big body with white foam that stood out against his tanned skin. That hugged every curve of his body until the water would rush in and wipe all the soap away.

He groaned.

They'd fucked in that shower. He and Leo often enough and sometimes with Cassie.

He looked down at the words that had gotten smaller and less recognizable than they were before Leo went in the shower. His gaze grasped onto the clock. It was only dinnertime. He could have some fun now and sit up until midnight reading. He might miss some TV, but come on. He'd rather be inside Leo any day than sitting in front of a screen.

He had plenty of time to get the reading done. Couple of days at least. And laundry? Laundry could go fuck itself. Nothing stank.

He bounced to his feet.

Did he want to do this? His cock poked out with a yes answer to that question.

He would find a way to get his schoolwork done, even if he had to pull a few all-nighters. He'd find a way to go on this trip too.

But right now, all he wanted to do was find his lover and have his wicked way with him.

Cassie would know what she was missing. He'd make sure and tell her. Vividly. Expressively.

He pulled off his shirt and tossed it to the floor. Quickly took off his pants, pushing them down his calves to the floor beside the shirt.

Reached the door and tried it. Of course it wasn't locked.

He grinned. Leo had wanted company. He could have locked the door. Aden wouldn't have disturbed him had he found a locked door. Maybe.

He slid open the door to find steam hanging in the air. Leo did like his showers hot. And his men hotter, so he said. Usually with a rare grin at Aden.

He got a lot of Leo's rare smiles.

A groan flew out from the shower.

Aden paused and moved through the humid air. He peeked through the shower curtain.

Leo wore soapsuds and rested on the other side from the spray. He had one hand against the shower surround, leaning on it. His other hand was between his legs, moving up and down.

Moving up and down.

Aden breathed in the warm air with a shudder. Couldn't move. He was transfixed by the sight of Leo.

Leo turned his head, his hand still on his cock, but he discontinued moving the hand around himself. "I thought you were busy reading." His voice came husky with arousal-tinged nuances along with slight surprise. Leo must be too deep into his pleasure to control the output of emotion.

"I'm taking a break."

Leo arched a brow as he turned more fully to face Aden. His hand left his cock, which drooped down in front of those powerful thighs. "Obviously." He looked curiously at Aden as if not sure what would happen next.

Aden could stare at Leo all day. Could eat him up and down. He made one hell of a meal. "I don't have much time."

Leo's chuckle was strangled. "I don't think it will take much time. I wanted...you when I got home. Couldn't stop thinking all day about you stripping and how much more fun it is to work with you."

A record sentence for the reticent man. Not to mention an admission. They usually tried to coordinate their days so they worked together. Although Aden didn't see how Leo watched him strip. He sometimes felt jealousy pricking when women looked at Leo, and Leo didn't even take anything off or showboat. But the man never made a peep, just stared at him with those eyes and commented later on any new dance steps. Or did a new painting of Aden. "You should have said something."

Leo shrugged, water spraying from his shoulders. "You had work to do." He moved back, giving Aden room to come in.

Fuck the man for being so agreeable. Fuck himself for being a selfish bastard. He'd been so focused on himself and his needs, he'd not looked out for Leo. That would change in this shower. "I'm not too busy for you." A lie. Because he sometimes was.

Leo took it with a smile. He knew the lie. But accepted it and moved on. "So you're joining me?"

"Oh yeah." Like there was any question. Hell, from the moment Leo had stripped in front of him, Aden had been joining him. That Leo didn't know that was somewhat endearing and somewhat disturbing. Like Aden could resist such a succulent morsel when it came his way. Aden stepped into the shower, being careful not to slip.

Leo moved over against the wall closer to the running water. He pulled down the soap.

Aden's lip curled. "You don't need that anymore. I'm going to..." But whatever he was going to say cut off shortly at Leo's action.

Leo's hand touched him, and sparks ignited like tinder, taking Aden's words away with the touch. Leo didn't say anything either as he scrubbed Aden's chest, giving a tweak to his nipples.

Aden jerked. His body became a conductor of electricity from his balls to his head. The current zapped him.

The rough hands knew how to touch him. Knew how much pressure to lay upon him as they moved down his torso.

Leo pulled back and soaped up his hands again. Water dripped down his body in rivulets.

Aden could smell the woodsy scent of the soap bar. It infused him because it smelled like Leo. It was Leo's brand of soap. He'd left it at Aden's house. In the shower. Intimacy was defined by the mingling of your world with someone else's. Aden and Leo had mingled.

Leo's hands went on a downward journey over Aden's flat stomach until they reached down between his thighs.

They cupped him, sudsing him up with hands that rotated around him. Hands lifted his cock and soaped up his balls, squeezing them in the process.

Aden leaned back, finding the back wall of the shower surround, on legs that turned to jelly.

Leo didn't let him get away but followed him to that back wall and tugged on him. Roughly. Forcefully. His hands gained momentum and speed as he cupped Aden between two expert hands.

This wasn't right.

Aden had come into the shower with the strong desire to pleasure Leo. Only Leo was doing all the work. Again.

Aden lifted hands that felt like they were loaded down with weights and found his own bar of soap. Yeah, he'd coat Leo in the scent of an Irish meadow. He looked more Irish than Aden did, that was for sure. A chuckle escaped. Black Irish, his ass.

He reached across and grasped Leo by the cock. His hands skittered down, soaping Leo up as they went.

Leo's hands shook while they stayed around Aden's cock.

They both clutched each other and rolled over the other's dick up and down. Tight and slippery from soap.

“Oh my God.” A female voice sounded as though someone were drowning or under a pile of something.

Cassie stood in the bathroom, peeking through the shower curtain much like Aden had. Guess he wouldn't have to tell her about what they'd done now.

Her eyes were wide with wonder.

Leo dropped one hand from Aden's cock. He crooked his finger at her. “Come on in. The water's”—he looked up at the spigot—“cold. I told you to get a bigger water heater.” He took the sprayer and sprayed both of their cocks off. “I bet we could get it warmed up.”

“Maybe...I...” Cassie turned toward the door.

Leo flipped the switch to cut off the water and sprang from the shower. He grabbed Cassie and picked her up.

“Lord, don't do that. You'll break your back,” Cassie exclaimed. “Hey, you're getting me wet.”

Aden couldn't help a grin of his own as Leo kept her in his arms but brought her over by the shower. “Not yet. But we're going to.”

Chapter Three

Leopold's cock ached. You'd think after having sex so frequently the last few weeks, he'd not get this aroused, but he did. He stayed in a constant state of lust. He'd gotten home from watching a stripper do his job, wishing it were Aden, and wanted to pop so badly, he could taste the sex.

Now Cassie was there, and he wanted even more. He wanted the good screwing that only the two of them could give to him.

She lightly tapped him. "You are going to break your... Mff."

He cut her off by claiming her mouth in a bruising kiss that had his senses swimming. She tasted of coffee and hazelnut. An elixir that was wholly Cassie. He could lose himself in her mouth for hours.

Aden and Cassie tasted differently.

Aden possessed a stronger, more pervasive taste. Usually Cassie tasted sweeter.

He drowned in her kiss, even as he eased her down his body to stand outside of the shower. The material teased him along with her curves. His cock jerked up, wanting to be inside someone.

She broke the kiss, gasping for air. "You shouldn't lift me." Her face had flushed to a delightful shade of pink.

He shook his head at her. She worried too much about her weight. "You're light—"

"Don't you dare say as a feather." Her hands went to her hips as she shot him a glare. "We both know that's not true."

"He was going to say as a pound cake. Right?" Aden leaned back on the shower surround as Leopold watched. His mocha body was a contrast to Cassie's pale skin. His darkness was

accentuated by the white of what he leaned against. His cock jutted from his body in anticipation of what would happen between the three.

“Yep.” Leopold wagged his brows. “Chocolate pound cake. With white whipped cream on the top.”

Aden arched a brow. “You're the—”

“Caramel icing, baby.”

They all laughed at the exaggeration of a metaphor.

Laughter had been for the most part absent from their lives lately. Instead a stagnant tension hung in the air between them. One that couldn't be easily fixed. Leopold wasn't stupid. He knew the issues that both Aden and Cassie had with their being together. That those issues hadn't lessened because Cassie had come back to them. She wanted them but didn't see this relationship as forever or even long lasting. Aden had trouble living in the here and now with them. Funny how they had opposite problems.

One couldn't live in the now, only in the future. One couldn't look to the future, only lived in the now. He couldn't get past the past.

He was trying not to hurt them. Trying to be different from his father and solicitous at all times. He would not be a greedy bastard.

A weekend away might do them all some good. Maybe they'd figure out what they wanted from each other. And themselves. More getting to know each other. They'd spent time getting to know each other in that stairwell. But how much had they done since?

Not a lot.

Cassie's eyes shone in the harsh lights of the bathroom. Five round golden globes glowed above the mirror, casting their glare. “You two were having fun. I almost hated to interrupt.”

Leopold pulled her against him. “I'd have been mad if you didn't.”

Aden echoed him. “Me too.”

She rubbed her hand down Leopold's chest, which was still damp from the shower. “We need to dry you both off.”

“You need to be naked.”

Her lips curved up into a smile.

Now that was a look he liked. He grabbed her white shirt in one hand and pulled up.

Aden pushed from the wall and scaled out of the shower. He put his hands on Cassie's waist and eased her skirt down her hips.

She slipped out of open-toed sandals as the skirt moved down her legs, while Leopold finished pulling the shirt over her head.

She stood in the bathroom in a matching pair of light blue underwear and a bra. Looking lovely. Gorgeous. Taking his breath away.

Her body swayed as she became agitated at them both looking at her. Like she always did. "Shouldn't we retire this to this bedroom?" Her teeth grazed her bottom lip in a nervous habit.

Leopold reached down to rub across her skin with the pad of his thumb. So smooth. She was always so smooth. "I think we're fine right here." He had an idea of a new position they could try. His gaze met Aden's hungry one.

"Oh yeah. I think we're fine in here." Aden ran his hands across her hips. His dark hands grazed across her paleness.

Leopold roamed his hands across her neck down to her burgeoning breasts. "Oh yep."

Her nipples hardened under the satiny material. Her hips shifted as though she needed a different position.

He grazed a nipple with his thumb.

She made a little noise back in the depths of her throat. Her eyes briefly closed, and she swayed on her feet.

Aden looked over him as his hands dipped inside the top of her underwear. "What exactly are you thinking?"

Leopold's eyes narrowed. How many positions were there in a bathroom? He cleared his throat and his irritation. After all, they couldn't be expected to work like a team all the time. "Her against the wall. One of us behind. One on his knees in front."

A shudder rocked her body at hearing what they intended.

Aden's face lit up like a present had come early. Or he'd gotten an A. "I call front."

Leopold's face twisted up.

Aden's eyes widened. "Or I can take back."

Leopold stilled his hands. What had Aden seen in his face to make him back down? Had Leopold's annoyance shown on his face? He'd worked so hard to keep that stuff down, to keep his emotions... Shit.

"Hey, it's okay." Aden reached over to pull his head down for an intense kiss. "Don't care what position." He glanced over at the door. "Long as we do it."

Cassie looked back and forth between them both. She didn't say anything, seemed to be thinking.

Leopold blew out a breath. Probably not thinking good things. If they hadn't been on a schedule, he might have tried to talk first, but he wanted them. They wanted him. Aden would want to get back to his books soon enough. Better get down to business. "You're more lined up with Cassie for height."

Aden's eyebrows lifted.

"You are. If I were to come at her like that, she'd...she'd have to stand on a stepladder."

"Hey." Cassie sounded affronted. "I'm not that short."

He chuckled and so did Aden. "I'm tall." He looked down her front suggestively. "Plus I love your pussy."

That put them all back in the game. It relaxed the moment again.

Leopold took a deep breath. He had to keep himself in check.

Cassie melted before his eyes with the comment.

Aden shook his head. "Dude, you're not the only one." His tongue came out to lick his lips. "But I love her back door just as much."

She breathed as though her breath weighed her down. "Oh really?"

"Really."

She rubbed her hand across her face. "Then let's get this party started." She moved back from both of them. Eased her bra straps down over her arms. Bit her lip as the straps fell to her elbows. She slowly slid the material down and reached behind her, almost baring her breasts. The material barely covered her. She let glimpses of her nipples peek through.

Leopold was transfixed by the game of peekaboo. He held his hands down by his side, itching to get his fingers on her. To touch that smooth skin. To revel in the finally bared breasts.

“Maybe you should be a stripper.” Aden's voice sounded breathless. As though he was waiting for the material to drop.

So was Leopold.

Cassie snorted, but at that moment the bra slipped down her front, having been undone by her hands in the back. So the sound was heard but not registered.

Two beautiful, firm, bodacious boobs stared at them. Urged Leopold to touch them. To taste them. To get his fill.

He would.

He took a step.

She shook her head at him. Cocked her head to the side with a look that tantalized him.

He stopped in his tracks.

She wasn't done yet.

He was barely aware of Aden beside him as she put her hands on the waistband of her underwear.

She moved her body back and forth, shimmying in a slinky, slow dance. Dipped her fingers under the waistband and slowly pulled the underwear down on one side. Millimeter by millimeter, she pulled down one side, then the other. Slow as molasses and as sweet.

When she finally revealed herself, her hand stroked across the exposed flesh.

Leo's mouth didn't have an ounce of water. He swallowed, trying to drum up any moisture that he could.

She let go of the underwear and let them fall to the bath mat, where she kicked them over her feet.

A striptease.

A naked Cassie now stood before them. Bare. How far she'd come. In the stairwell, she hadn't wanted to do this for them at first. This time, she hadn't hesitated. This time, she had gone all the way.

Now it was time for her to come.

He moved to her side with lightning-fast speed. Pulled her against his body and held on to her as if she were the rock of his world. Needed that contact and needed to be inside of her in

ways only he could understand. Even with all their problems, this was the one area that they didn't have issues.

The bedroom, though they hadn't limited their sex to that one room. They never had problems getting together.

But screwing doesn't a relationship make. What else is there to the three of you? You can't even reveal your feelings to them without feeling guilty. Look at earlier.

It was neither the time nor the place for deep thoughts. After all, he didn't have enough blood for brainpower. He gave over to this joining for now.

Aden was only a step behind him. He hung on from the back, enveloping Cassie and pushing his body along Leopold's. He was so warm against them. So hot to their coolness.

Three naked bodies slid against each other with constant friction that had each of them groaning. Body parts shifted, and cocks rammed against whatever they could touch. Hands roamed over skin.

After a moment, Aden guided them all toward a wall. He positioned Cassie, then tested out the angle. Looked to Leopold and nodded. He'd found a way to take her. Not that there was any doubt that he would. Aden was a master of figuring such things out.

Leopold planted a soft kiss on her lips, teasing her with his tongue. He tasted her until his body shuddered. Until he wanted her so badly, he couldn't help with the shaking. He wanted to be so deep inside of her that he became one with her.

He leaned down and captured one nipple in his mouth to suck and grind with his tongue. Couldn't stay long. Needed to be at her pussy driving her wild.

The look on her face at the quick move made his sneak attack worth it. A mixture of surprise and desire moved across her face.

He laved for several more seconds. Then slowly descended to his knees. His actions were deliberate, letting her know what was to come.

Aden had backed away from Cassie and was sheathing his cock in a condom and acquiring lube. There were drawers shutting and muttered curses as he had trouble finding what he was looking for.

Cassie glanced to him, then back to Leopold, who had reached his knees. Her face tightened.

She knew what was coming. *Them*. She'd been taken enough in tandem to know what would happen.

He blinked.

Neither of them had ever taken her alone.

They'd taken each other alone. But never her. Leopold didn't have time to ponder that as Aden stalked up behind her.

Aden's condom-sheathed cock swung with his gait. "Hands on the wall." His voice was no longer breathy, but commanding.

She placed her hands, one over the other on the wall as he'd ordered. Without comment. She hung her head slightly down to watch Leopold.

Leopold licked down her belly until he reached the top of her pussy. He was at the start of the sensitive skin. Could scent her essence. She was turned on.

Aden spread her legs, inching her feet out. This also widened her for Leopold, giving him purchase with which to drive her crazy.

She shivered as Aden set about doing something. Probably giving her lube to ease his entry. They'd taken her anally before, but they always prepped her. Aden would stretch her out before his entrance.

Leopold knew him well enough to know that.

Leopold continued to lick and kiss the very top of her, but not going where she wanted him to. He was careful not to go too far down but kept at that level with small embraces.

Until she thrust her hips forward, making the demand without words. The sign he'd been waiting for.

