



Lust Bites
STROKE OF LUCK
Jenna Byrnes

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Stroke of Luck

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Warning: This book contains sexually explicit content which is only suitable for mature readers. This story has been rated *Total-e-burning*.

STROKE OF LUCK

Jenna Byrnes

Dedication

To my husband, who still thinks winning the lottery would be the best thing ever.

I think we already have the best thing ever.

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Chapter One

Steven DeLong blinked. His stare alternated between the TV screen in front of him and the piece of paper in his hands. 03, 09, 25, 27, 28, 45. He'd chosen the same numbers he always had when he bought petrol and a Power Play Lottery ticket. He'd just never read them on the winning screen before.

Am I seeing things? He rubbed his eyes, noticing his hands were trembling, and looked back at the TV. The numbers hadn't changed. According to the announcer, he'd just won ninety-seven million dollars. Or possibly a share of the ninety-seven million, if someone else picked the same numbers. *I'm not greedy. I can share.* He giggled, sounding like a lunatic on crack, and forced himself to stop.

He'd read a semi-joking article online telling new lottery winners what to do when they first discovered they'd won. *Don't tell anyone* was the first rule. *Stick the ticket into a resealable plastic bag and keep it safe* was another. *Proceed with a normal routine.* Steven's heart beat so wildly, he wasn't sure that last one was even possible.

From a drawer in the kitchen, he withdrew a sandwich-sized bag and sealed the ticket inside. He placed the bag on his coffee table, unwilling to let it out of his sight. He sat on the floor, knees pulled tightly to his chest, in front of his sofa. Mind racing a million miles per hour, he hugged his legs and rocked back and forth.

Do I tell someone? There were very few people he'd choose to let in on the secret. The thought of telling his mother made him chuckle. She was an insanely religious woman. Gambling was a big no-no. But then again, so was being gay. Steven obviously hadn't done everything his mother's religion recommended.

Norma DeLong had wrestled with his sexual preference and finally accepted it. He doubted she'd have as big a struggle accepting the ninety-seven million dollars. They *might* have different views on how to spend it, though.

Note to self – telling Mother can wait.

The other person Steven knew he'd have to tell was his brother, Tim. Two years apart in age, they'd always been close and had remained good friends over the years. Tim was going

through an especially rough time just then. He and his wife, Cheryl, had recently lost their three year old son to a horrific brain tumour. Matthew had been the light of all their lives, and his illness had taken a toll on the whole family. He'd been a trooper, bright and optimistic, which made it even harder when he'd passed away in his sleep two weeks ago. Tim and Cheryl had been inconsolable.

Steven shifted positions. Perhaps this news would provide a distraction for them. Or maybe it would seem like he was flaunting his good fortune in their faces.

Second mental note – telling Tim and Cheryl can wait.

The third suggestion from the online article was to proceed with a normal routine. Steven wasn't scheduled to work at the bar until the next evening, so he had the entire day ahead to figure out what in the hell he was going to do. He knew one thing – he needed some real advice from a live person who could talk him through this and answer his questions. *A lawyer? A financial planner?* He didn't know anyone personally and hated to trust just anybody.

An accountant? He didn't use one himself, but Tim swore by the guy who handled the taxes for his small construction firm. Tim had tried to convince him to see the man about doing his taxes, but Steven had laughed it off. Single, with no dependants and a job tending bar for a living, Steven figured filling out a short form once a year was within his scope of ability. Now, he had a reason to need a professional. It was getting late, though. The call would have to wait until morning.

Until then? Steven pulled the afghan his mother had crocheted off the back of the sofa and drew it around his shoulders. It was going to be a long night.

* * * *

Steven dozed off and on but never really slept. Shortly after eight, he looked up the accountant's phone number and called, asking to speak with the man. He was pleasantly surprised to get through.

"Paul Aspen."

"Hey, Mr. Aspen, this is Steven DeLong. You do some work for my brother Tim's company."

"Sure, Mr. DeLong. I was sorry to hear about your nephew. How are Tim and Cheryl getting along?"

"It's tough, but they're coping. Thanks for asking. I was wondering if I could get an appointment with you. I've got something I need to get your advice about."

The man at the other end of the line hesitated. "Uh, sure. Honestly, I'll have to transfer your call back to my secretary. She handles my schedule and can book something easier than me. But I'm sure we can fit you in sometime in the next couple of weeks."