He used his hands to part her folds and made one pass up her slit to lick across her clit. Didn't linger. Just did a quick slide.

She cried out.

He paid her no mind. Kept licking up and down. Then he circled her clit like it was a target before he rammed his tongue into her dripping pussy, tasting her cream on his taste buds.

Aden moved behind her, and her whole body swayed.

Leopold kept up his relentless assault on her pleasures, driving his tongue in and also swirling it around.

Her hands scrambled at the wall as if trying to achieve some purchase. Her breathing came erratically and noisily. "Oh God."

Leopold flicked his tongue against her in fast motions that didn't stop. More moisture crept out from her.

He was coated in her. Could smell her strongly now.

Aden's groan pierced the silence of the bathroom.

She jerked suddenly, and her hands slithered on the wall. Her orgasm gave her voice free rein, and she shattered her cries all over them.

Leopold lifted his head. His face felt wet with her essence. He saw Aden's hands tighten around her hips.

He came with a bellow of her name, ramming into her and pushing her farther into the wall.

Leopold moved out of the way and stared up at his two lovers. He blew out a breath that had to be covered in her scent like the rest of him.

Aden finally stopped pulsing and pulled out from her. He quickly took off the condom and put it in the bathroom trash.

Cassie turned and leaned back against the wall. She panted, looking sated and tired.

Leopold turned to lean his back on the wall and laid his head against her leg. He pressed a quick kiss to her knee.

Her hand came down to pet him on the head and tangle in his hair.

Aden swung around, his deflated cock pointing at them like a soft exclamation point. He wiped a bead of sweat from his face. He closed his eyes, not leaning against anything but taking a break. "Man."

Cassie folded her arms in front of her chest. "That was—"

"Incredible." Aden finished her sentence for her.

Leopold laid his head back against the drywall and closed his eyes. His cock was still hard and aching. He'd not been satisfied. But he'd done what he could for them. That was enough. "You'd better get back to your books." Cassie might want to leave. Sometimes she didn't stay the night. "I know you need to study. Do you have work to do tonight, Cassie? I could make you dinner." He made his voice sound as neutral as possible.

A rustle made him look up and open his eyes.

Cassie had dropped to her knees beside him. Her eyes bore into him like she could burrow within him. She shifted over closer to him and put a hand on his thigh.

Aden's soft voice echoed across them from where he still stood as if rooted there. "Did you think you wouldn't get anything?" With a jerky movement, he came over and dropped to his knees as well on the other side of Leopold. "You didn't come yet."

Leopold looked back and forth between the two. "I..." He hadn't expected them to notice. He'd been fine with that. He'd brought them pleasure. Yep, he wanted to come. Had since he'd gotten home. But after the positions they'd taken, he hadn't expected them to ease him. He found himself surprised that they would try.

Aden laughed, probably at his expression. "I may be a selfish prick. But it's a threesome. We all get pleasure."

Those words rocketed across Leopold with their meaning. They were a threesome. *A threesome.*

Cassie nodded. "Yes." She gave a look to Aden and then lowered her head to Leopold's cock. Her mouth stretched to envelop his tip. "All of us." The words were muffled as she said them against his cock.

His entire body shot off the floor in a rush of spasms. He couldn't calm himself down, nor did he want to. This wasn't going to take long. He was too needy. Too wanting. Had seen them both already get their pleasure, which always made him close to his own. His heartbeat pounded with rushes in his own ears. The beats flapped against his chest as if they wanted to take wing.

Her mouth hovered, taking him into her molten heat and surging to come down on him again with a vengeance. She kept up a steady rhythm, increasing the speed each time she came down on him.

Aden moved beside him and kissed him, a desperate feel to it for Leopold. Aden tangled his hand in Leopold's short hair before cupping his chin. His tongue flicked across Leopold's. Centered and plunged into Leopold's mouth with a force that wouldn't be denied. Couldn't be denied. Aden's hands held his head in place as Aden plundered his mouth, his tongue dancing back and forth.

Leopold couldn't help it. Couldn't hold back any longer. It had been too much. Too many. He needed to lose himself in this act. He thrust his cock deeper down Cassie's throat and let himself go. His come erupted, and Cassie fought to slurp him down, taking in each drop. He let himself go, lying limp back against the wall, even as aftershocks rocked him.

This was the way he always found sex with these two. Now if only he could find the courage to let his emotions go as he could when he came.

Chapter Four

Cassie glanced at the clock yet again. Still not time to head home and pack. She was putting in a couple of hours before the boys came to get her.

A noise drew her attention.

Jenna skulked just outside of her office door. She caught Cassie looking at her and took a deep breath before she walked into Cassie's office. The look on her face was tense. Like someone had died.

"Oh my God, you're pregnant." Cassie's worst fear that eventually Jenna would leave her was about to be realized.

Jenna blinked at her. "What?"

Maybe that wasn't it. Cassie turned more fully to face her. "You look so serious. Like you have something bad to tell me. Tell me you aren't quitting?" It had to be something difficult for the look that Jenna was giving Cassie. Cassie wouldn't make it most days without her secretary, so she hated the idea of losing her. Jenna looked as if her best friend had died or something. What could it be?

Jenna shut the door behind her and clicked the lock. "No. I'm not quitting. Or pregnant. Can I talk to you?"

"Sure." Cassie motioned for Jenna to sit down.

She sat stiffly in a chair as though her ass were starched. Cassie had never seen her act so upset. "I really like working for you. Most of the other managers are...well, they aren't that nice."

Cassie had heard the horror stories from the other side of the desk. She'd gotten lucky with Jenna and tried to show that. She wasn't as hard-nosed as some of the others toward her employees. "I like working with you. You're my right hand."

Jenna's expression didn't change. "Morgan's secretary stopped by my desk to gossip this morning over coffee."

Cassie had met the wench a few times. She thought she was superior to all the other secretaries because she served one of the bigwigs. "I'm sure that was exciting." Office gossip was always boring and mainly consisted of who was about to get fired or who was boinking whom.

Jenna didn't smile or laugh. Not a good sign. "She told me she's overheard a few things. About you."

Cassie stilled. "What about me?" That couldn't be good. Her heart started to pound.

"That Morgan has some concerns with 'the way you carry on.' Outside of the office."

Dammit. They knew. They'd somehow found out about Aden and Leo. How had they? She'd been careful, hadn't she? "How I 'carry on'?" Her voice sounded weak even to her ears.

Jenna looked miserable. As though this was the last thing she wanted to discuss. "Something about who you're dating."

Leo and Aden. How on earth had the men been found out? Her hands gripped tight around each other. If that were true, her days in this office were numbered. What would she do without her job?

Jenna continued. "A black stripper."

Cassie's head came up. They knew about Aden. "That's it?" She didn't know how they'd found out about him. But after thinking they knew about both of them, it was a relief. Despite the implied threat.

Jenna nodded, still looking sad. "It's enough."

"Who I date has nothing to do with my job." Cassie leaned forward over the desk. "Nothing." She believed that, but her bosses didn't. But then it wasn't important what she believed. Only what they thought.

Her job was part of who she was. Like school was so important to Aden. Her job had come to mean everything to her. That was why she'd worked so hard and built up a reputation. She'd shown naysayers who'd said she'd never get ahead in business. That it was a man's game. Now

she could lose everything. She'd been so wrapped up in this job before Aden and Leo had walked into her life. She didn't know how she could stand losing it.

"I know that. But it's a big deal to Morgan. His secretary said he's concerned about the impropriety of your actions reflecting badly on the company. Deeply concerned."

She could picture Morgan saying that with his beady little eyes. His secretary had probably been gleeful as a lark. "That's bullshit." She'd always known their moral compass wouldn't agree with her life choices. She'd seen them do this before.

"I know. But...if they feel you are blatantly thwarting them, they are going to call you in. Maybe even more."

Fire her.

That was what they were thinking of doing. It would be because of Aden's color and his profession. Probably more the color. Being blatant would be simply incorporating him into her life.

Unfair.

They'd cover their tracks so that there was nothing she would be able to call them on. They'd not cite the real reason for which she'd be fired. As Virginia was a right-to-work state with at-will employment laws, they could disguise the real reason she'd been fired with impunity. Regardless, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission would be interested to learn that a white woman had been fired for dating a black man. Even a hint of that and it would look bad on the company, which was probably the only reason they hadn't brought her in yet. That, and she did good work.

However, the EEOC might be less likely to look into the matter if said woman were fired for dating two men at the same time. Not implicitly, of course. It would be something else done under the table.

Another reality that was unfair.

"I had to let you know they are watching you. I couldn't let you be unaware of that." Jenna let out a deep sigh. "They will look for reasons to fire you if you put your personal life on display."

Which meant going out. Introducing Aden to friends. Doing what normal people did with boyfriends.

God forbid they ever found out about Leo. She'd be out the door faster than it could swing and hit her in the ass.

"Thanks, Jenna, for bringing this to my attention." It hadn't been easy for her, but she'd done it anyway. Cassie had never been so grateful to anyone before. If Jenna hadn't come forward, she wouldn't have known anything was going on.

The question now was what should she do about it?

Jenna offered up a slight smile. "Had to let you know. I don't think it's their business who you date. Or anyone else's. But I'm just a secretary. What do I know?" Jenna moved toward the door but turned back to face her. "Be careful. But do enjoy your weekend away. I started to wait and tell you when you got back. But I felt you had a right to know." Jenna shut the door behind her.

Cassie let her head meet the desk. She was about to go away with two men for the weekend. Her firm was ready to fire her over just *one* of the men. Great timing.

* * *

Cassie looked at the bed where her clothes were piled up. One more pair of socks? You could never have enough socks, because you never knew what you'd encounter freaking hiking, for Pete's sake. She tossed a pair of regular socks and one pair of thick, fuzzy footies on the bed for good measure. How cold was it supposed to get?

She was trying not to think about her day at work. That getting fired could be on her horizon.

She started to check her phone for the weather but stopped. She didn't have it in her pocket yet, and this was up in the freaking mountains, so who knew how cold it would be up there as opposed to here.

If the guys thought they were getting her in lingerie and sexy stuff, they'd better crank up the heat. Or else her fat ass was going to be in flannel pajamas.

"I can't believe I'm going camping."

Bill, the cat, meowed at her. He was named after a comic-strip character. He was a great excuse to come home. He also didn't seem bothered by her frequent disappearances as long as the kibble bowl was filled.

"Yes, I know talking to myself isn't good." She looked down as he rubbed against her feet. "Neither is talking to a cat."

She'd already filled his water and food bowls and scooped his litter box, so apparently he was looking for loving. She picked him up and scratched his chin.

How the hell had she gotten roped into this? Why was she even going? This was sure to end up in disaster.

Which was probably why she was going.

She'd needed to see where things went with Leopold and Aden. For it to end here would resolve issues that existed for her. It would put her back on track at work.

She slammed a few more things into her suitcase and managed to trap it shut. Who knew roughing it required so much stuff?

She had hauled it halfway down her apartment stairs, planning to grab her cell phone from the charger, and sit and wait for them, when the doorbell rang. *Right on time*. They should know she'd be running late, as usual.

She flung open the door, only to find her neighbor eyeing her with a suspicious gaze. "I heard noises. You haven't been home much, so thought I'd check it out." The tall woman had the nerve to peep in through the door, probably trying to see what Cassie had in her apartment.

"Mrs. Cast. Thanks for checking. But it's just me." She wanted to slam the door closed and block the woman's nose from snooping any further into her business. The woman had annoyed her since the first day Cassie had moved in, when Mrs. Cast had brought over an old diet book to give to Cassie. Said she didn't need it anymore. The biddy.

Mrs. Cast's mouth pursed into an ugly smile. She looked like a gargoyle. "Going somewhere? *Again*? You've hardly spent any time at home lately. Business trips?" The insinuation was there that there was no way it could be a man taking up Cassie's time. It hung in the air so heavily that Cassie could reach out and touch the words.

She could tell the truth that she had not one but two men to be spending time with, but whatever Cassie told her would be all over the apartment complex by morning. Hell, with Facebook and Twitter, the news was liable to go worldwide. Cassie wouldn't put it past her neighbor. With everything going on at work, Cassie didn't want this broadcast. "Just a trip. I have been busy...working lately." Yes, working up a sweat with Aden and Leopold. Who would be here any minute. Which meant the bat needed to go. "If you'll excuse me, I need to finish getting ready..."

Before she could shut the door on the woman, Aden loped up the steps. "Hey, Cassie." He nodded to the woman, who grew more prune faced each second. "Hello."

Least they'd had enough sense for only one of them to come upstairs. "Hi, Aden. I'm ready."

So the old bat would think she was going away with Aden. Would restore her reputation as "dating" and even Mrs. Prune Face could recognize Aden as a hunk. Even if he was African American. Even if somehow this got back to Morgan and Klein, they already knew about Aden. This wouldn't add too much more kindle to the brimming fire. Only stoke it. Now two men—that would make this fire an inferno. Not to mention have all the neighbors looking down their noses at her, something Cassie couldn't stand.

"Good." Aden smiled softly at her. He looked bright eyed. He wore jeans and a black T-shirt. Looked gorgeous.

Especially as Cassie knew what lay under that cloth. If the past were any indication, the clothes wouldn't last long after they got to the cabin. Her thighs squeezed together as they quivered.

Movement caught her eye from the landing below, and she looked up in time to see Leo dash up the steps. So much for not having the rumor mill going. "Hey." He grinned at her, a rare thing. He tended to keep his expressions close to grim. His gaze took in the older woman who looked back and forth between the two of them, and he sobered. Probably because he saw Cassie's expression.

The other woman's mouth turned so far down, it almost reached the bottom of her chin. "Well, well, well. Going away?" Her voice dipped, low and snotty. She was asking if Cassie was

going away with the two men. Funny how going away with one man would have made her look good, but the addition of another man would make her seem a slut in so many eyes.

Unfair.

Thought you didn't care what people thought?

Especially people who didn't matter like Mrs. Cast. But she still didn't want anyone in her business. She didn't like being under the microscope. Never had. With what she knew about work, she was living under a microscope. Mrs. Cast could have the power to bring her down. Not to mention, all the neighbors went on what Mrs. Cast said. One word from her, and they'd all be giving Cassie the stink eye. She wasn't great friends with her neighbors. But she wasn't enemies with them either. Nor did she want to be.

This relationship was starting to affect her whole life, despite her best efforts not to let it.

Cassie swallowed. Looked at Aden and Leopold with a somewhat pleading look to understand what she was about to do. "Going away for work. For the weekend. My friends offered to drop me off at the airport."

Even she cringed at the use of the word "friends." Hell, even sometime lovers didn't seem to convey what they were to her. Definitely weren't boyfriends. Even she saw that. But no one word encompassed Leopold and Aden, even with all her doubts.

As she said the words, she saw Leopold nodding his agreement. Aden was the one who blanched and looked stunned.

Interesting, because if she'd had to guess, she would have said neither of them would have had an issue with her comment. Showed her how much she knew the men she was sleeping with. Dammit, would she ever know them?

Aden's voice was as hard as nails and twice as piercing. "We'd better get going. We don't want you to be late for your *flight*."

Mrs. Cast managed to look smug and rankled at the same time. "Have a good trip, Cassie. What nice *friends* to take you where you need to be." She stalked back to her door with the air of someone superior.

The event would still be all over the building by morning. So much for being a part of any apartment associations. She pictured everyone leaving the pool whenever she found time to

swim. Not to mention Morgan and Klein knew where she lived. Dammit. For all she knew, Mrs. Cast was reporting to them.

The door slammed with an echo around the open corridor that went on and on.

Somehow it felt like a door closed somewhere else besides the neighbor's apartment.

Leopold moved forward to take her bag in one hand. "Here you go." He pulled it with ease toward the steps, where she would have been struggling. He didn't make any comments about how heavy it seemed.

Aden didn't offer to help with her luggage. He took the lead with a silent, annoyed air about him.

She waited until they were almost at their car before she spoke. "That old biddy is always in everyone's business." She had no plans to tell them about work. It would just make them mad. Nothing any of them could do about it.

Aden didn't even turn around, just opened his car door. His face looked more drawn than she'd ever seen it.

Leopold opened the trunk and hefted up her suitcase to place it inside, but not before Cassie caught sight of two small duffel bags. They had apparently traveled light for this weekend. Maybe she'd packed too much stuff? Maybe that was why Aden was so irked? Maybe pigs would rain down from the heavens. She knew why he was irked, even if she didn't want to admit the reason.

She moved toward the back passenger-side door. Wanted to get this weekend over with. Even though she hadn't been looking forward to it, this was an especially inauspicious start.

Leopold put a hand on her back. His warmth bled through her clothes to push against her skin.

As usual, sparks went off. They fluttered across her spine, bolting up in the nerves in her neck.

"You sit in front." Leopold gave her a little push that engaged her reluctant legs to move. He sounded hoarse. Had the touch done as much for him as it had for her? A quick glance verified his arousal.

“No. You.” She didn't want to sit beside an annoyed Aden. It wouldn't make for good conversation. It would probably end up getting her pissed off. Another bad way to start a weekend together.

“Somebody get in the fucking front.” Aden's biting voice told Cassie more than she wanted to know.

She yanked open the front door and crawled inside. She'd never win against Leopold. They were taking Aden's no-frills, black, four-door sedan. She sat down. Glared at Aden. “That woman gets in everyone's business. She'd have told the whole complex if I'd given her any information.” Not to mention she would have tried for more. One rumor to pass along was never enough. For anyone. She grabbed the seat belt and pulled it across herself.

Leo shut the back door. He didn't say anything to show he'd heard her. She heard him scooting his big body around, trying to get comfortable.

She quickly shifted her seat up, trying to give him more room. He had such long legs. That she loved wrapped around her.

She glanced at the pair of legs she could see. Aden's were long too. Muscular. Dark under those jeans. Her gaze moved up his body and froze on his chilled facial features.

Aden's lips tightened, and he turned the key. The car powered to life after one spitting fit. “God knows you wouldn't want your business all over the place. No, can't have that.”

“No, I wouldn't want that.” Work and home weren't that far away from each other, and both had about the same opinions of her love life. She started to ask him what his damn problem was, but she wasn't sure she wanted the answer. Her resentment at his reaction grew. “She's my neighbor, not my friend.” A justification to a lack of introductions. “A nosy one at that.”

“Uh-huh.”

“Why are you making such a big deal out of this?”

Aden pulled from the parking space and sped for the exit to the parking lot. “You know, you have yet to introduce either of us to your friends.” Aden's hands gripped the steering wheel. “You've met ours.”

It was almost out before Cassie caught her words of *but your friends are strippers*. That wouldn't go over well, so she managed to keep the comment trapped inside. She took a deep breath to come up with something else to say. “I'm—I don't mix my personal and my business

life.” That was true. It wasn't like she'd paraded around other boyfriends where she worked. Her personal life was none of her bosses' business, even when they tried to make it theirs.

“Yeah.” He dropped his hand into his lap “That's why your *neighbor* got a fish story.”

Leo leaned forward, the seat making a noise. “We're not exactly conventional. Her neighbor would have broadcast it if she even thought we were going away together. I know the type.”

Exactly. “He's right.” Leo seemed to understand her motivations even without knowing the full story. Why couldn't Aden?

Aden kept his eyes on the road but shot her a glance from his peripheral vision. “I know that. The type too. I know that not everyone needs to know what we do. It's our business. No one else's.” His concentration went back to the road. “But 'friends'? 'Business trip'? That's how you describe this weekend? You're not even telling people who *are* the closest to you about us. I'm not talking about your work, but your actual friends.”

“What was I supposed to say to her?” Cassie's mouth tightened. “You're telling me, when you get signed on to some hoity-toity law firm, you're going to run around and tell everyone you're in a threesome? That you have two lovers?” That was hardly likely. They'd react like her company would and fire his black ass.

Aden didn't squirm or look uncomfortable at her questions. “When I feel it's appropriate, yeah, I will tell people about us. But I'm not going to work in some hoity-toity law firm.”

Cassie swallowed. Another mistake on her part. Two of them. He didn't say much he didn't mean, so he would be revealing the nature of their relationship to those he felt needed to know. She'd always assumed he was going into law for the money, which meant working at some rich firm. “Where are you going to work?” Why should she have to ask this? Why didn't she know? Her eyebrows knit together.

Aden looked out of his window. He didn't answer her. Didn't look at her. His hands were so tight on the steering wheel, they were almost white. He flipped on his sunglasses so she couldn't see his eyes.

Leopold's hand came up and squeezed her shoulder. “He's going to start his own firm.”

Had he talked about that? In front of her? Had she missed it? What a brave thing going out on your own like that... She'd thought about it but never had the guts.

Yet one more thing she hadn't known about Aden. Another nail in the relationship, splitting them apart.

* * *

Cassie lugged her suitcase out of the trunk. It had been a long, silent trip. One that had created discomfort with a capital *D*.

Leopold stepped up behind her. "I could have gotten that."

She shook her head. "No, I got it." She tossed her hair to the side and stared into the blue sky. The bright sunshine made her eyes water. "How did you know about Aden's plans for after he graduates?"

Leopold turned to look, but Aden had moved toward the cabin already and was staring off into space. "He's talked about it."

"With me?"

Leopold shrugged. "I guess."

She couldn't remember his ever mentioning that fact. Maybe when they'd talked about school or her work, but maybe she hadn't paid attention. Or maybe she hadn't wanted to. She'd had preconceived notions and wanted to hang on to them, no matter the evidence against them.

The latter idea didn't set well with her.

"We don't expect you to tell everyone about us." Leopold picked up his and Aden's bags from the trunk. He slung a gray one over his shoulder.

"You could have fooled me by Aden's speech."

"We've been together four months." Leopold looked serious.

Had it been four? It seemed like more. Like she'd always slept sandwiched in between two men. Another idea she didn't like. *You can't get too comfortable*. "Four months. Huh, I had no idea."

He held out the other bag and slung it over the other shoulder. "I didn't think you would." He stalked over to Aden.

Great. Now she'd pissed them both off. She was doing a bang-up job of ruining this weekend.

Maybe she should keep her fat mouth shut for the rest of the weekend and stay out of trouble. Or keep her mouth stuffed.

Cocks du jour?

Not unless she stopped talking.

Besides, they were only having fun. Nothing serious was happening between the three of them. They weren't living together. Which was why she wouldn't leave anything over at Aden's. Did Leopold still have his own place? She hadn't heard him mention going home in a while. Maybe she hadn't paid attention to that either. Maybe it bore finding out.

She dragged her luggage across the rocky ground. Almost tripped on an uneven plane of dirt and rock.

Leopold had handed off a bag. He said something to Aden and fished in his pockets.

"Look, guys—" She approached them rather like you would a bear trap. She wasn't sure if either of them would go off.

Aden interrupted her. "I overreacted a little earlier. School is kicking my ass lately." He blew out a breath. "I know why you didn't tell Mrs. Crap."

She couldn't help a smile. "Mrs. Cast." Oh Lord, that would lead to a wrong name being spoken aloud to someone's face eventually.

"Whatever. But sometimes it doesn't feel like you're as *in* this relationship as Leo and I are."

Maybe because she wasn't. That was the crux of the matter at hand, wasn't it? She wasn't invested in this relationship. She'd tried to pull away after the event in the stairwell, then come back to them. But she'd never fully committed herself to them. "I don't know what to say to that." Anything she said would be a lie, because she wasn't sure he could handle the truth. Nor could Leo. Even if they already unofficially knew, to hear it aloud might hurt them more. Not anything she wanted to do.

Aden's smile was bittersweet. "There's nothing to say." Except one thing. That she was in the relationship. Which would be a lie.

Leopold had fished out the keys. "Shall we go inside?"

Cassie closed her eyes. Held the handle of her suitcase tightly. Her heart pounded in her chest. The crux of the matter had come home to her a few minutes ago. She wasn't as invested in this relationship as they were. It wasn't fair. Not to herself. Not to them. The truth was, she couldn't do this weekend. Not and stay true to herself. Not to mention with things at work hanging over her head, she wouldn't be able to focus on them like she should. Add in the old biddy at her apartment complex, and that added up to trouble. Even here, she would worry about something getting back to Morgan and Klein. She should have called this off as soon as Jenna had told her, but she'd already been so committed to going. "I can't do this, guys." This would probably be the end of their facsimile relationship. She couldn't stay, and they needed her to stay. Her throat constricted. *End with a whimper and not a bang, please.*

"What do you mean?"

She twirled her hand around her suitcase. "I can't do this. I can't go away with you for the weekend. I can't..." She shook her head. The tears came, but she blinked them back. "I thought I could do a fun tryst. But this... I can't." She brushed her hair to the side. "Let me call a cab. That way I won't ruin your weekend." Any more than she already had.

Leo's hands fisted around the keys. "As if you leaving won't ruin this. Don't do this. Not to us."

"I have to. It's not right to keep pretending." Aden's words flashed home to her. "*Sometimes, it doesn't feel like you're as in this relationship as Leo and I are.*" "I'm in this relationship, but not fully. He was right. It's not fair to either of you. This weekend is a commitment that I can't make." If she did, she'd have to bank on losing her job. She wasn't ready to do that yet. Her job was too important to who she was. She wasn't sure how important Aden and Leo were. Not really. She'd had her job for years and had invested so much time into it.

If she gave that up for Aden and Leo, she'd lose part of herself to them. She wasn't ready to do that yet.

And who's to say she wouldn't resent them over giving up Morgan and Klein? Not right away. But in a year? Especially if their relationship didn't survive. Even if they did make it, losing so important a thing to her would eventually start to impact her feelings. Wouldn't it?

She didn't want that. Better to end it here and now, while it wasn't getting so messy. While getting away wasn't that complicated.

Because you've never liked messy. Being entangled with a lover in life, not only in body. Being in love.

Aden's face looked darker than usual but not surprised.

Leopold looked as though he wanted to slam something. He kept moving his face but couldn't get a handle on his emotions. "Would have been nice if you'd figured that out before I booked this weekend. Before we drove up here for an hour and a half." His hand tightened into a fist.

That man could do serious damage if he was furious. She checked his face. He was full of rage. She resisted the urge to back away. This was Leopold, after all. To see her do that would hurt him. He worried about being like his father, who had abused him and his deceased sister. "I'm sorry. I am." Aden's words had opened up a truth in her she couldn't ignore. "Let me call a cab. Maybe the two of you can salvage something of this weekend."

"As if." Leopold's jaw set in a stubborn line.

Aden sighed. "There's no phone here."

A line from the *Gilligan's Island* theme song popped into her head. But they had a phone, didn't they, unlike Gilligan and the crew? A motorcar? She didn't know about the luxury. "Didn't one of you bring your cell?" She reached for her pocket, where hers was—only it wasn't there. She had a vague memory of putting it on her charger earlier in the day. She'd been about to grab it when Mrs. Crap had knocked. Damn, and she'd never picked it up.

"There was no coverage, so why bother?" Leo sounded as if he gritted his teeth. "Not that a cab would haul up here anyway to pick you up."

Aden shook his head. "I wanted to focus on you two this weekend. I left my cell at home. Brought my laptop, but there's no Internet up here either."

"Damn." She looked around, as if hoping to see a cell phone or phone line materialize out of thin air.

"I can drive you home." Aden moved back toward his car. His steps were slow and loping. His graceful body slid across the earth as though he were dancing.

Dammit, what was she doing? They might not be all that she'd fantasized about, but she did care for them. The question was, how much? That was an answer she didn't know. She was going to lose them over this. But the truth was, she couldn't lie to them or herself. It was time she

stopped doing both. And saved herself while she could. She could salvage her job at this point. If this went further with them, she might not be able to.

She followed him toward the car. This would be a fun drive home. *Not*. “Maybe to the nearest town.” Somewhere there had to be a cab. Or a rental-car place. How far would they have to go to find civilization? Damn rural area. Damn cabin. She never should have come up here. Should have gone with her first instinct and been working this particular weekend. Then she wouldn't have had to face this so soon. But hadn't she been hoping to get this dealt with? Conflicting wants dialed through her, leaving her unsure of what she'd ever hoped for.

Aden grasped Leo's hand as he was walking alongside. “You can stay. I'll take her home and come right back.”

Right back being several hours later. Boy, she had mucked up good this time. Her eyes closed before opening and taking in the sky.

Leo shook his head grimly. “I'll come with.” He still looked as though he would gladly throttle her.

What had started as a romantic getaway was now turning to hell. “I'm sorry.” For what? Not staying? Not being what they needed? She couldn't change what she was or what she had to give.

“I know.” They both said the words at the same time. But while Aden sounded sad, Leopold sound furious.

There was no coming back this time. Last time, she'd found a way back to them because she'd missed them. This time, there wasn't going to be that chance. If she left here, it was over. There was no going back. She blew out a deep breath. Maybe the time had come for reality to intrude upon dreams. For night to give way into day on their relationship. Because it certainly wouldn't stand up to the light. Not to any scrutiny from her work, from her landlords, from just about anyone.

After stowing their luggage back in the trunk, they got back in the same positions they had been in before. Only things were grimmer. Last time, at least it had only been Aden upset. This time, all three of them were.

Aden turned the key.

Same grinding sound as before, only the car didn't follow up with a motor coming to life.

He turned the key again. And again. Still no motor sound. “Oh come on.” He tried it again. Nothing.

Cassie closed her eyes. “Don't tell me the car won't start.” That would be her luck.

“Okay, I won't tell you.” Another *click*. Nothing. He gripped the steering wheel and turned toward her.

Looked like she was on Gilligan's cabin getaway after all.

Chapter Five

Aden followed behind two tense people, carrying his luggage and a bag of Cassie's.

Had he made the right decision?

Only time would tell.

It had been a spur-of-the-moment, "it had helped us last time to be stranded" decision.

Leo's shoulders were straight, making him even taller. He opened the door to the cabin with the key, though he seemed like he wanted to break it in his huge hands. They all filed into the small cabin.

That was more luxurious on the inside than the somewhat ramshackle outside. A rug you could sink into spread across the living room. Paintings. A huge couch beside a gorgeous stone fireplace. Exposed beams and paneled walls. That was only the first room.

This wasn't some run-down shack. This was a getaway place.

All the more reason to make this weekend work.

"Wow." Cassie looked around as she stopped right in front of them. "This is nice."

"Yeah, it is." Aden dropped the bag on the floor. "We can figure out bedrooms later."

Cassie's face pinched, looking a little nervous. Almost as nervous as she had that first night. She wasn't in an enclosed space, which might cause her to have a panic attack, so that probably didn't bode well for any sort of quick reconciliation. "Guys..."

Aden shushed her. He had to try to get through to her. "Let's make the best of this."

Leo's words bit the air. "She can have a bed to herself. That's what she wants." He walked to the fireplace and looked down at the hearth. Put his hands on the stone as if pushing against the cold rock.

Maybe seeking a kinship with it?

After all, if he were made of stone, then he wouldn't be feeling this right now. Leo might be downplaying his reactions, but he felt the hurt and anguish at the thought of Cassie leaving them. Just like Aden did. He'd become able to read the giant of a man better in the time they'd been together. This taciturn man was churning inside. Aden had to figure out how to release Leo's inner workings without dislodging Cassie further.

Cassie stood back, arms wrapped around herself, as she watched. She didn't say anything. Probably better she didn't talk right now.

"Let's make the best of this, guys." Aden repeated himself before he moved forward to the couch that looked like he could sink in its depths. He sat down and did sink down several inches. "Ahhh." He leaned back. Then crooked his finger at Cassie. "Why don't you sit beside me?"

She looked dubious. Smart woman. The closer she came, the more he could touch her. "Aden..."

"What? Are you going to go in a bedroom and spend all weekend alone? Or be alone until we can leave? Stay away from us the entire time? Don't be silly." He patted the cushion. "Come sit down by me."

Leo had turned around and watched them. His face had gone back to neutral, as though he'd retrieved some strength from the stone. His gaze never wavered, nor did he speak.

Aden had said a truth earlier that had caused Cassie to think about her life. She'd seemed introspective anyway. He'd been suspicious once he'd calmed down that more had happened in her day than she'd told them. It hadn't been his intent, exactly, but it wasn't a bad thing. They all knew the problems they were facing. Now maybe, just maybe, they could work on them over this weekend, instead of pretending they didn't exist. Or at least until he started the car. Or gave in to the sex they were so good at. What would be the outcome? He didn't know yet.

Cassie came over and sat on the couch. She didn't relax. She posed ramrod stiff as though a ruler had been placed along her spine. Did she have a stick up her ass? He'd never seen her sit so rigidly.

He frowned. She shouldn't be so uncomfortable around him. They'd have to work on that. Before she found out about the car.

'Course this position pushed out her tits for him to admire. Even encased in a shirt and bra, they were luscious.

Aden cocked his head at Leo and motioned to the seat beside her. He did the motion again when Leo didn't move.

Leo's lips pursed. Slower than Aden had ever seen him move, he walked over to the other side of Cassie.

Cassie pulled herself even tighter as Leo sat down. As though she could retreat into herself.