It was Steven's turn to pause. "I know it's tax time, and you're really busy. But this is serious. Really important. I'll pay double your usual rate if you can squeeze me in today."

Paul chuckled. "That does sound critical. So let's see, my last appointment is out of here at 5:00. If you can be here then, I'll tack you on at the end of the day. You don't even have to pay double. You've piqued my interest."

Steven sighed with relief. "Thank you so much. I'll see you then." He disconnected the call and made note of the address from the phone book. He knew the building, just hadn't been in it. He suspected this was one of many 'firsts' he was going to encounter in the next few days.

He grabbed the lottery ticket and carried it to the back of the apartment, peeling off his clothes along the way. In the bathroom, he set the ticket safely under a bottle of lotion on the counter.

In the shower, Steven worked shampoo through his short, black hair and stood under the warm spray to rinse. The reality of his situation hadn't entirely sunk in yet, but excitement welled in the pit of his stomach. A grin threatened to split his face in two. He was lousy at keeping secrets.

He decided to hibernate all day, forgoing the risk of running into someone who might recognise that, for some reason, he looked stupidly happy. He'd try to eat and sleep and remain calm, not really sure any of the three were possible.

Steven inhaled the scent of the fragrant bar of soap. The musky aroma, one that matched his cologne, aroused his senses. He ran the bar over his stomach and down to his groin, where his cock had risen to attention. He lathered the area, one hand sliding the skin of his shaft back and forth before reaching lower to cup his heavy balls. As he fingered them, they ached for release, and Steven decided to oblige.

He put the soap back in the dish and returned his hand to his erection. Leaning against the wall for support, he stroked himself until his length was rock hard. The lather rinsed away, leaving the stark feeling of skin on skin. His cock, with its smooth, soft surface, felt warm in his firm grasp. *And good, very good.* With everything going on in his life, it'd been a while since he'd pleased himself. It'd been longer since he'd had a lover to do it for him, but Steven didn't want to think about that, for the moment. This was too enjoyable to waste even a second of the fun.

Drops of pre-cum mingled with water to slicken his grip again. Long, languorous strokes turned into fast, choppy thrusts. His belly churned as his balls tightened and drew up.

Steven inhaled. He could draw it out or just let it happen. Orgasm imminent, 'letting it happen' seemed like the best plan. All the emotion of the past twelve hours bubbled inside him and threatened to overflow. Steven gasped and groaned, his back pressed against smooth, cool tile.

The first shot of his climax arced into the air and landed on the far side of the shower stall. Successive spurts followed, and he muttered and swore as waves of delight tore through him.

"Yes!" he grunted and, when he could think again, remembered the lottery ticket and the ninety-seven million dollars. Another tingle of excitement zipped through him, prolonging the orgasm until Steven didn't think he could remain on his feet any longer.

He rinsed off quickly and snapped the water knob off. A thick, oversized towel waited just outside the stall. He grabbed it and wrapped himself in the plush terrycloth.

"Yes!" he hollered again, finally allowing himself to react to the news of his win. He twirled around the room like a dervish, laughing maniacally. Sexual and nervous energy spent, he collapsed on the bed, still draped in the towel, and closed his eyes.

Yes.

* * * *

Steven pushed the button for the ninth floor and rode the lift to Paul Aspen's office. It was nearly 5:00. He caught his reflection in the silver panels on the wall and nodded with

silent approval. A man who tended bar for a living wasn't always taken seriously. He'd needed to rectify that today. A navy suit with no tie and an open collar gave him a business-like, but not uptight, façade. Hair fastidiously mussed and face neatly shaven, he was satisfied he'd achieved the look he was going for.

A short woman with bouffant red hair and a frilly, white blouse met him at the door of the reception area. "May I help you?" Her eyes looked tired, voice wary. Purse in hand, she didn't appear too excited about going back inside to her desk.

"I have a late meeting with Paul Aspen."

She nodded and moved back a few paces to a door behind her. "Your appointment is here," she said.

"Thanks, Nancy. Good night."

"Night." She smiled at Steven on her way out, apparently more cheerful now she knew she wasn't expected to stay. "He'll be right with you."

"Have a nice evening," Steven told her and waited.

Shuffling noises stirred from the inner office, then a man in a black suit appeared. "Mr. DeLong?" A startled expression crossed the accountant's face for a moment, but he rebounded quickly and smiled. "I'm Paul Aspen."