Not going to happen, baby. Aden leaned back and placed an arm on the back of the sofa. "So who's up for a game of truth or dare?" He winked, grinning and showing white teeth.

Cassie groaned.

"We have to find *some* way to pass the time." Aden looked up under the wrought-iron coffee table, seeing what rested on the shelf there. "Hey, we could play strip poker? Or naked Twister? Naked Monopoly?"

Cassie choked out a laugh. "Aden." Her shoulders dropped a minuscule amount, easing her body's stiff stance. Maybe she would lighten up eventually if he kept talking to her. Teasing her. He had to get her to relax.

"Hey, we have to find a way to pass the time. No television up here." As long as she was full of doubts, no sex. Not even if she asked, at least, for a while. His mind went to several places and positions with that thought, galloping ahead to when they could fuck. He roped it back. They had to resolve this doubt once and for all.

"Only if I'm the car." Leo moved closer to them. His long leg brushed against Cassie's. Both of them responded as if they'd been burned.

"Fine with me. I'm always the shoe." Aden looked at Cassie, who looked back and forth between them. He bent over, reached down, and picked up the game from under the table.

"Guys. We're talking...about doing this, are we?" Cassie's voice softened. "I..."

Aden hushed her again. "You can be the thimble." He pulled the top off and put it on the glass top. "Besides. What else are we going to do?" During the game they could talk, but the diversion would hopefully pull some of the tension away.

"I'm not...playing naked Monopoly." She looked down at her toes as though they'd become the most interesting things in the world. "I don't think that's a good idea for us to do."

Only because once they got naked, it would be hard to hold on to those inhibitions she possessed. But she wasn't saying no to playing, which all fit into Aden's plan. *Get them interacting and start talking.* He'd have to trust the rest would resolve itself.

"You wouldn't." Leo didn't put any emotion into his voice. Said the words in a flat monotone.

No. Aden's hands tightened on the box. That wasn't going to go well.

Cassie's chin came up. "I said I was sorry about this weekend. I thought I could do it. But I can't."

She didn't sound angry, a plus. Maybe Leo had been right to say that.

They needed to get naked emotionally before naked physically. Maybe they didn't need the safety net of the game. "Because that would mean you were invested in us. You haven't been, have you?" Aden let the game stay where it was.

A single tear ran down beside her nose. It was as much of an answer as anything said aloud.

Aden reached over to grasp her hand. "We're not stupid, Cassie. You might have come back into the relationship after you'd left us at the stairwell, but you haven't fully been there. We know why you don't leave anything at my house." It was the first time he'd come out and said what he knew to be true.

She swallowed. She didn't offer any denials. Not that he would have believed them. Had hearing them aloud shocked her as much as him?

"Why did you come back?" Leo's voice grew hoarse. "Why did you seek us out that night after so long had passed? I know what you said, but...why?"

Her hands clasped together. "I...couldn't get you two out of my mind. Like I told you." Her laugh came without humor. "I thought I was losing my mind. Still do. I couldn't function. Everything made me think of the two of you."

"So in light of that, why don't you think we can make this work?" Aden attacked the problem from a different end. "Explain what you think."

"I live in the real world." Cassie cringed at the snapped words. Her chest heaved. "I...didn't mean that."

Leo shook his head. “Yep, you did. You haven't given *us* a chance. Because of all your preconceived notions. You came back to us in body. But not mind or soul, and that isn't right.”

So much for any playing or distractions. But things were coming along like Aden had wanted without board games. Leo had asked the difficult question that Aden would have gotten to eventually. Usually Aden was the direct one. This turn of events was surprising. Aden wanted to reach out and touch him, but didn't dare reach over Cassie.

“I know.” Her hands twisted again. “I know. It wasn't fair to either of you.” She didn't cry but looked close to it.

“Nor you. Because if what you want is us, why can't you let yourself have us?” Aden sat back and watched mixed emotions spread across her face. “Because it's not traditional? Because you're not supposed to have two men in your life?”

She didn't answer. The look on her face betrayed her.

“Because of what others will think of you?”

Now she averted her eyes. Therein laid the ultimate crux of the problem. A major conflict that presented itself to them. Cassie cared about what others thought. In her work for Morgan and Klein, she had the right to care. Nontraditional relationships made others think about you. A lot. Morgan and Klein would judge her for whatever this relationship was. They'd probably try to take back all the ground she'd gained with them, if not terminate her completely.

He took a different approach to this whole issue. “Did you know that the French existentialist Sartre and his lover, Simone de Beauvoir, were polyamorous? So are Jada Pinkett and Will Smith.”

Her eyes widened. She still didn't comment.

“Polyamory isn't mainstream. But it isn't as uncommon as you'd think. Some people have open relationships. The actors Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee are two. Others have relationships with a steady other person in their life.”

“It's not widespread.” Her hands continued to make circles in her lap. Wrung around each other.

“No. No, it isn't. It's not for everyone.” Aden moved his hands into his lap. “It probably will never be a popular choice here on earth.”

“Exactly.”

“Once upon a time, neither was interracial marriage. It was illegal in some states until the 1960s and a court case. I'm not comparing the two agendas. But the truth of the matter is, whose business is it that people are in love?”

“No fucking one's.” Leopold piped up the answer.

“Being in a threesome is not something that you need to be ashamed of. If it's what you need. What you want.” Aden took a gamble here. He thought it was what she wanted, what she needed. But outside pressure had caused her to question herself and needs. A sad state of affairs when you thought about it.

“There's never two knights riding the princess off into the sunset.” Her voice hovered close to tears.

“Then maybe you're reading the wrong stories.” Leo shifted his weight on the couch, making it squeak. “Knights also never smell bad, and the princess always takes a bath. Both are very unlikely in that time period.”

They both stared at him.

“She left a book on the nightstand...” He shrugged. “And yep, I read it.”

Cassie pulled her attention away from Leo. Came back to the subject at hand. “My work would never accept...”

Aden squeezed her hand, enveloping her small one in his. His looked so dark against hers. She was so much paler than Leo. “Probably not. I'm not naive. I know a lot of people won't. But what fucking business is it of theirs? What you do in private is your own business. Like Leo said.” They had no right to be in her personal life as long as what she was doing wasn't illegal. ‘Course in this state, what he and Leo did was illegal. So maybe that wasn't the best example.

“My bosses—” She broke off. “They look into everything. Scandal isn't well received where I work.”

“I know you've worked hard to get where you are in your career.” Aden covered the Monopoly box with the top. “Other jobs can be found.”

“With the same problems of this one. Who is to say they won't be as concerned with what I do as Morgan and Klein? Not to mention clients. I've worked damn hard to get where I am. I've given up a lot. It's not just a job to me.”

Her career was a part of who she was. How she identified herself. Again, he went for a different tack. Time would come when she would need to deal with using her job as her identity, but the time wasn't now. “But...haven't you learned anything along that way? There are people who won't accept your weight, aren't there? Who put you down because of a number? Put me down because I'm half-black? Leo down because he's huge?” He kept rubbing her hands. “People will always find a way to reject what's different.”

“That's different.”

She used the same word he did, but in another context. “It's not right. None of it. It's all the same. There's little difference between a KKK member burning a cross in my yard and the dicks at work knocking you down a peg because of who you live with. If people don't accept you for things that don't hurt them, then why don't you say fuck 'em?”

She wouldn't meet his gaze. “I don't know.” Her voice grew stronger. “I don't know.”

“You mostly say fuck 'em about your weight. I've watched you. I know bitches make you feel badly about your size, but you can throw that stuff off, as you should. Mostly. It still bothers you.”

She shrugged. “I've always hated people looking down on me. But if it can make me mad enough, I can deal with it. I am what I am.”

“You're gorgeous. Why wouldn't you be able to do that about us? What's the difference?”

She pondered the question. Appeared to be deep in thought. “I've dealt with my weight all my life. I've never dealt with this.”

Leo moved forward. “So when they dictate to you about anything new in your life, you'll capitulate? What car you drive? Where you live? Even what pet is the one to have? Suppose they said get rid of the cat, you need a dog? From what you've said, they might try to use your job to dictate everything about your life.”

“No. I wouldn't do that.” Her voice was firm. Sure of herself.

Aden had her. “Then why let them say what you can do with us?” He slapped down the comment in true winner style.

“It's not just that.”

“Then what is it? Why can't you be with us? Other than society says it's not right or normal?” Aden removed his hands from her. Needed her to talk to him. They needed to get past the superficial excuses to the real issues underneath. This not being accepted by work was bullshit. They were so close to the truth. He had to keep her talking.

Her eyes narrowed as she went into thinking mode again.

He didn't back away. “Do you care about us?”

Several long seconds passed. Without comment.

Aden was about to give up. Maybe he'd pressed her too far. Pushed too much. Maybe they were over this time.

“Yes.”

Both Leo and Aden swiveled their heads toward her. “What?” Another action done in sync.

“Yes. I care for you both.” Her lip trembled. As though she was ready to call back the words at any second.

“Then what's the problem?” Leo moved toward her. His legs touched hers. His face lit up in anticipation before he called it back. Aden saw his face change into the mask that he often wore. If Aden hadn't been watching, he would have missed it.

Maybe they could deal with this issue too, while they were talking.

“Sometimes caring...love, it's not enough.” Cassie blew out a breath. “Everyone starts off in love. Then it fades.”

Aden reached over to grip her hands. “That's the hang-up. It's not about the threesome. The triad we might form. It's about you're scared of intimacy. Like Leo.”

“Hey!” Leo looked indignant.

“You are. You know you are.”

Leo's face faded against the backdrop again. But he didn't protest anymore.

Cassie shrugged. “Maybe. I guess.” Her gaze moved to Aden's face. “Like you're not, Mr. I Have My Studies.”

His heart pounded in his chest. Thundered in his ear. He almost denied the charge. Then he remembered what he'd been trying to do with this whole conversation. What he'd wanted to

accomplish. Lying about his own foibles would do nothing to help his cause. He swallowed. “I want things. Specific things in life. And...yeah, having people I'm involved with does distract me from those goals.” Which was why he'd brought work to do on their weekend. He hadn't had a choice.

“Exactly.” Cassie smoothed a hand down her thigh.

“But I'm not denying a relationship because of it. I do have to work harder to avoid pushing you two too far away. Yeah, maybe it was an excuse not to get involved in the past.” His mouth drew up. “Maybe.”

“Definitely,” Cassie said with conviction.

“Okay. Definitely. In the past, it was easier. But even though it wasn't the right time in my life for a relationship when I met the two of you, I'm at least trying to make this triad into what I believe—what I know it can be.”

“I can't deny that.” Cassie rubbed her hand against her thigh again. “But haven't you used studying at least once when things were going to advance past where you wanted them to be with us? At least once?”

He nodded. Again, lying wouldn't do anything that he wanted this communication to do. He needed to be straight with them.

Leo's eyebrows rose. As though he couldn't believe what he'd heard. Yeah, Aden was no saint. About time Leo realized that. Maybe he'd see that no one was a saint and stop trying to be one.

Along that line of thinking. “I'm not immune to doubts about this relationship. I'm not perfect. None of us are. It's complicated.” More so than he'd even thought. He never would have guessed Cassie's relationship phobia. “I will grant you that one uncontested.”

“You got that right.” Cassie sounded resigned. Her body had relaxed, as though they weren't discussing their future. It was a good sign, and he'd take any one of those he could get right now.

“Threesomes always are complex. But the end result has got to be worth it. Being with you two has been the best time of my life.”

Both of them jerked in astonishment at his words. He wasn't one for mushy platitudes. None of them were. To hear that from his lips apparently was a shock to them.

"I'm not shitting you. Even though school keeps me so busy, all I want to do is be with the two of you. It's why I have to shove you away sometimes. Because if I don't, I will lose my goals." His mouth turned up, and he looked away. "If I lose my goals, I won't be me."

He'd never admitted that to anyone else before. Barely even acknowledged it to himself.

Cassie reached over to stroke his hand. A first for her, reaching out to him, or at least it had been a long time since it had happened. "You will reach your goals. I know it."

"I'm trying." Aden didn't hesitate to talk, no matter how much he wanted to refrain from discussing these subjects. "I succeed, but I know it's at the cost of shoving you both away for little bits. I only hope it's worth it in the future."

"It will be." Now she was reassuring him. How things had changed in the short time they'd been talking.

It was about time they talked about another reality of being together. Something they hadn't discussed before, but Aden had been aware of for some time. Best to get everything laid on the table now while the communication was open.

"I'm mixed race, and I know what being with lovers different than my own color can do. Better than anyone else." His mouth twisted. "I don't think either of you realize what you're getting into, being with me."

It was another shocker for them, by the way they both looked at him. He'd known they rarely contemplated race. A good thing. Except to be with him, they needed to.

Cassie sputtered. "In this day and age..." She sounded a little too hyped up about this. Why would that be?

"It's still not accepted. Better than it used to be, yeah. But if we have to move neighborhoods, we could as easily end up with a cross on our lawn as we could hear about being called gay with a fag hag."

Cassie rolled her eyes. "I'm not worried about that. Either one." Sounded a little too brash for Cassie on this subject.

"You should be. You think Mrs. Crap had a problem with two guys picking you up. Or it was more that a black man was picking you up." He'd seen the way the old woman had looked at him. Cassie hadn't noticed. But he had.

“Noooo.” She looked as though it was the most unfair thing in the world.

It made his chest swell. It was nice that she and Leo thought this way. That it was such a nonissue for them. Yet he knew the things that could happen. He'd opened their eyes to the facts. Had Cassie's eyes already been opened to something? She seemed a little more aware of his race than usual. Hard to say. Her work sounded like they all had sticks up their asses. Like in prior years they would have been wearing white robes and burning crosses. Only now they hid behind respectable racism. Blacks just didn't fit the mold of who they were looking for, not that they would only hire whites to fill positions. “Yesss.”

She thought on it a moment. “She's an old busybody. She won't make trouble for me. I won't let her. Look, I'm not worried about your color.”

What trouble? He didn't mention it but filed it away in the back of his mind. She'd probably be even more alert now. As would Leo. Now, time to bring more forward. “But you are worried about us breaking up. I'm sure we will get razzed for my color and for being a threesome. I'm not sure we'll have to break up. In fact, I'd like to think we're going to make it. Despite our relationship being complicated.”

She swallowed. “You don't know we're going to stick together. You could wake up in a week and hate me. And if we don't make it—”

“You could wake up in a week and love sushi.” She'd always hated sushi. Whenever he and Leo got it, she almost gagged. Aden watched her face to see how she'd react.

Leo laughed. “That's not likely.”

“But it could happen.” Anything could happen. “However, if I worry about what could happen, I'm not enjoying what's happening now. Like this.” He placed a hand in hers. Motioned Leo to join hands with them.

Three hands clasped together. Light, tanned, and dark. Entwined.

“I could worry about the guy at the grocery store three towns over calling me nigger. But then I'm not enjoying what I have here.” He tightened his hold. “What's real now.”

“It's easy to say. Harder to do.” But she didn't pull her hand away.

“Pfft. It's only hard if you make it that way.”

“No, you're hard when *we* make you that way.” The line from Leo sounded like something Aden would say.

Aden would have given him a high five if his hands weren't already busy touching their hands.

Cassie blushed but continued to leave her hand in theirs. “We're as important to you as school?”

He nodded. “Oh yeah. At least that much. I've been dreaming of college since I was ten, and what I would do with the rest of my life.” That should tell her something he couldn't out-and-out say if she were listening to what he'd said. Not to mention, maybe it would give her some things to think about for her own job. She might have to one day make a choice, her job or them, if she stayed with both them and Morgan and Klein. Might not be for a while, but might be sooner than later.

She leaned back against the cushions. “Are we playing Monopoly or not?”

“Naked?” He let the hope show in his voice. Maybe they could get this worked out.

Chapter Six

Leopold watched as Cassie shook her head at Aden. “You have only one thing on the brain.” She laughed as she said the words, though. Looked much more relaxed than she had earlier.

Aden shrugged. “I’m a guy. Besides, we’ve spent too much time talking already. Maybe we should try and resolve this problem *another* way.”

She swallowed, the motion making her throat bounce. She knew what Aden meant. So did Leopold.

Might as well say aloud what everyone was thinking. “I say we skip the Monopoly and go straight to the naked.” Leopold leaned back against the firm cushion. Might as well skip the game-playing step too.

Aden wagged his brows. “I’m all for that.” The bulge in his pants told even more than the words.

“We don’t have any problems in the bedroom, guys.” Cassie still looked troubled, as though she hadn’t figured things out with all their talking. If talking wouldn’t work, then it was time to start doing.

No, they’d never had problems in the bedroom. But maybe it was time they realized how important that was. Leopold steeled himself to talk.

“Really? I never would have guessed.” Aden didn’t back away, still keeping that shit-eating grin on his face.

This time, Leopold got it out before they spoke. “The only problems we have outside the bedroom are the ones we make up for ourselves.” Both of them looked at him. “It’s true.” Their problems were caused by their own faults. The time had come to move past them. Even he had to do that. Now. Or this relationship would fail. He took a deep breath. He didn’t want to see this threesome end.

Cassie stared up at him for a minute. She didn't say anything. Gazing upon that face was like looking into heaven. Her pert little nose, scrunched up in the middle of her round face, beckoned him. Her sultry, full lips called him to possess them. She was one of the most beautiful things he'd ever had to look at. She and Aden. Yep, Leopold had to help them fix this relationship. He would or die trying.

He responded to her look the only way he knew how. Stood up from the couch. Reached up to the buttons of his button-down shirt. His fingers lingered over the top fastening.

He wanted this even more than he'd wanted them that first time. This would cement their relationship for the future. It had to. This was one last shot to keep Cassie with them.

Cassie cleared her throat. "Shouldn't we make a fire before it gets dark outside? In case we have to visit the woodshed for the wood?"

She was trying to postpone their coming together. Doing a shitting fine job of it too. His hand stopped on the button. *Shit.*

"Spoilsport." Aden huffed out a breath. He cocked his head to the side. "I'll get the wood. You and Leo continue this. It shouldn't take me long."

Her face went wild. "But...but...but." She hadn't expected Aden to go do the chores and leave them to the bonding. She'd probably thought they'd both go get wood and give her a break to regroup herself. That wasn't going to happen.

Aden didn't listen, as usual. He got up and stalked for the back door. "Save some for me." With that, he exited.

Leopold moved over to her and knelt on the floor in front of her. He pressed his face into her lap. Kissed her knee. "I want to be with you." He reached up and placed his hands in hers. "Now and for always." Like Aden, he wasn't all about the platitudes, but he meant this.

She gazed down into his face. Looked around. Wouldn't focus in on his face. Wouldn't meet his gaze. "What if...?"

He shook his head. "Don't play the what-if game. It will only drive you nuts." He moved up on the couch beside her, taking her hands in his. They were cold. He rubbed her to warm her up. "Let me be with you. Now."

"But I'm still..."

“We'll deal with tomorrow when it comes. Another day. For today, let's deal with the reality of *this* moment in time.” His face clenched along with his hands. If they could make enough moments, they could have forever.

Something must have shown about how desperate he was, because she nodded and burrowed her face in his chest. “I've never seen you look so...wanting. So emotional.” She sounded awed.

Was there a crack in his armor? Because he never let his true self show. Aden had revealed more in an hour than Leopold had...since that day in the stairwell when they'd first gotten together. Watching him, Leopold knew his only shot to make this work was to bare himself. To take down the walls. It wouldn't be easy. But it was necessary.

Even though he was scared of being in a relationship. Scared of being the hurter, not the hurtee. Somehow he had to break through that. Had to show them what they meant to him.

Cassie was a good place to start. Maybe he could help her face her own fears this day as well. He'd start by showing her how much he wanted her.

He took her face in his hands, which he found to be trembling, and lowered his mouth to hers.

Her mouth opened under his. She tasted of cherries and cream. She moaned as his tongue traced the outside of her lips before seeking entry.

Gently he pressed down into her, taking the kiss as deeply as she'd let him, which was of course as far as he could go.

His hand slipped down to her neck and stroked her soft skin. She always felt so smooth. So featherlike.

Their kisses became wild and frantic. Like wild butterflies flapping over a hundred meadows.

She'd never been with one of them and not the other. *Ever*. Leopold tightened his grip around her.

He and Aden had been with one another, but never her with only one of them. This was a first for them both. A layer of intimacy that hadn't happened before. No wonder Aden had left them alone. He'd figured that out. Probably known it needed to happen too.

Leopold's heart pounded.

He moved his hand down to explore under her shirt and plunge down to her breast. He cupped her. She more than filled his hand.

She writhed and moaned up under him with little noises of pleasure. Her reactions encouraged him.

He stroked her breast through the satiny-feeling bra. Could feel her nipple harden under his roaming hands.

Her shoulders widened as she pushed forward toward him. Her breasts pressed into his wanting hand.

Time to go further. Get naked. He pulled his hand from her before he pulled on her to sit forward and yanked the shirt over her head.

Her beautiful eyes surveyed him as she sat there in jeans and a bra. She kicked her shoes off and swallowed again. She seemed to have developed a nervous twitch. He ignored her indecision. This was right. She'd stop him if she didn't want this.

Keeping her gaze even with his, he moved his hand down to the waistband of her jeans. The promised land of no compare. He opened the snap and zipper before splaying her jeans open wide.

She sat farther up, trying to give him more access to her considerable charms. She wasn't protesting his actions. She liked what he was doing. So he went forward. If she'd given him any sign she was ready to stop, he would have stopped. Instead she encouraged him to continue.

He pulled the jeans over her hips, along with her underwear. Bared her for his lusting eyes as he tossed her clothes to a nearby chair.

Her tongue darted out to lick her lips. Her gaze enveloped him. Something wholly inexplicable, yet she ignited him as much with that as a touch. She burned him with only her gaze caressing him.

He reached behind her to undo her bra. It fell forward, and those glorious tits fell free. The way nature intended. Shit, but he always wanted to bury his face in them when she freed them from her bra.

As his gaze skipped along her body, he wanted to be everywhere at once. Needed to be on every inch of her freckled skin with tongue and fingers. Wanted to taste her everywhere.

She reached over and undid the top button of his shirt. "You can't stay clothed now. Not with me naked."

He'd almost forgotten he had clothes on. Almost. The race was on as he quickly divested himself of every stitch on his body. He needed to rid himself of the garments fast, before this moment passed. Before her doubts took her over again. She'd finally lost herself in the moment. He had to preserve that.

She laughed. "I've never seen you strip so fast." Her laugh was like a balm to his soul. If he could be with her, it would make stepping outside the emotional box worth his trouble.

He didn't follow suit with a laugh, though. Couldn't get a chuckle past his burning lungs. Couldn't ease his aching chest. He needed her so badly. For once, he let everything show in his face instead of trying to hold himself back.

How much had he been holding himself in check? He wasn't even sure. But today, he would let it all hang out.

She sobered. Reached up and touched his face. "I've never seen you look like this." Was that fear he detected in her voice? Or a healthy dose of apprehension? That was to be expected. "So...hungry."

He nodded. That about summed his feelings up. "I'm hungry for you. I need you." Needed her like the breath his lungs took for granted.

Her eyes grew full of wonder. "I've never seen you like this. Your voice. Your face." She touched him, and he felt the mark down to his soul. It was about time she knew how she touched him, not only with her body but with her soul.

He'd never allowed himself to feel like this. *Never*. He'd always held himself back. He'd not felt this way with anyone else, and only a few times before with them. Everything reverberated in his heart, which pounded so hard, he could hear the sound over most other noises.

He fell onto her like some man starved. Because he was starving. Only she would satisfy that all-consuming hunger within him. Only she could feed a hungry man like him. He lost control, bucking his hips against her.

His kisses were frantic as he thrust against her, letting her feel his stiff cock as his hands roamed her body. His touches were wild, motions, frenetic. He didn't try to bring himself back under control.

She reacted in kind by groaning and pushing herself as close to him as she could. Her nails raked across his back.

He had one more conscious thought and pulled his kisses away from her before he went too far down this road. Reached for her pocketbook. Didn't ask. Couldn't get the words past his loaded tongue. Had to protect her before he could give her pleasure. Thank God he hadn't been that far gone.

She grabbed the pocketbook from him. "Yes." Seemed to know what he sought. She tore the zipper open and pulled out a condom packet. Now her hands shook. The paper moved up and down.

She opened the wrapper and grinned at him. Seemed to have brought herself back under control for now.

He'd delight in making her lose it again.

He settled back, his heartbeat still a frantic bird trying to break through his chest with battering wings. His cock poked from his body toward her. He couldn't get himself back in hand. Didn't want to.

She touched his cock with careful fingers, dipping in some of the wetness on his tip. Her fingers played in that sticky liquid, swirling it slightly around. Squeezing the end of the engorgement.

His eyes almost rolled back into his head. He was so ready to spill; for a second, he thought he would come right there. It was too soon. He had to hold himself back for a moment at least.

Even that light touch had felt too good. What would further touches do to him? Not to mention penetration? Without him holding back, it would be...heavenly.

A shudder racked his body as memories of what she felt like coasted through him. He managed to keep himself from climaxing, but only barely. This wasn't going to last long. It couldn't.

She took the condom and rolled it over him. She was gentle, careful, and touched him more than necessary. Her fingers lingered as they caressed him. The cool rubber enclosed his cock.

His head swung back in his enjoyment of what she was doing to him. Hips swiveled back and forth, arching for her touch. He made a sound deep in his throat. Couldn't wait any longer. Not for her. Had to take her now. Needed to be inside of her and feel her around him.

He pressed her back into the cushions. His fingers gently probed her pussy, checking her readiness. *Let her be ready, because I can't wait.* His thumb found her clit while his fingers delved down inside her wetness. Extreme wetness.

She was ready for him.

Oh how wonderful she was. How warm. Inviting. His thigh muscles clenched in anticipation as his fingers played with her folds. He ran fingertips across her velvety pussy.

No, they didn't have any problems here. Not at all. Even now that he was so close to an edge he'd never been before, it was all good. He had faith the problems outside of here could be resolved. That they would be resolved. They had to be.

His fingers became coated in her essence. As the scent wafted to him, he became entranced by it. By her. He wanted to be covered in her body. Surrounded by her warmth. He wanted to find home within her silken depths.

His thumb stroked fast against her clit, working it over and over. Quick movements, rough and not at all gentle. Couldn't find a way to take his time, even with this.

There was too much he wanted.

His body trembled with the effect of finding her so ready for him. So primed for his entrance. How long could he hold off having to be inside of her? Even now his hands wanted to be replaced by his cock. But he should give her some pleasure this way, before he took her his way.

Her body straightened. "Leopold. I need you." Her voice was breathy. A sexy whisper. "So close." She was close to finding her own pleasure. "Please. Come inside of me." She urged him with her hands to come on top of her.

He didn't have to be told twice. He leaped on top of her and pressed his cock into her wanton depths. Only he slipped in quickly, not slowly, as he wanted to do. In and out, he took

himself down into her, then up again. Penetrated her, then pulled away and almost out before plunging back down again. Each motion down took him farther within her. Her slickness surrounded him, sucking at him.

So hot.

Like being engulfed in lava. He couldn't imagine anything being hotter than this woman right now.

In and out, he kept up his rhythm. Didn't deviate from the pace he'd set, even as she urged him with her hips to go faster.

Her fingers tore at his back. Beat at him as her hips thrust up to meet his movements. She undulated under him, trying to control his movements, and after a while, he lost his control. He met her thrust for thrust at her pace. Couldn't hold himself back, going full force against her body. Their sweaty skin rubbed against each other.

The raw orgasm took him in hand and clenched him so tightly, he couldn't breathe. His throat closed up. Couldn't see. Could only ride the wave along with the stream.

He heard a roar and was only dimly aware that it was his. Poured his seed out for what seemed like forever. He kept rocking against her as aftershock after aftershock hit him. His solar plexus ached from sucking breath into lungs that heartily needed air.

He collapsed on top of her with the finish, barely aware of his surroundings. His muscles had become like liquid. His skin was covered in goose bumps as it cooled with the sweat.

She lay still under him, her hands stroking along his spine. Her breath rasped against his shoulder. Puffed out of her in gasps. Her body quivered as she tried to control her breathing.

Which was when he realized she hadn't climaxed. She'd been close to her own orgasm. He'd felt the tension in her limbs and body. But hadn't gone over the edge into her own wave of pleasure.

His heart skipped several beats. Breathing became shallow. He always came last. Never first.

Until now.

Her breathing slowed against him. Her shaking subsided. Her thighs moved underneath him.

“You weren't done.” He kicked himself. Dammit, he at least could have made sure she was coming before he took his own pleasure, as he had remembered the condom before taking her. He pulled out of her. There was a rush of moisture from her pussy he could feel even through the condom. Both of them groaned upon his exit. He sat up and yanked off the rubber. Faced her body, which had turned away from him. “I...” He didn't know what to say.

She turned back toward him to press a finger against his lips. “Don't. It was wonderful.” Her voice still sounded hushed. Even hoarser than it had been. “I had fun.” But not as much fun as she could have had.

He grabbed a tissue from a box that had been there when they'd arrived, and folded it around the condom. “Cassie...” Did he apologize? He'd left her hanging. Now what did he do?

A throat cleared.

Both of them turned from the couch, though they knew who it had to be. How long had he been watching them?

Aden stood in the doorway. “I'm going to bring in some wood now. When I'm done, you won't have to worry about Cassie climaxing.” His grin widened, exposing white teeth. “I'll take care of her.”

Leopold closed his eyes. He'd messed up this time. So much for exposing himself. Letting out his emotions. It did nothing but cause trouble.

“Open your eyes.” Cassie's voice commanded him. “Please, Leopold.” Her voice lowered.

He obeyed. How could he not do what this wonderful woman asked of him? He could never resist her voice.

“You lost control with me, didn't you? You came *before* me, lost in your own pleasure.”

He nodded. He was a shitting bastard. That's what he was. Like... No, he wasn't going there.

She cupped his face in her hands as they heard Aden banging around with wood. “Don't you see? That means everything. You're always so controlled. That I did that... Oh my God.” A thumb stroked along his jawline. “I made you lose control, even as I lost myself in you.” Her head shook. “Don't be sorry about this. Ever.”

Maybe it hadn't been a bad thing after all. Not that he'd go first every time, but he'd finally relaxed his guard. It had felt good to let go.

She brushed a light kiss over his lips. "Thank you."

No, he couldn't be anything like his father. No one had ever thanked that man. More relaxed than ever, Leopold settled in to watch the next act. After all, Cassie now had to let go. Aden was a master at making that happen.

Chapter Seven

Cassie released Leopold's face as she stared at him. She'd never thought he'd lose control like that. *Ever*. She had always imagined him keeping that iron-fisted control until the bitter end.

She'd been the catalyst of his release. The reason behind him exploding before even he was ready.

Holy wow.

Not anything she'd ever expected to happen, especially today. With all their underlying issues, she didn't expect him to react like this to sex. She couldn't help feeling the thrill of conquest.

Underlying issues.

What the hell was she doing?

She'd been about to walk away from them. Completely. About to take off and not look back. She'd been ready to abandon this relationship. Both because of her work and because she wanted to protect herself. Not to mention she didn't want to resent them for any decisions made about her job. She'd been about to take herself out of their lives. Forever. Yet now she was fucking them? How had that happened?

It felt right.

Sex with them felt right at the moment. Better than ever before. She'd lost herself in him and forgotten about work and everything else. That never happened. That was her only excuse.

It felt as right as things had been the first night when they hadn't known each other and had ended up having sex. Why didn't they ever stay feeling right? Especially for her? *Because you're insecure*. That hardly seemed fair. Of course they all had their own issues with being together. At least some of her issues right now were outside of her. Which wasn't fair.

She hadn't expected to talk about her fear they'd break up. Hell, shouldn't they break up? Wasn't this a fling? Hadn't that been what she'd been telling herself since she'd gone back to them? Didn't she need to break this off now to keep her job?

Looking into Leopold's face, his peaceful face that had showed so much emotion while they'd been making love, it was obvious. This was no fling. Had it ever been?

Hardly.

Which made things even harder now. She knew what this relationship meant to him. Her throat constricted. How could she walk away from this? Even if she should, both for herself and her career. They made her feel things she'd never expected. Never wanted to feel.

Therein lay the problem. These feelings they dragged up scared her. She'd always thought no mere person should be enough to make you act. That you should be strong enough in yourself to get things done. Yet every time she was around them, she felt herself slipping into wanting to be with them more than anything else. More than her job, which had been the most important thing in her life up until now. More than her old life without them.

That was scary.

She didn't know how to handle that. Except to shrink back. Before the feelings could go deeper. Multiply. She didn't want them to become the most important things to her. Her job would never betray her, would it? She squashed away the idea she could be fired. They could betray her in a second.

Aden came through the back door and stacked the rest of the wood by the fireplace. He walked through a nearby door, and water ran. There must be a bathroom nearby.