You're also a hunk. Steven tried not to gape at the gorgeous man with thick, wavy brown hair curling around his collar. The tall man's functional, black suit was slightly rumpled, tie askew. He looked as if he'd been seated behind a desk all day. *Which takes nothing away from his rating on the stud-o-metre.*

"Please, call me Steven." He stepped forward and extended a hand. When his fingers touched the other man's, sparks flew between them.

Another surprised expression crossed Paul's face, and he pulled his hand back quickly. "Sorry about that. Static in the carpet is terrible this time of year. Come in. Have a seat."

"Static, huh?" Steven wasn't at all convinced the electric shock had been caused by the carpet, but he'd let it go. He was there for another reason. Sexy as the accountant was, this was no time for a love connection.

He chose one of the two chairs in front of Paul's desk and sat. "Thanks for seeing me on such short notice. I really appreciate it, Mr. Aspen."

The accountant slipped into his chair and leant back, rocking it. "It's Paul. And it's no problem. I like your brother. And as I told you, I was really sorry to hear about Matthew. I'd intended to go to the funeral." He paused, his eyes meeting Steven's. "I hate to say it, but I chickened out at the last minute. No funeral is fun, but when it's a kid..." He shook his head. "That's tough."

Steven raised a hand in the air. "Don't worry about it. It *was* rough. Probably the worst thing I've ever been through in my life. I'm not sure how Tim and Cheryl managed it."

Silence hung between them for a solid minute. There wasn't much more that could be said about the horrible, sad event, and Steven fidgeted in his chair.

Paul changed the subject. "You mentioned on the phone that you needed advice?"

Grateful for the new topic, Steven nodded. "That's right."

"How can I be of service?"

Now that's a loaded question. Steven could think of several ways, but dragged his mind out of the gutter and pulled two things from the pocket in the lining of his jacket—a newspaper he'd stopped to buy on his way over and the plastic bag with his lottery ticket. The paper was folded open to the Power Play results of the night before. "I'd like you to have a look at these." He set them on the desk.

Eyebrows raised, Paul leant forward and studied the newspaper. He glanced at the ticket then back at the paper again. His gaze travelled the same path three more times before he finally looked up at Steven. "Are you kidding me?"

Steven raised his right hand as if taking an oath. "God's honest truth. I bought the ticket yesterday at Billie's Quickie Mart, along with ten gallons of petrol, some Twinkies and a diet root beer."

Eyes glued to the ticket, Paul commented, "Diet pop and Twinkies. That's some great nutritional regimen you've got, there."

Steven shrugged. "I'm a bartender. I survive on minimum wage and tips."

A wry grin spread across Paul's face. "Looks like you might be able to afford better from here on out."

"That's what I was thinking, too." Steven smiled.

Paul held the see-through bag up. "Have you verified this yet? Do you know if there are other winners?"

Steven shook his head. "I haven't done a thing. I didn't know *what* to do. I haven't told anybody. I called in sick to work tonight. I've just been sitting around, staring at the ticket all day."

With a nod, Paul placed the bag gently on his desk. He slapped his hands on either side of it and grinned again. "I think this calls for a celebration. I've got a bottle of fine bourbon a client gave me a while back tucked away in a drawer. It's not something I normally do, but these circumstances seem to exceed the bounds of 'normal'. What do you say we have a drink?"

Exhaling, Steven blew out some of the nervous tension that had been building in his gut over the last twenty-four hours. "I'd say I could use a drink. And then that advice. I really have no idea what to do next."

Paul pushed back from his desk and jumped up, moving with an energy Steven hadn't expected. He peeled off his jacket, tossed it on an empty chair and loosened his tie. Moving frenetically, he began opening drawers and doors in the cabinet next to his desk and finally came up with a fancy bottle of amber liquor.

He glanced around quickly and told Steven, "Hang on." He hurried out of the office and returned with two plastic cups. "Not the ritziest in the world, but they should do the trick."

"They're fine. Allow me." Steven opened the bottle and poured them each a generous shot. He set it down and handed one cup to his host.

Paul raised the glass in a toast. "To one hell of a stroke of luck."

"Stroke of luck," Steven repeated and maintained eye contact as they both tossed back their shots.

"Ooh, that's nice." Paul picked up the bottle and read the label. "Had I realised that, I might have opened this sooner."

Steven chuckled. "I'm glad you didn't. I feel special."