He dashed back, rubbing his hands together. His eyes gleamed. "My turn." He smiled at them both sinfully. Came toward her with mincing steps. He was so graceful. Such a dancer. She'd never seen anyone who moved as well as he did. He could twist his body in ways she'd never imagined.

A shiver raced across her. He often did that. He'd contort in any way that she and Leopold asked.

He motioned to Leopold. "Leo, you get to do what I did." He stretched out those fine fingers, cracking his knuckles.

Leopold looked confused. “What?” He folded his arms across his chest. Still looked a bit dazed, maybe from his orgasm.

Her chest swelled. She'd done *this* to him. Never had she seen him so out of it, so into his own reactions.

“Watch. You get to be a voyeur.” Aden wagged his brows. “You can't touch. Either one of us.” He shook his finger under Leopold's nose. “Until we're done.” He looked at Cassie. “Or until we say you can.”

Leopold stepped away from the couch and sat in the chair. He still had his arms over his chest. “You're an evil man, Aden.” He didn't smile but sounded as though he was teasing. “But you know that.”

Sex with them always involved teasing. Teasing and tenderness. Her hands clenched by her sides.

“Hey, I did the whole voyeur thing.” He turned and winked at Cassie. “And I know.” He thrived on being evil.

He knelt down by the couch, reaching to the floor, and his gaze moved across her almost like a physical touch. His hands went behind his back as he didn't make contact with any part of his body. Just looked with those all-knowing eyes shifting up and down her body.

She licked her lips. What would he do next? She never knew with Aden. Her body shivered almost as if he'd caressed her. Hell, she never knew with Leopold either. They were both wild cards.

“Do you want to come?” His voice deepened throughout the sentence. His stance widened.

Instantly her pussy moistened. She'd been so close with Leopold. So in shock of how far he'd lost control, it had almost pushed her over the edge. She'd wanted to come. Her inner folds tingled as though Aden had touched her instead of only speaking.

“Answer me.”

“Yes.” She nodded along with the words to show she wanted this. She did. Surprisingly badly.

“What would you do to come?” Aden still rested on his knees. Fully clothed. Watching her. Testing her. Teasing her reactions to see if he could... What? What was he aiming for?

“Anything.” A true answer. She'd hand in her resignation if her bosses had been in front of her.

He pulled out a rope that she hadn't noticed him carrying. He must have had it behind his back or maybe on the floor by the couch. She'd been so focused on Leopold, she hadn't even registered his hand had been behind him. “Would you let me tie you up?”

She glanced at the rope. Tie her up? Her heart raced. Why would he want to do that?

“You don't have to do this. Only if you'd like to try it.” He fiddled with the rope between deft fingers.

They'd done some kinky things. But never *this*. She eyed the white material. She'd never thought about being restrained. With that, he'd be able to do whatever he wanted to her. Make her helpless. Her pussy eked out moisture. Maybe that wouldn't be a bad thing? “Okay.” She licked her lips again. What would he do to her when he had her restrained? With Aden, there was no telling.

“The word for me to let you go is 'eggplant.' Say it, and I stop. All I'm going to do is tie you up. No pain. Nothing but pleasure. I'm going to make you come. While you can't get away from me.”

She gulped. That should sound scary, but it didn't. It sounded fun. She had a word she could use to get away. This was Aden. Whatever he promised, he'd deliver. He'd promised her pleasure without pain. The pleasure he gave could be immeasurable.

He held the rope up and motioned for her arms. His face looked serious, as though he was zeroed in on nothing but her.

She held them out to him. They shook a little bit. She didn't like closed-in spaces. Would she like being trussed up?

He looped the rope around her and tied her hands together. Not tightly; instead the bonds were loose. She could probably break them if she had to. Pull them off. If she wanted to. Was she going to want to? This didn't feel bad or frightening. Instead warmth and a sense of peace spread out from her torso toward her limbs. Aden would treat her right. He'd make sure to give her pleasure. After all, he'd promised.

After he'd gotten done tying her hands together, he moved to her feet. He tied one leg with one piece of rope to the coffee table. Then he looked around. Frowned. Appeared puzzled about

where to secure her other leg. Finally managed to loop the other rope over the arm of the couch to something behind the furniture. "There you go. All secure?"

She nodded. Felt more of her tension ebb away. She wouldn't be able to control what happened to her. Was surprised at how much appeal that had for her. She'd never done anything like this before. Her heart beat faster in anticipation. Her breathing came faster. Control was such a big part of her life. She hated not having control in the way work or Mrs. Crap would judge her. Yet somehow this seemed natural. She couldn't get over the feelings ebbing and flowing inside of her.

"Scared?"

She thought about it for a minute. "No." She wasn't. Still surprising, considering what she was doing.

He settled down beside her again. "Cassie." His baritone took on a stern quality. As though he was about to order her around.

"Yes?" She didn't balk.

"You trust me enough to tie you up. To bring you to orgasm and fuck you while you're tied up."

She nodded, though it wasn't a question. Where was he going with this? To hear him put it so crassly made her cringe. Maybe she should be more worried.

He chose his words carefully, speaking slowly and deliberately. "If you trust me this much, you should trust me to stick around. With this relationship. Right now, I could do anything to you. You couldn't stop me. It takes a lot of trust to let someone do this." He hesitated before plunging on. "Trust me in the rest."

Her heart pounded again, but not from fear or arousal. From shock. He was right. Entirely right. She trusted him this much. To take control of her. Yet she couldn't seem to find it in herself to trust him for the future? Was this why she had so many issues? Because to be with someone she had to give up control? Because she couldn't always predict how things in a relationship would go?

She didn't know the answers to any of those questions.

Yet she could give up control in sex to him? Never had any doubts about doing it? That made no sense.

They'd never had problems in the bedroom. That hadn't carried over into life. Maybe it should. If she could trust both of them this much with her body, why shouldn't she trust them with her feelings? What was it Leopold had said? They created their own problems outside of the bedroom? Maybe there was some truth to that.

Had she created these problems in her mind? Maybe they didn't exist.

Your job situation is real. Very real.

They would fire her if they knew about both of her men.

Her thoughts raced as Aden stared down at her. She could lose everything she'd worked for by being with them. Lose everything she was at this moment. For something she couldn't be sure would last.

Then she couldn't think at all when he moved toward her.

He slowly pulled his shirt up slightly. Bared each little expanse of skin with a wiggle. He put on a show for her.

Thinking about anything beyond his body went out the window. She'd mull all this over later. If she knew herself, countless times.

He yanked the shirt over his head with a flourish and tossed it on the floor. His bedroom eyes met hers. He swiveled his hips and unbuttoned his black jeans. Moved back so she could see him.

She lifted her head, watching. Spellbound. He could always captivate her when he stripped. How could one man look so yummy? Add in Leopold, and she was one lucky woman.

Most of the time.

She kept the focus on them. What they were doing. Not the reality of what she could face. Tomorrow. She'd deal with that tomorrow.

Leopold made a sound from the chair. Her gaze swung to him. He swallowed. The mask he usually wore came off in a second as he watched Aden strip. He remained naked, and from what she could see, his cock had already sprung up to semihard.

As her attention shifted back to him, Aden pushed down the pants, and his cock poked up through the top. His bulging, plum-ended cock.

She was entranced at the sight of him. Big and beautiful. Did it weep for her as it sometimes did? Her hands twitched in the bonds. Wanted to find out for herself. Wanted to touch him.

He shimmied from his jeans in one solid movement and left them on the floor. Cocked his head to the side to look at her. His eyes heated every single nerve cell along her skin.

He was naked, in all his glory. Heavy cock. Dark balls peeking slightly from behind his length. Slender hips that tapered off from his lightly hair-covered chest. His pecs rolled as he flexed. "Now. To give you what I promised."

Her breath caught in her throat. Couldn't wait for him to get started. To take her back to the brink. To make her scream.

Had Leopold screamed? He'd called her name. Which was a boon. After all, he usually was silent when he climaxed.

She glanced behind him to Leopold. His eyes were hungry. Burning. He sat watching them. Wasn't going to interfere. He'd obey Aden as she did.

How odd.

A voyeur.

Interesting position for Leopold to be in.

Aden ran his hand down her side. Blocked her view of Leopold. His warm hands stroked over her cool body. He came up above her like some rising god looking over his kingdom.

She was his kingdom. His glory. She could tell by the look in his eyes.

He slipped down between her thighs. He didn't look comfortable. His feet were sort of hanging over the arm, and his body was twisted like a pretzel to reach her.

She moved her body. "That can't be comfortable."

He put a hand on her thigh. "I'm fine." He blew across the hairs of her pussy, moving along to kiss her hip. "Fine."

Was that the word Leopold said he hated because it was never true? Aden could contort his body into the most uncomfortable positions without repercussions.

She swallowed and stopped her protest. He should know if he was fine, shouldn't he? She wanted this more than anything else right now.

He stroked her hips with one hand and looked down at her. His gaze centered on her most private of places. His fingers slowly moved over her skin and probed her gently. Slipped into her folds and massaged.

She was so electrified, she almost yelped when he made contact.

Her body shifted downward. So good. She moved around, his fingers following her. Her movement was restrained by the bonds, though she could move in spurts. Not being able to move freely made her heart pound even more than from his touches. She'd never thought she'd find being tied up exciting, but she did. Her pussy ached for his possession.

He delved deeper and located her clit. Pressed his fingers along her flesh and rubbed them together.

Her head went back, and her eyes closed.

One minute, his hands were alone. The next, they'd been joined by his mouth. He blew warm air against her. She writhed against him.

Her legs spread out as she felt like she spiraled up some long staircase, heading for her orgasm. If only she could find an elevator to the top. Her fingers raked across the couch in frustration.

Something warm, wet, and limber ran across her pussy.

His tongue.

He licked her up. He licked her down. He licked all her folds from side to side. He toyed with her clit, wiggling it back and forth. Wildly. Then too gently. Then forcefully. Each move was a torturous assault on her senses.

She wanted to scream at him. Her hands tried to grip the couch for purchase. Never had she wanted anything more than to climax right then and there.

His large hands held down her hips.

He positioned himself against her clit to suck it inside his mouth and suckle on her flesh.

Almost enough.

His finger dipped down under his chin as he rasped his tongue over her once more. He penetrated her slowly, going in and out of her wetness. Stepped up his assault on her senses with his tongue frantic across her folds and clit.

She came in a roaring wave that had her fighting the bonds to straighten out her body. She shook from the force, riding the crest to the end.

Limp and sweaty, she rested on the couch. Opened her eyes. Could barely see with swirls of color racing across her senses.

He lifted his face as he shifted his weight. Came up to a sitting position. His tongue swept out to lick his lips. Cleaning his face of her essence. His eyes pierced her. Saw into her very soul.

“Should I untie you now?” He asked the question as his hand dipped down to stroke across her energized skin.

A shiver stalked across her.

“No.” The deep voice almost took them by surprise. The chair squeaked as Leopold must have risen from it. “Not yet.” He sounded eager. Another something different. How often did Leopold sound eager?

Aden smiled as he looked across to her. “Look who's voicing his opinion for once.” His face sobered. “That okay with you?”

She nodded.

His eyes appraised her with a knowing glance. “You know we *can* be as good out of the bedroom as we are in it.” With that, he hopped to his feet. Gave her little time to process the comment. “Should we take this in another room?”

Her eyes closed. Could they be? Could she let herself believe that? What would that mean for the future if she did accept it?

* * *

Leopold dumped her unceremoniously on the bigger-than-king-size bed. She fell in the middle with a creak of springs.

“You know I could have walked, right?” She slowly stopped bouncing from where he'd tossed her.

“Ah, but then we would have had to untie you.” Aden sank into the bed on the other side. “Leo, whoever this friend is—remind me to make his acquaintance. I like his taste in mountain cabins.”

Cassie had to agree. The beautiful room was a sort of blue with lush carpets. The bed was huge with blue and gold sheets. A huge closet door spoke of lots of storage space, and another door perhaps announced a master bath.

Maybe they should stay here.

After all, here, there weren't any of the pressures of the outside world. No job. No Mrs. Crap. No other neighbors. No morally high-horse bosses. Maybe that would be...

"You didn't come." Cassie blinked, staring at Aden. She'd been so swept up in her own reactions, she hadn't even realized until now.

Aden chuckled. "Leo's not the only one who can be last. I can put off my pleasure when I need to."

What a day this had been. Leopold was always last. Aden always made sure he came. He'd never done anything like this that she could remember. Not to mention, he hadn't pulled out his study guides and books yet, which were always around him. Instead he'd remained focused on the two of them.

She knew he'd brought schoolwork to work on. That was Aden. She'd never known how much this law degree meant to him until today. She'd seen the emotion in his eyes about earning that diploma. She'd known it mattered to him, just not quite this much.

Nor had she realized how much they meant to him.

He wasn't hiding behind studying. He was full out trying to work things out with them.

She closed her eyes.

Would it be enough? She didn't know. Where was this all leading? She didn't know that either. Had no idea what would happen with her job if she did enter into this relationship fully. She didn't like not knowing. Not one bit.

Which was the problem with being in a relationship. Sometimes you didn't know what was coming next.

"You okay, Cassie?" Aden sounded concerned.

"Need to say 'eggplant'?"

She opened her eyes. Stared into two concerned faces that fixated on her. She could read them so damn well. Too damn well. “No.” Only about the whole entirety of their relationship was messed up.

Neither of them relaxed. “Then what's wrong?”

“Nothing.” *Everything*. Maybe the whole world was wrong. Maybe they were the ones right. She didn't feel like she knew anything anymore. How could things be so good and not be right?

They didn't look like they believed her. Both looked dubious. They knew her too well too. She tried to look as bright and cheerful as she could with things thundering inside of her.

She painted on a smile. “I'm fine.”

“I hate that word.” Leopold blew out a deep breath. “I hate it especially when women say it. Because things are never fine when they say that.”

“Remember, we are only concentrating on today.” Aden straightened. “Not tomorrow or the future.”

Wasn't that one of their problems? They always focused on today and not on the future? She licked her lips. Not the time to go into that now. It was time to get back into the bedroom. “Are we going to get on with this or not?” She pulled at the bindings.

Aden surveyed her. “Eggplant still our word?”

She nodded. Her body tightened in anticipation. At least they'd be getting back to the area where they didn't have problems. She was ready to do something different. To think about their future another day.

Chapter Eight

Aden's cock was so hard, he thought he might burst apart. Of course, that would never happen. That was only a trick teenage boys used to get their way with nervous young girls. But fuck, he'd never been so tight. Never been so stretched to the limit of his control.

Usually he let himself go. He didn't try to hold himself in check. Usually he didn't have to.

He'd put off his orgasm today. For the greater good of seeing to Cassie's needs first. Of making Leo watch.

A first time for everything.

But now he needed his due.

Cassie still had doubts after all they'd done and said, which had gone further than he'd thought the discussion would. He wanted to keep her tied until she admitted her problems and they fixed them.

Not likely to happen.

He was near the limits of what he could do for her. What Leo could do for her. The rest would have to come from Cassie herself. No matter how much he wanted this relationship, she'd have to meet them part of the way.

However, she'd stayed. She hadn't left them yet. She'd played with them and talked to them. He couldn't have asked for more.

Only because of what you did.

He winced. Yeah, because of what he'd done, she'd thought she'd been stuck here at the cabin. His action had made her have to deal with them. Even if it didn't work out, he'd never be sorry for doing that.

They'd come so far. Would she come the rest of the way? Admit that they could make it if given a chance?

Will she be so forgiving when she finds out what you did to keep her here so that you could talk?

He took his own advice about living in the now. "You're right. Let's get this party started." He rubbed his hands together. There would be plenty of time to focus later on what would happen. Could happen.

It was important to make this good. To make their sex last. To show Cassie how good they could be together. To convince her that they could be this good out of the bedroom. Fuck, that they *were* this good out of the bedroom.

"Let's get started." Leo placed a hand on her thigh. His gaze followed his hand, as though he couldn't look away.

Aden slipped around to the edge of the bed. "Hmmm." How to secure her feet? Would have been easier with a four-poster bed. He wound up looping the rope over her foot and putting it under the mattress before securing it over the top end of the mattress. It wasn't that secure, but it didn't need to be. The binding was more symbolic than anything else. Even without bonds, if she was told to be bound and submitted, that was the important thing.

He came back up the bed by crawling and brushing his body across Cassie's. His skin grazed hers.

She shivered. The little tingles worked their way up her body and made her brush more across him.

God, he loved that power. To make her do that. To make her react in that way toward him. It always made him feel like a king. Of course, she made him react in much the same way.

He brushed his hand across Leo's arm. Leo's body tensed. More of a response than usual. Leo usually didn't respond to small touches. So his fingers lingered over Leo's skin to see what else would happen. More tensing. Leo was finally getting in contact with and letting them see his feelings. He always held himself under tight control. Now he was letting it all hang out, and Aden was holding himself back. How odd.

Aden glanced to Cassie. Surely she had to be aware of the changing tide. How they had switched places.

Would their change in attitude be enough to turn this relationship into what it could be? More so Leo's turnaround than his. Aden knew what it would cost Leo to act this way if things didn't work out. Only he didn't look like it was costing him anything at the moment.

Only time would tell how Cassie would react. Aden needed stop dwelling on it, or he'd never get anything done. Time to take his own advice. *Live in the now.*

He slipped his position nearer to Cassie and let his hands slip over Leo to Cassie's side. He explored her soft, silky skin. Counted a few freckles in his hand's slide across her.

She giggled. "No tickling me because I'm tied." Her voice was light, but her breathing sped up.

That was the Cassie he knew and loved. The one who called them on anything that wasn't right. Who stood up for herself. Who teased them back as often as they teased her. She was so good for both of them. Why she didn't see that, he didn't know. Maybe she only saw... There he went again.

This might be harder than it seemed.

Leo turned toward her and pushed his hand along her side too. "Would we do that? To you?"

She let out another giggle. "Yes." Her eyes looked mischievous, as though she knew some great secret.

"Who says we tickle only because you're tied?" Aden raised an eyebrow, looking into her upturned face.

She shook her head. "Incorrigible."

Leo's hands continued to move along her side, going dangerously close to a big tickle spot, her underarm.

Aden grasped one of Leo's hands in his. That big, strong hand. With calluses. An artist's hand. Leo worked with all sorts of mediums. He liked to sculpt and do ceramics. Probably where the calluses came from. He liked to paint. He was good too. He always had nicks and burns from working with materials, yet his hands always looked so distinguished. No bitten-off nails like Aden's. "No tickling." Aden finally managed to squeeze out the words he wanted, having become distracted by Leo.

Leo nodded. "Just teasing." He left his hand in Aden's and pulled the other one back toward himself.

Their hands rested atop Cassie's hip. Aden's was darker than them both, sort of chocolate on caramel on vanilla. The difference in their colors was sometimes striking, especially up close like this.

Cassie looked up at them. She moved her hands toward her chin. Grinned at them. "You tickle me, and I will make you pay." Each word was enunciated as though she wanted them to hear her.

Now that sounded intriguing. "How would you make us pay?" Aden moved closer to her, brushing his body against her. Yeah, he was dying to be inside of her. Dying to take her body and make her theirs. But this play was as important to the relationship as was the fucking. He could wait for now. Eventually he'd get to the point where he had to take her. But he wanted to hear what she would do to them first.

They always did this sort of teasing. They fucked like bunnies, yeah, but there was always a lot of banter and talk. Especially today. It was time she realized their goodness wasn't only in the bedroom. It existed everywhere. She hadn't figured that out yet, but she would. Today.

Her smile grew. "By tying you up and tickling you." She laughed, a short burst of noise. "Or maybe torturing you with my tongue." She flicked it out and up and down like a snake. Considering he knew what that tongue was capable of, it was a nice demonstration.

She made it almost sound quite interesting enough to pull back. Except they already had her tied up, and it was best to take advantage of what was already in place. "You'd tie us up, huh?" He took the other hand that wasn't on top of Leo's and stroked it along her hip. "Like we've got you right now?"

He crept the other hand around Leo's so he couldn't pull it away. He liked both of them touching him like this. Wanted to enjoy a moment with both of his lovers before he sped along to his climax.

"Yes, I would." She moved her hands again toward her. "Maybe I'd tie you up together."

Naked bodies pushed against each other. With her having the control over both of them. She'd take them the way she wanted to. Yeah, that did sound like an interesting prospect.

But not for right now.

Time to show her what control he had. To make her remember her predicament. At their mercy.

He ran his hand down her middle and tickled her under her breasts. Her whole body twisted to get away from his touch. Laughs belted out of her as she moved, her face shining in the light from the window.

His hand and Leo's hands were dislodged in her attempts to get away from his tickling her.

Leo snorted. "You told me not to, and then you go and do it. Nervy." He arched a brow. "Maybe I should tickle you." He curled up his fingers like he was going to do that.

Aden smiled. "Maybe you should. But we do have Cassie here in front of us like the best banquet in the land. Waiting on *us*." He licked his lips. "So patiently, I think she needs a reward."

"Yes." She smiled. "Waiting on *you*." She scooted on the bed. "Tied up, no less. A reward would be good." She batted her eyelashes at them as though she were the most innocent person in the world.

"True." Leo's gaze burned hot. He put something in the look that spoke of firebrands to come.

"Course, now I will be getting even." Her mouth pursed as she turned on her side toward Aden. "You won't know when. You won't know where. But I will exact revenge." She raised her head slightly and nodded at him. "You can bet I will be getting revenge on you."

It would be fun to see her try. Aden ran his hand down the globes of her ass, stroking along the rounded curves. "Uh-huh. Sure you will." He ran his hand up her side until he reached her breast. Pinched her nipple between her fingers. Liked the way they hardened and perked for his enjoyment.

"Uhh." She leaned her head back. That didn't encourage him to stop doing what he was doing. "Uh-huh. Leopold will help me. Won't you?" She sounded as winded as a runner of a marathon.

"Sure he will."

"I will." Leo sounded certain. An almost emotional outburst from him. What was the world coming to?

Her head rolled back as Aden continued to stroke her breast. She lifted her chest, giving him even more access to her.

“I can't wait to see you try.” She was talking of the future, or at least an event that wouldn't happen for a while. A good thing. He hadn't been sure they'd had a future earlier in the day. He leaned down and flicked his tongue against her already hard nipple. She felt rough against his tongue.

She jerked her body. Said something that made no sense. Nonsense words that had no relevance.

Still, he asked, “Huh?” Kept touching her with his mouth and gauging her reactions. “Like that?”

“You know I do.”

He did. But he still liked to hear what she thought and to keep checking in and making sure she enjoyed him. He sucked her nipple into his mouth and clasped around the circle. Nipped, but only slightly.

Aden heard footsteps. He glanced away from the woman who had become his world for the moment.

Leo moved around the room. Aden hadn't even seen him get up from the bed. He looked in a bag for something. His cock still hung heavy and loaded. It swung whichever way he turned.

He went back to Cassie's breast. Nipped the nipple and ran his tongue across it again faster and faster. Speeded up his ministrations. Gave her what she craved from him. Tasted her skin.

Her face looked blissful. Dreamy. Her breathing sped up as he continued to suckle her into his mouth. She couldn't seem to control how fast she took in air. Kept opening her mouth for gulps.

Leo came back to the bed carrying some things. His hands were full, and he dropped stuff on the mattress. One thing bounced and almost rolled off the bed. Leo managed to catch the tube.

Lube. Condoms lay spread around. Both of those were givens, even if they hadn't been identified. What was that other item? There was something that looked remarkably like a vibrator.

A vibrator? They'd played with one before but not often.

Aden broke away from Cassie's body. "Aren't we going all out? Aren't you prepared?"

Leopold cracked a smile. "Always."

Cassie quirked a smile. "He always is, isn't he?" She blew out a breath. "I do care for you both. You know that, don't you?"

Leo nodded. "Yep."

So did Aden. "Of course."

The key question was, was the caring enough? Only time would tell. They'd have this moment. That was all he could ask for.

Leo's hand shimmied up her leg. He patted a thigh with his tanned hand. "You okay being tied?"

"Yes."

His grin took over his face. "Good."

The buzzing of the vibrator saturated the room. Echoed around the hollow walls. Bounced from the floor.

The corded muscles in Cassie's neck tensed. A shiver raced up her from her toes to her head.

Leo pushed on her thighs. "Spread them." He brushed the vibrator over her pussy before settling in a spot. He inserted the phallic object inside of her and then set about to licking her pussy from top to bottom with his full tongue.

Leaving Aden to his own devices.

Aden shifted up to her breasts and had himself a good old-fashioned banquet. Never had tasted something so fresh and tasty as her nipple in his mouth.

He felt her body tense under him, and he doubled his efforts, taking his hand over to the other breast.

She came with a full, throaty cry. A moan that was more than a groan, and she struggled for several minutes, her body rocking and her cries a joy to his ears.

The vibrator cut off.

Aden turned to see that Leo had removed the device. He looked rather pleased with himself.

Because she'd come first?

Aden's eyes narrowed. He wasn't going to let Leo get away with coming last. It wasn't allowed this time. "Come up here to her mouth."

Leo eyed him. "What?"

"Come up here to her mouth."

Leo pushed off the bed and dropped the vibrator to the floor. He did what Aden said, though he looked suspicious.

Cassie tried to bring her breathing back under control with deep, measured breaths. She was almost panting. Covered in sweat. Her face beamed at them serenely. "Come here, big boy." She seemed to know what Aden had in mind.

Leo complied for her with a big smile. "Oh?"

Aden hoisted his body over her. "You think you can keep from biting him off while I take you?"

Her laugh was light. "I've never done it before, have I? I'm not about to start now. I like his cock too much."

"Seconded." Aden liked it as much as she did.

With her mouth around Leo's cock, he wouldn't be able to resist coming. Aden would take his own steps slowly. So that Leo would come before him. Leo wouldn't be last for the second time today.

Leo set himself up, reaching with his hips so that she would get him in her mouth at the right angle. He blew out a breath while kneeling on the bed.

The sight of his cock going into Cassie's mouth made Aden pause. He'd never seen anything more sexy, and he'd seen a lot of sexy things in the last four months.

The look on Cassie's face, so serious yet excited. The look of pleasure that passed across Leo's visage. The look of love on both of their faces.

Yeah, they loved each other.

Cassie didn't realize it. He wasn't sure if Leo did or not. Somehow during the fucking and the getting to know each other, they'd all fallen for each other. Maybe Cassie wouldn't admit it

but did know it deep somewhere inside. Regardless, he knew what he saw in her. Love. He'd never cared for any other lover like he did Cassie and Leo. Ever.

Yet it was something they'd probably never speak of.

Like the sight he'd seen. He'd never be able to tell them what a beautiful vision they were like this.

Leo could paint the scene. Sculpt it. Some of his best work had centered on the three of them. Pieces that would never go up for sale. No matter how good they were.

Aden had no way to let them know what he'd seen. What he felt. Except with his body.

He had slacked on the job. He needed to get busy.

He came down near her pussy and poked her with his cock before sliding into her warm depths. He slid up and down, penetrating her deeply and speeding up his pace almost immediately.

Now that he'd slid inside of her and Leo was fully in her mouth, he couldn't see her features anymore.

He closed his eyes, envisioning the scene as it had been when he could see them both. God, they were so beautiful.

His eyes flew open. Slow. He was moving too fast. He slowed himself down. Thought about all the things that would keep him from climaxing.

Only he didn't have to.

Leo's whole body jerked back. He tensed. Roared. Cassie's name pushed past his lips like a speeding locomotive.

Her throat gurgled with the effort of keeping up with his come. He could see the struggle to keep from spilling.

Leo had come.

Come.

All over Cassie.

Whose pussy Aden was grinding against. Was filling. Could feel surrounding him as he spasmed.

His orgasm sped to life and took him full force up into the heavens. He couldn't breathe. His chest was tight as his body speared her.

His vision finally cleared to see. He pulled from Cassie. Leo had already extricated his cock from Cassie's mouth.

He came over and helped to guide Aden from her.

Aden looked up into his burning eyes. They were so hot, they scorched him.

Cassie pushed to her knees and dragged the condom from Aden's cock. She wrapped it in a tissue and tossed it in the trash can.

Leo curled up along Aden's right side, and when Cassie came back, she snuggled into his left. Their hands met on his chest as they came in even tighter to him.

A knot moved down his throat.

It was perfect. The whole moment. If only he could stop time. Keep the outside world from coming into their sanctuary. He could live like this forever.

Only this moment was contrived. Man-made. By him, because he'd tampered with her ability to leave them.

She needed to know.

He sighed. Didn't want to break this moment. But she deserved to know.

Cassie looked into his face, eyes shining. "You okay?"

He closed his eyes for a brief second. Then opened them. Looked to Leo, who nodded. He seemed as usual to know what was on Aden's mind. Or at least, Aden thought that he did.

Aden turned his head back to her. "I lied about the car not being able to be started." He swallowed at her gasp and Leo's tensing.

Neither said anything for a long few seconds.

Maybe this would go better than he'd thought.

"You've got some fucking nerve." Cassie sat up on the side of the bed.

Or not.

Chapter Nine

Leopold watched as Cassie's face turned red, not from passion or embarrassment, but from anger. She sputtered as she jumped from the bed. He hadn't known Aden was going to tell her that truth at this particular moment, but it was probably past time. He pursed his lips together. There wouldn't be a good end to this day on the path they'd headed down. Would she leave them?

"You lied to me!" She shook her head at Aden as though she couldn't believe what he had done. She didn't seem hurt, only angry. Her hands had balled into fists. Her face scrunched up, wrinkling.

He didn't offer any denials or apologies. "It was the only way you'd stay. We need to try and work this out." His hand came up to wipe at his mouth. Only a few seconds ago, they'd been lying in each other's arms, content. But even if Aden hadn't spoken up, something would have made Cassie back away. She always did. Maybe it was time someone called her on it.

"By lying?" Her voice deepened. Her breasts bounced as she swung her arms out toward them. They were all still naked. Her chest rose and fell in succession. "That makes no damn sense."

"You staying was the only way you'd listen to us. The only way you'd give us a chance to talk this through." Aden's shoulders shrugged. "I'm not sorry I did it, because we did talk. We took steps toward working this out."

After staring at him for an imperceptible amount of time, she directed her attention toward Leopold with lightning-fast speed. "Did you know?" Her eyes flashed color, trapping him in their fire.

He hesitated. What should his answer be? The truth wasn't something she would like to hear, but he wasn't about to lie either.

“Did you know?” Her voice didn't get higher but lower, with more gritted teeth than voice. Her gaze bore into him as if she could see the truth lurking on his face or in his eyes.

Leopold met her gaze head-on with his own. Had nothing to hide, nor would he try. He hadn't done anything wrong. “If you're asking, if he told me, no.” Aden hadn't talked to him about what he'd done or indicated he'd done anything.

Her eyes narrowed into little slits. Now he could barely see the color of her eyes. “But you knew.”

“Again, he didn't tell me outright, but I...suspected.” He'd known from the moment Aden had said the words. The car had just been inspected. Just been checked out by a mechanic. There was no way the car had failed to start. Why hadn't Leopold spoken up? Because he wanted Cassie to stay there as much as Aden did.

“You didn't say anything.” Her voice descended a few octaves. Tears rested close at hand. “You didn't say a word to me that he'd lied. Let me keep believing that the car wouldn't start.”

He looked her full in the eye. “What was I supposed to say? That I suspected the car would start? Besides, you would have left if Aden hadn't done what he did. Then we wouldn't have...done what we did.”

“You could have said something. You could have alerted me. You played a part in his deception. By your silence.”

Leopold ran his hand over his mouth. “I bring your attention back again to what happened between us.”

“What we did was under false pretenses! I thought I was stuck here. That the car wouldn't start.”

Aden blew out a breath. “I know that. But don't you see? You keep saying we aren't any good outside of the bedroom. *We are*. We can be. You gave us a chance by staying. That went from good to better. It wasn't completely because you were trapped here.”

“Wasn't it?” Her voice seethed like sparks in a microwave. “Wasn't it?”

No. Before Leopold could even speak the word, Aden had jumped in to tell her what they all knew.

“No. You could have gone into another room. Secluded yourself from us, if you'd wanted to. You could have.” Aden cut off any denials from her as he sat up, leaning toward her. “You didn't want to do that.” He bounced to his feet so fast, Cassie started in surprise. “Do you deny it?” He looked full into her eyes, confronting her. Might not be the best tack for him to take.

She looked away and didn't deny what Aden had said. Nor did she yell back. “The subject is *you* lying.”

Maybe there was some hope. Leopold glanced at her downtrodden expression. If they could keep her talking, maybe they could get somewhere. He fiddled with the sheet. Glanced to the wet spot. They had to resolve this.

“I know. I lied. I kept you here by doing that. I'm not denying that. But look at what came out of that. We talked.”

“Ends do not justify the means.” Her voice contained a trace of bitterness. An acrid sound on her tongue. “Or at least, in my world, they don't.” Now the tears were threatening, but she didn't give in to them. Her chin uplifted in a proud stance.