Paul's eyes shone with merriment. "You are. Let me tell you just how special." He shoved the bottle back onto his desk and hurried around to his chair. Using the ten-key machine next to his computer, his fingers virtually flew as he did some calculations. "Your odds of winning the Power Play Lottery were one in eighty-two million, five hundred

ninety-eight thousand, eight hundred and eighty." He glanced up. "How about another shot of that booze?"

"Coming right up." Steven poured two more drinks and slid one across the desk. "So, say I get the whole ninety-seven million. I know I might not, and that's fine. I'm not greedy. But if I do, what kind of a payout am I looking at?"

Fingers danced over the adding machine one more time. "Tax rates are about twenty-eight percent." He looked up again and smiled. "Too bad you didn't buy your ticket in Europe. They don't pay lottery tax over there."

"Wow. That's amazing." Steven was giddy thinking about his win. He couldn't imagine *not* having to pay taxes on it. But that was a moot point. "I don't generally buy my Twinkies and root beer in Europe, either. So what can I expect here?"

Paul gave an amused roll of his eyes and continued to calculate on the machine. "Diet root beer. Okay, ninety-seven million dollars. You're probably looking at a lump sum payout of fifty-two million, four hundred and some thousand. After taxes, you'd get around thirty-seven million, seven hundred thousand."

"Wow." The numbers shocked Steven. "That's quite a difference."

"You just told me you're not greedy." Paul knocked back his shot.

Steven emptied his cup and nodded. "I just don't figure Uncle Sam should get such a big share, considering I had to pump the petrol and all that."

"Some lotteries offer an annual payout that usually amounts to more money. Honestly, I've never been in this situation, so I'm not up on all the details."

"Me either." Steven swallowed nervously. The bourbon had loosened him up just enough to deactivate the censor between his brain and his mouth. Feeling a little bullet-proof, he said, "I'm just a single, gay man with simple tastes and a budget to match."

"You don't say." Paul flipped off the adding machine and shoved it away from the edge of his desk. "Your brother never told me that about you."

Steven shrugged and smiled. "He never told me much about you, either. Like how I really should have hired you to do my taxes sooner."

A sexy smile played across Paul's lips. He stood and moved around in front of the desk, where he leant back against it. "Maybe if he had, we'd be past all this 'getting to know each

other' bullshit and on to something more interesting—like a real drink at a nice little spot I know."

Sounds good to me. Steven grabbed the arms of his chair, but before he stood, he asked, "What about the ticket? I still don't know what I should do."

"First thing in the morning, I'll call the Lottery Commission and confirm it. See if there are any other winners, that type of thing. Then you have some decisions to make. I'd suggest consulting a lawyer. There are several ways to handle claiming the money." He scrubbed a hand over his face. "I don't know all the details, but I think you can set up a blind trust so no one knows it was you who won."

Surprise shot through Steven. "Are you serious? I want to tell people. I can't wait to see the looks on their faces."

Paul made a 'tsk, tsk' sound which oozed with scepticism. "Not sure that's such a good idea. You have no idea what money does to people. They'll be crawling out of the woodwork."

Steven stood. "We don't have to worry about this tonight, do we? You mentioned calling them first thing in the morning."

"Yeah, when the lottery offices open. There's nothing we can do about it tonight. Just keep the ticket safe." He picked it up off his desk and held it out.

Steven took the bag and pocketed it. "You mentioned a 'real' drink? What did you have in mind?"

Paul's gaze travelled up and down Steven's body. "I'm partial to a Sloe, Comfortable Screw."

A jolt of excitement buzzed through Steven. He took a step forward, his face inches away from the other man's. "Would that be a Sloe, Comfortable, Fuzzy Screw? Against the Wall, With Satin Pillows, or the Hard Way?"

Paul's eyes lit up, and he chuckled. "A bartender, right. You got me. I'll tell you what, I have the ingredients to make all those drinks at my place. We could just go there, and you could name your pleasure."

Steven blinked innocently. "We were talking about drinks?"

Chapter Two

Steven glanced around Paul's condo, located in one of Chicago's nicer high rises. He admired how the smooth, brown leather furniture contrasted with the plush, white carpeting. "This is great. You have good taste."

"I like to think so." Paul drew the blinds wide and exposed a gorgeous view of the city at sunset. "How about that drink?"

Excitement simmering in his gut, Steven moved behind the chrome and glass bar and pulled out bottles. "I think all we're missing is orange juice."

"Coming right up." Paul went into the kitchen and returned with a small pitcher.

Steven chose two highball glasses and prepared their drinks, topping them off with the sweet, orange liquid. He handed one to Paul and smiled. "I improvised the recipe a little and made these the way I like them. Hope you approve."

Paul sipped the drink. "Definitely." He maintained eye contact as he added, "You've got good taste, too. But I expected that."

Two steps around the bar and Steven was inches away from Paul again. "I'm glad you're not holding the Twinkie and *diet* root beer thing over my head."

"No way. After all, look how that turned out?" Paul grinned and took another sip.

The lottery ticket, which had been pushed from Steven's thoughts in favour of more lusty matters, suddenly returned front and centre. Would he be as attractive to this handsome, seemingly wealthy accountant before he'd come into ninety-seven million bucks? *Well, fuck*. He couldn't believe he hadn't thought of this earlier. Had people started crawling out of the woodwork already?

He shook his head. "Can't believe I forgot about that ticket. Guess I had other things on my mind."

"How could you forget about it?" Paul's enthusiasm bubbled over. "I just keep thinking—" He froze, an uncomfortable look crossing his face. "No, wait. I didn't mean it like that."

Steven's stomach seemed to hit the floor, and he smiled sarcastically. "If it would help, I could stick the ticket to my forehead as we're doing it. Or maybe the *back* of my head would be more appropriate."

"Whoa." Paul stepped aside and set his glass on the bar. "I guess I deserved that. The timing really sucks, here. But I hope you'll believe me, when I invited you here I wasn't thinking about the money."

Steven wanted to believe him, but the timing *did* suck. "What *were* you thinking about?"

"Mostly, your lips." Paul faced him, his dark eyes teaming with something that looked a lot like sincerity. "I could spend about an hour chewing on them before I had to drag myself away. It'd take another hour to explore every inch of your body. Maybe two if I did it right."

Heart thudding, Steven fought down the lump in his throat. "I'm sure you'd do it right. That doesn't worry me one bit."

Paul's gaze shifted to the floor, and when he looked up again, he seemed full of regret. "The last thing I'd ever want to do is worry you. Let's call it a night. I'll ask Nancy to clear my schedule in the morning so I can phone the Lottery Commission first thing. Leave me your number, and I'll let you know what they tell me."

"I'd rather be with you when you call." Steven stared into Paul's chocolate brown eyes. "In fact, I don't really want to go anywhere tonight." He knew his actions were impulsive. Paul might very well be more interested in his money than him. At that moment, Steven didn't care. They weren't making a lifetime commitment, for Christ's sake. It was one night.

Standing so close to the handsome, dark-haired devil had his cock pulsing in his trousers, and the ache was getting difficult to ignore. "If it's all right with you, I'd like to stay."

"Look." Paul put his hands on Steven's chest. "As much as I'd like that, I don't want you thinking it has anything to do with the money."

The touch did it. Steven slid his arms around Paul's waist and dragged him forward until their bodies collided. "Forget about it," he murmured and smiled. "Or at least, let's think about something else for a while. I have all this nervous energy I could use some help to burn off."

"If you're sure." Paul's lips said one thing, but his eyes reflected another. He seemed to be as turned on as Steven was. For either of them to stop, at that moment, was most likely a feat easier said than done.

"Kiss me." Paul had mentioned spending a good hour devouring his lips, and Steven was ready for the hunk to get started.

"Aw, fuck." Apparently resigned to what was undeniably going to happen, Paul pressed his mouth against Steven's. What started as something light and tender quickly turned hungrier, more primal.

Steven parted his lips, allowing Paul's plundering tongue to slip in. The kiss deepened, and for a moment he struggled for air. He gasped but soon realised his lover was breathing for both of them. They were like one being. An amazing feeling, and one he was anxious to take to the next level.

Must get closer. Steven sank against the man, would have crawled inside him if he could have, to be nearer to him. "Need you," he murmured unintelligibly because their lips were still locked.

Paul pulled back, panting. "I have no idea what you just said, but if it was 'stop', I think I'll have to kill you."

"Don't stop." Steven tugged the other man's tie off with a flourish. "More. I need more."

Both sets of fingers trembled as they unbuttoned each other's shirts. Paul tugged him towards the other room. "Let's take this party into the bedroom. I have supplies in the nightstand."

"Think you can be naked by the time we get there?" Steven shrugged off his jacket. He thought for a moment about the ticket in his pocket but ignored the niggling and left the coat on the sofa.

Paul hopped as he kicked out of his shoes. "The bedroom is right around the corner. But, yes, I'll be naked by the time we get there."