Leopold wanted to go hold her. But he didn't dare. His touch wouldn't be welcomed right now. He had to keep his hands by his sides.

“I never said they do. Or fuck, maybe they do. I don't know. All I do know is that you were ready to walk away from us. In your head, you'd already left. But that's not the right thing to do.” Aden seemed to have the same issue about wanting to touch her. He pushed his hands behind him.

She shook her head in denial. Didn't say anything back. Her tongue came out to moisten her lips.

Leopold's hands balled up. So much for getting anywhere. He was watching his lovers at odds. Seemingly at an impasse at the moment. He wanted to beat the wall. Would be more reactive than the two of them.

Cassie continued to shake her head as if waiting for Aden to say something more. When he didn't reply, tears did leak from her eyes. “Take me home. Now.” She wrapped her arms around her body, much like the words that fell from her lips wrapped around them all. “Don't fucking lie about the car not starting.”

“No!”

Both of them twirled toward Leopold as he spoke. With looks of astonishment on their faces at the empowered word that had escaped from his lips, they gaped at him. Somehow that made warmth spread across his chest. It was a day that they all seemed to be acting out of character.

“What?” Cassie asked. Her mouth drew up into a bow. “What did you say?” Was she daring him to repeat it?

Like he wouldn't. “No. Don't go yet.” His voice tore through his chest. The pain seared him right under his breastbone. “You can't leave.” His breath caught in his lungs before pouring out of him in a *swoosh*.

“Leopold—” She sounded as if she was going to scold him. Tell him what was what.

He slid off the bed. “No. You aren't going yet. You can't.” He watched her face change.

“You can't tell me what to do. I need to leave. I need to get away from here. From the lies.”

“Bullshit.”

Now she did startle. So did Aden. They both looked shocked at his outburst and his burst of language.

They shouldn't be. He'd always called things as he saw them. They were about to get a dose of that. His voice rose. “Don't you see?” He took a deep breath, trying to get his center back. Couldn't find it. Too much was going on.

“See what?” Her voice came as clipped as the winter wind banging on a rock. Yep, he'd be like a rock. Immovable.

“You're using Aden's lie as a shitty excuse. To feed into what you think you want.” He took a step toward her. “You're only using this as a reason to an end. So that you aren't responsible for making the final break.”

She didn't step away but stared him down. Didn't say anything to address what he'd said either.

He didn't need her to argue. He already knew what she was doing. “If it weren't this, you'd have found something else to explain why you pushed us away. You'd have found another reason to distance yourself. You do it all the time.”

“Do not.”

“You do.”

Her lips set in an even-tighter line.

“Right now, you're using what Aden did to justify walking away, but if it hadn't been that, you would have found something to keep you out of intimacy. I should know. I'm the king of walking away from people.”

“Leo—” Aden broke off. He didn't seem to know what to say to that, an unusual occurrence. There was nothing he *could* say.

“Friends. Lovers. Anybody who got too close to me. I'd use the excuse that they weren't perfect to push them out of my life. But the truth was, I couldn't let them get close.”

“That's not what I'm doing.” Cassie put her hands on her hips again. Her breasts perked up and out.

He ignored the flare-up of desire that always happened with her body so close, so naked. He'd been able to keep a handle on his libido so far. Didn't need that interfering with what they needed. “Isn't it?”

She opened her mouth to deny what he'd said. But she couldn't get the words to come out. He could see her struggling.

He changed subjects. “Never mind. But regardless of that, if you'd wanted to...you'd have walked down that mountain on bare feet, naked as a jaybird, to be away from us. I know you, Cassie; you don't do anything you don't want to do. You wanted us, or you wouldn't have fucked us.”

It was the longest speech he'd probably ever made in his life. He'd talked more in the past few minutes than he usually did. Even with them. Not to mention his voice had been shaking the whole time he'd been speaking. He swallowed, unable to move the lump in his throat.

Cassie looked at her toes, and then she lifted her head. She seemed inclined to argue. “No—” She broke off, as if thinking about her options. Sighed. “I did want you.” A small acknowledgment, but it was huge too. For her. Her voice suddenly broke. “I still want you.”

A truth Leopold had never thought to hear her say. “Then why walk away? Don't say because Aden lied. You were ready to walk away before that ever happened.”

Aden motioned to Leopold to come over. He walked over, and Aden reached out for his arm. He clasped it. "He's got a point."

The wind sailed out of Cassie in a big *whoomp*. "It's not because Aden lied, though you shouldn't have done that." Her anger had ebbed away on that sigh. Disappeared without leaving a trace.

Leopold stepped toward her and took her hand in his. "Then what?" His fingers stroked over the cool, smooth skin of her hand.

Aden didn't reach for her hand. His hand hung stiffly at his side. He waited for her to take his hand.

Which would make them a circle. A true chain of a threesome of linked arms to show the world.

They'd be an unbroken circle, and circles had no end. Leopold often used circles in his artwork when he wanted to convey longevity. They were a sign of forever. A symbol that spoke without speaking.

Leopold held his breath, but she didn't take Aden's hand. She didn't even look at the balled-up fingers.

"What makes you want to leave us? Really?" Aden remained where he was, hand still down by his side. "Is it more than what you've told us before? Come on, Cassie. Talk to us."

Her eyes closed, then opened. "I've never..." She took an even-deeper breath. "Never been in love before."

Before? Which meant she was in love now? He didn't corral her on that point. She probably hadn't even realized what she'd revealed. "And?" Needed to say something, anything, that would encourage her to continue.

"I told you. I don't want to lose this. I don't want to lose the two of you. This can't last. I know in my heart it won't last." Her eyes pleaded with them. "My...job—somehow they found out about Aden. They are...looking into my life."

Aden looked stony faced, but he nodded an acknowledgment of her admission. No wonder she'd been ready to bolt, with her career in jeopardy. It was so important to her. Leo had a feeling it defined who she was, and she wasn't ready for that to change.

“So, better to walk away from this relationship? Before it hurts you with your job? Or emotionally?” Now the latter was something Leopold understood. He'd done it enough times before.

“Job. Emotionally. Both. Neither.” Her voice hollowed out, almost as though the meat had been stripped from it like a bone. “I've broken up with people before. It...hurts. I didn't love those people. I can't imagine what losing you two would feel like.”

It was as close an acknowledgment of love that they would probably get. It was why she'd been choosing to run away from them. She'd run away from her feelings. Even her job had probably been an excuse, even as important as it was to her. They'd now stripped away to the core of the problems they had.

Leopold squeezed her hand. Stroked her fingers through his clasped fingers. “Leaving us isn't the answer.”

Aden shook his head. “No, it's not.” He still didn't reach for her, no matter how hard Leopold challenged him to. Aden needed Cassie to take his hands. Leopold could see that. He wanted to scream at them both.

“Then what is?” She sounded tired. As though she couldn't argue anymore. As though this was her last-ditch effort to figure this out.

“Sticking this out.” Aden still didn't offer his hand, though the fingers were curled tight, as though he wanted to reach out to Cassie.

Leopold watched with trepidation. How would she react? “Stay with us. Let's take this thing as far as it will go. You can't predict the future. I guarantee we'll try. We'll make it. And we'll deal with your job together. As much as we can. Maybe make you a kept woman.”

Aden squeezed Leopold's hand.

A gesture of caring. Leopold must have been showing emotion again. Good. They needed to see how this affected him. Maybe it would make her realize how her actions rippled through them.

Her head came up, and she looked at both of them.

“Don't lie to me ever again.”

Aden nodded frantically. “You got it. I won't. If...if I thought you needed or wanted to go, I would have—”

She interrupted him. “Never lie.”

“Okay.” A small smile graced his lips. “I won't lie to you again. Unless it's over chocolate.”

A laugh bit from Cassie. “You steal my chocolate again, and I will have to punish you.”

Leopold blew out a breath he'd apparently been holding. “This mean you're staying? For good? Not just saying it, but believing it too. A relationship in more than words only. We need that commitment from you.”

She bit her lip. Nodded.

And she placed her small hand in Aden's.

Chapter Ten

Cassie closed the door to the office. Slid the key into place and listened to the tumblers click.

“Problem with the key?” Leopold sounded concerned. “Is it sticking?” He moved toward her as if he was going to fix the problem.

Aden came up on her other side. “Not working?”

She shook her head, pulled the key out, and slipped it in her pocket. “No, it works fine.” Everything in the new office did.

Leopold smiled and took her hand. “Good day again, I take it? Get some more new clients?” His warmth enveloped her coolness. Like it always did.

She snuggled into him. “A few. One came from... Well, let's say they came looking for me because I had left Morgan and Klein.” She'd quit her job not long after their trip the mountains to start her own consulting firm. It had felt good to take her work elsewhere. To leave them before they fired her. Felt better than she'd expected, actually. The job had been so important to her for so long, she'd expected to feel more upset. But somehow being with Aden and Leo and starting her own firm had eased her emotional ties to Morgan and Klein. Her money would be lean for a while, but she was working to get it going. She'd had some small successes already. “That brings the client list up to ten.” In six months, not too shabby. Her voice went up and cracked in the lousy acoustics of the hallway.

Aden grasped her other hand, and they started for the steps to the parking lot. “Still don't know why we couldn't christen the *entire* new office.” He put on a mock pout. “Wouldn't do it when you first rented and won't do it tonight.” His pout turned into a grin. “Every office needs a good fucking.”

She rolled her eyes. Such a guy. “We christened *my* office.” They had a few times. “That's enough for now. I don't want to hire a secretary and...remember us on her desk. I'd have to buy

her a new one. Don't have money for that.” Or the secretary either. Yet. She was determined to make this new start work. For all of them. One day, she'd have a secretary. Jenna, had already applied for the job. Said as soon as Cassie was on her feet, she'd turn in her notice and join Cassie's firm. Maybe one day there would even be staff. When she questioned whether it would happen, she remembered how she'd questioned her relationship with Aden and Leo. Look how that had turned out.

He shrugged. They reached the stairwell door. He suddenly laughed. “This isn't going to lock behind us, is it?”

“No.” She smiled and wrangled through the door, keeping hold on her two guys. “Your car will start, right?” She'd finally come to realize how much the lie had eaten at Aden before he'd told her what he'd done during that trip to the cabin. A cabin that was now one of their favorite weekend getaways. He'd only done it to save their relationship. Good thing too. Otherwise...she'd be lonely now.

He snorted. “You ask me that one more time...” But his eyes twinkled. He knew she was teasing. The way they always teased.

Leopold suddenly pulled her against him. The motion was sudden, and she almost fell against his body.

The door clicked into place behind them.

No panic ensued. How could it? She was with her two men.

Their bodies caressed each other's. Deliciously. Only thing that would be better was skin on skin. Leopold had an intense look on his face that she never could get over. Ever. How could she ever have thought she could get over them? It would have been an impossible feat. “You had a good day too, I take it.” He seemed happy. 'Course they'd all been pretty celebratory these last few months.

“I painted. Sculpted. Worked as a bodyguard. All I could think of was you, though. And Aden.” He still looked wilder than she'd ever seen him. “Been waiting for you both to be available.” His eyes flashed with a hunger she knew all too well. When would the fire diminish? She had a feeling they might never tire of pleasuring each other. But even if it did fade in time, there was a comfort under the fire that would satisfy even the most intense of wants.

“Any word from the gallery?” She reached up to caress his masculine face. His square jaw.

He didn't pull back but placed his hands around her waist. Brought her closer to him. His face seemed bathed in intense pleasure at even that light touch of their bodies. "They are taking over half the prints."

Aden had a friend who'd arranged for Leopold to meet with an art dealer. They'd been quite taken with his skill. "That's wonderful." She reached up and kissed him. Enjoyed the taste of him under her lips. She'd never had a doubt they'd want his talent. He hadn't even released some of the best pieces. Because those were private ones that they'd always keep.

Leopold appeared almost embarrassed by the discussion of his good fortune. He still didn't like the spotlight on him. "It's a start." He planted a kiss on her lips, leaving her breathless. "Something to celebrate."

Aden came up behind them. His arms wrapped around them tightly. He squeezed. "More than a start. It's a good thing."

Leopold didn't say anything, but he did grin. "Long as I get to celebrate with the two of you, I'm good."

Aden touched her back. "Are we going downstairs or staying here talking?" He wagged brows. "Or more?"

"Aden has good news too." Leopold had kept the focus on himself for longer than he'd ever used to. He'd learned to deal with their attention.

Cassie leaned back into him, delighting in the smell of him. "What's your good news?" She looked to Aden. She might know what this could be. After all, school was winding down.

"I aced my second final. Only three more to go." He leaned a kiss over on her cheek. "Then the bar."

He'd been studying like a madman. Frantic. But he made time for them, and they let him study at will. Sometimes they made him hit the books. Strip studying had become a favorite game. If they had their way, he'd pass the bar with flying colors. He brushed another kiss over her cheek.

"When you're done with exams, we'll have to celebrate all our good fortune." She turned her head around and kissed him on the lips. "Maybe a trip back up to the mountains." That would be a good idea.

One man was in front of her, holding her, and the other was in back of her. She was entwined between them.

She wouldn't have life any other way. She still had her moments of self-doubt. Of thinking they'd never make it to a future. Of wondering if she was crazy for even thinking a triad would work. They'd met another triad in the city who made it look easy. She, Aden, and Leopold were still working on theirs. But they'd stuck it out this long. That meant something.

"I think we need to go home." Leopold's erection rubbed against her middle. "Now." His voice roughened with urgency.

Aden suddenly started. "That reminds me." He pulled a key chain out of his pocket. "I almost forgot." He handed her the key and small flip-flop.

Leopold couldn't hold back his smile. "How come she got a green one? I got a purple."

The key was to Aden's apartment.

She was moving in.

A huge step, but one she was ready to take. As soon as Aden was done with exams, they were moving her in.

Aden snickered. "Mrs. Crap has a lot of news to tell the building. I stopped by today. I might have let some things slip."

She eyed him. "I bet you did." They both delighted in setting up Mrs. Crap to new heights of gossip. They'd had her sleeping with the entire hockey team at one point. Maybe even the soccer team too. People like Mrs. Crap and Morgan and Klein would only be able to hurt her if she gave them power. She was done giving them power.

He batted his eyes at her. "I can't resist."

She reached out to stroke his face. "I know." He couldn't. And she'd reached the point where she really didn't care. The only ones who mattered to her stood in front of her.

"Oh, and Bill likes his new home."

She blinked at Aden's sudden turn of subject. "Huh?" She didn't understand what her cat had to do with anything. Unless...

"He christened it. Hairball."

She winced. That was what she wondered. “Sorry. He doesn't do that often.” Bill had gotten very lonely with as much time as she was spending at Aden's. Once they'd decided to move in together, she'd moved Bill over there first. After Aden became a lawyer, they'd probably look for a house together. Or a nice townhome. Something they all could share and have their own space.

Aden's warm hands stroked her gently. “It's fine. He's fine. I think he'll fit in quite well. He's crotchety like Leo.”

Leo glared at Aden with a turn of his head. “Hey.” But he didn't look truly upset. Only playful.

Who would have thought that night so many months ago would lead to a long-term relationship? She looked into both of their faces. Thank God for locking doors and stairwells.

She peered down the staircase to the parking garage before she glanced back to wink at them. “Old time's sake?”

Leopold arched an eyebrow at her. “Seriously?” He looked intrigued by the prospect. If she knew Leopold, he'd strip as soon as she said yes.

She nodded. “Seriously. No one else is here in the building right now. I'm the last one out. They won't be back until in the morning.” She motioned toward the stairwell door behind them. “We could pretend it's locked. Maybe play a round of truth or dare. Just to keep my mind off it being locked.”

Aden nibbled on her neck.

Leopold pressed his erection into her again as he claimed her mouth. His kisses trailed a frenzied path across her lips.

She closed her eyes, letting herself go with her men.

Yes, it might have started out another dream, but it had grown into her reality. And she wouldn't have it any other way.

 THE END 

Loose Id(R) Titles by Mechele Armstrong

Another Dream, Another Reality
Another Night, Another Dream
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Dinah's Christmas Desire
I Heart That City: Body Shots
Solstice Spell
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The Sixth Curse of Spring
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Mechele Armstrong

Mechele Armstrong lives in Virginia and writes while technoing with a computer geek hubby, chauffeuring two girls, throwing balls to a spaz cat, playing psychiatrist to a neurotic dog, and serving one diva kitty. She loves open bedroom doors and things that go bump in the night, which is why she probably writes what she does. She's always looking for new worlds to play in so she never knows what will come up next. Her world is where sensuality and wonder collide.