Wide grins split both their faces. Steven shrugged out of the rest of his clothes, leaving a trail that ended with his boxer-briefs by the side of the bed.

With one swift motion, Paul tossed back the bedding and exposed navy-coloured silk sheets. He fumbled in the drawer of the bedside table and came up with a couple of foil packets and some lube.

"Aw, look at this!" Steven dived onto the bed and flopped onto his back. "Fancy, schmancy. You're living the good life, man." He bit back a moan as Paul grabbed his knees and spread them wide, crawling between.

"What difference does it make if you don't have someone to share it with?" The handsome hunk kissed Steven's ankle and slowly worked his way up the leg.

Steven shuddered as the lips and tongue left no inch of skin untouched. When the mouth reached his groin, he was ready for it. His cock throbbed, a drop of pre-cum glistening on the slit. If Paul had so much as licked the swollen head, he might have erupted on the spot.

Instead, Paul blew warm breath on the puckered balls. He ignored the raging hard-on and continued kissing down Steven's other leg. Slowly, methodically, he made it to the toes and massaged them one at a time before Steven had to protest.

"You're killing me!" He flopped on the bed. "I said I needed you, not needed more torment. Suck me, fuck me, do something. I can't take any more teasing."

"Oh, I think you can. Just relax, Lover-boy. You'll be sucked and fucked to your heart's content. Right now, I want you to flip over on your stomach. I have more tasting to do."

Steven groaned loudly but did as requested. He buried his face into the cool, slick pillowcase and muttered, "I'm gonna get your sheets all messy."

"I hope so." Paul sucked a tender spot near Steven's Achilles' tendon hard enough to leave a mark.

"Fuck!" Steven jumped. Despite his complaint, the pleasure was about to drive him wild. His erection rubbed against the soft silk, and he truly thought he might come with little or no help from either of their hands. "Damn, that feels good!"

"I'm glad." Paul licked a wet trail up the back of one leg.

Steven closed his eyes. He bit the inside of his cheek, trying to ground himself. Never had a lover spent so much time attempting to drive him wild – and succeeding – until now.

The lottery ticket flitted through his mind. *Is Paul sucking up to me because of it?* He winced as the man placed another hickey on the back of one thigh. *Literally sucking up?* Steven smiled. *So what if he is? Go for it, dude.*

When Paul reached his ass, Steven held his breath. If the man ignored his anus the way he'd ignored his cock, Steven would be hurting.

With both hands, Paul pried the cheeks apart. He blew a puff of warm breath on the hole hidden there then licked it with small, cat-like strokes.

"Aw, Christ." Steven thought he'd been desperate before. Much more of this and he'd be done for. "Please..."

Paul chuckled. "Please what, babe? Please stop? Or please go deeper until your tongue doesn't reach, then use your fingers on me, then your cock?" He inserted his tongue and worked it past the tight, outer ring.

Steven gasped. "Uh, that second one. I'm ready. Tongue, fingers, cock—all of them. Just...*please.*"

"Mmm," Paul groaned. He drove his tongue as deep as it would go then pushed it in and out like a battering ram.

Steven was beyond caring what appendage was inside him. Whatever the stud wanted to use was fine, but Steven needed it hard and fast. "Yeah, fuck me," he groaned, face still buried in the pillow. "More, more, more."

Paul eased his tongue free and sat up. "Such a greedy boy."

A low moan escaped Steven's lips. "If you tell me you're done, I think I'll have to kill you."

With a deep-throated chuckle, Paul patted his ass. "Nowhere near done, sexy. Just getting some lube for phase two."

Steven heard the *squish* of the grease squirting from the tube. His anus puckered like Pavlov's dog drooling at the sound of the bell. He smiled and relaxed his muscles for what was to come.

Paul's finger slid in easily and was joined by another. "Oh, yeah. Feel that sphincter loosening up for me." He tugged them from side to side then added a third before he seemed to be satisfied. "I believe you *are* ready. And I've got just the equipment to do the job."

Fingers still inserted deep, Paul used the other hand to pat Steven's bum. "Up on your knees, babe."

Steven backed into position, pressing his ass firmly against the fingers prodding him. He groaned with disappointment when they left, but when the foil packet ripped, he smiled. The familiar sound held the promise of things yet to come, and again he reminded himself of Pavlov's dog. He was the one drooling this time when he imagined Paul sheathing his erection with latex and greasing it for entry. "Anytime tonight," he urged.

"Such a slut." Paul nudged the tip of his dick to Steven's hole. "I'm going to fuck you now, slut, just like you've been begging me for the last hour."

"An hour?" Steven groaned. "Do it. I'm ready." He dug the top of his head into the pillow so he could watch their joining. His own, weeping erection blocked the view, a long ribbon of cum swaying from the tip, nearly reaching the mattress. "Aw, fuck. I'm serious about the sheets, man. I'm gonna blow any minute, here."

Paul grasped Steven's hips and drove their bodies together. "I'd be disappointed if you didn't. In fact, I think I'll help." He snaked his hand around Steven's middle and cupped the drooling shaft. "Ooh, nice and slick." His thumb swiped across the tip and spread the sticky cream.

"Fuck!" Steven's mind raced as his body was overcome with sensation. The thrumming in his ass was heightened by the perfect technique of Paul's hand strokes. *Perfect*. The word floated through his mind as his balls churned and prepared for release. Steven gasped and grunted, giving in to the feelings that had toyed with him for too long.

Spurts of cum covered Paul's hand and the sheets, but his lover barely seemed to notice. Paul was in his own Nirvana, groaning and writhing as he emptied into Steven's latex-lined ass.

They held still for precious, long seconds after the shudders subsided, neither apparently wanting the moment to end. Steven finally blew out a breath and another curse. "Holy shit!"

Paul chuckled. He placed small kisses on Steven's back and shoulders before easing his cock out and standing. "You have a filthy mouth."

Steven rolled to the side of the bed to avoid the wet spot. He suddenly felt ashamed of something that had never occurred to him before. "Sorry. I guess that comes from working in a bar."

Paul smiled. "I never hear it. I love it. Don't change a thing." He grasped the used rubber and motioned to the bathroom. "I'll be right back with a towel and a warm washcloth."

"You're too good to me." Steven smiled as he watched Paul go. The nagging *are we here because I won the lottery?* feeling returned, but he ignored it. The sex they'd just shared had been incredible. If he found out he was being played and ended up kicking Paul to the kerb, it wouldn't be until he'd had his fill of the man and his amazing body.

His lover returned with a thick towel, which he spread on the mattress, and a wet cloth, which he spread on Steven. "Let me clean you up a bit."

Paul's face was so handsome, his gaze so intent as he ran the cloth over Steven's body. Steven almost felt guilty for the thoughts he'd been having but couldn't be sure they weren't accurate. When the quick wash was complete, he drew Paul into the circle of his arms and held him. "That was fantastic. Thank you." He kissed his forehead.

"Mmm, thank *you*. I thought so, too. So wonderful, in fact, I'd like to do it all again in about an hour." He waggled his eyebrows at Steven. "Or something similar. Will you stay with me tonight?"

"I'm not going anywhere." Steven tightened his grip on the other man, surprised at how comfortable it was to be lying together so intimately after knowing each other for such a short time. *I feel frigging happy*. He kissed Paul's head again. "No place I'd rather be."

* * * *

Steven paced around Paul's office the next morning while the accountant spoke on the phone with someone from the Lottery Commission. The conversation had lasted nearly half an hour. From Steven's end, it sounded like good news, but he couldn't be sure. He watched Paul's face and looked at him questioningly when the call ended.

"Well..." Paul drummed his fingers on the desk.

"What? Spill it!" Steven wasn't sure his heart could stand the strain.

A slow smile creased Paul's face. "Congratulations. You're the sole winner. *Ninety-seven million dollars.*"

"Woo hoo!" Steven whooped and jumped around the room. Through the window in the door he saw Nancy, Paul's secretary, glance up with a curious expression on her face, but he didn't care. He pumped Paul's hand enthusiastically and drew him into a quick hug. "I can't believe it. I mean, I knew it. But I didn't want to get my hopes up."

"I know. Fantastic news, buddy." He squeezed Steven a little tighter and for a moment longer than a typical friend-hug.

Steven relished the embrace then backed up, smiling. "Thanks. So what now?"

"They're expecting you at the Commission offices sometime today. It'll be a photo-op. They'll have a big check for you to hold and all that jazz." He ruffled Steven's shaggy mane. "You might want to comb your hair."

"I don't know." Steven shrugged as if that were too much to ask. Another thought occurred to him, and he glanced at Paul. "Any chance you could come with me?"

"Of course I will. And we need to get you an appointment with a lawyer. Have one?"

He rolled his eyes. "What do you think?"

Paul smiled. "I know a guy, Barry Goodrich. He does a lot of work for the Gay Rights Society. He has an office over on Sixty-Fifth Avenue. I could call him for you."

Steven waggled his brows. "Anyone I should be concerned about?"

The smile widened to a grin. "He's a flaming queer. Wait until you get a load of his wardrobe. But, I'd trust him with my business any day."

"Sounds good to me. Get us an appointment as soon as you can, okay?" He watched Paul's face to gauge his reaction, but there was none.

"Sure. I'm going to have Nancy clear my schedule for the rest of the week. You might want to think about what you're going to tell your boss."

"Oh, yeah." Steven's thoughts reeled with the beginnings of a list of things to do. "I guess I won't make it in tonight. Maybe I should take the week off, too."

Paul blinked. "Are you serious?"

"No, but I didn't want to come off sounding like a pompous ass. 'Hey, Joe, I won the lottery, so I won't be coming back to work.' That's tacky."

"Tacky, schmacky. If you want to mix drinks, you can do it for me. I don't think you need to go back to work at the bar. *I don't want you* going back to work at the bar."

"No?" Steven stepped close to Paul and smiled. "'Tacky, schmacky'? Really?"

Paul fingered the lapel of Steven's jacket. "Just taking my clues from you. I recall hearing 'fancy, schmancy' last night."

Excitement rose in Steven's gut, and his cock stirred. "If you're lucky, you might hear it again tonight."

Paul closed his eyes briefly then gazed at Steven with lust. "I'm feeling *very* lucky. Must be from our standing so close. Something's rubbing off on me."

Steven grinned. "Don't even get me started. All this talk about rubbing and getting lucky has me hard as a rock."

Both their heads snapped when someone knocked on the door. Steven took a step back as Nancy stuck her head in. "There's a reporter from the Daily News on line one. Something about the Power Play Lottery?"

Paul glanced at Steven then back at his secretary. "Get his name and number and tell him I'll call him back when we're ready to make a statement."

Her eyes widened. She tilted her head towards Steven, and Paul nodded. Nancy squealed then covered her mouth quickly. She grinned like a fool as she returned to her desk.

"And so it begins." Paul looked at Steven. "Are you ready for this?"

Steven swallowed, all thoughts of lust deflated along with his erection. "I, uh, think I need to call my mom."

Paul burst into laughter. "Yeah, you might want to do that. Before the Daily News calls her, that is."

His face hot with embarrassment, Steven yanked his cell phone from his pocket and stuck his tongue out at Paul as he turned his back to make the call.

Still laughing, Paul made a biting motion towards him.

Steven tuned out the image as he dialled the number and listened to his mother's soft, "Hello?"

"Hey, Mom, it's me. Boy, have I got something to tell you."

Chapter Three

Steven couldn't believe his eyes. He'd expected reporters at the lottery office and hadn't been disappointed. At least a dozen of them milled around, asking questions which he had no answers to yet and snapping pictures. He hadn't expected to see the same scene playing out in front of his mother's house.

The driveway was blocked, so he parked on the street and dodged people, cameras and microphones as he made his way to the front door.

"Mr. DeLong! How are you going to spend the money?"

"Are you going to quit your job?"

"Mr. DeLong, is it true a stripper from the place you work picked the winning numbers?"

He got past them and shook his head, holding both hands in the air.

The crowd quieted down.

"I don't have any comments at this time." He had to add one more thing in an attempt to squash a foolish rumour before it got started. "And there are no strippers at the place I work. *Tony's* is a fine establishment, and Anthony Girding has been great to work for. Whether I continue working there or not, he's been great."

He continued up to the house, mentally kicking himself. *Two greats – don't I sound intelligent?* Paul had suggested he not make any statements and that was probably one of the reasons why. Neither of them wanted his words to get twisted around, and he really didn't want to come off sounding like an idiot. *'Great' job, genius.*

Steven opened the door, slipped inside and leant against it. "Whew!"

Norma DeLong paced back and forth in her front room. "This is a mess! Can you believe it? How long are they going to stay out there? I'll need to get my car out Sunday morning to go to church."

He stepped in front of her and placed his hands on her shoulders so she'd stop pacing. A full head taller than she was, he looked directly at her salt-and-pepper coloured hair, which was messier than her usual prim style. Steven planted a kiss on her forehead. "They'll

be gone by Sunday, Mom. This'll be big news for a day or two, then it'll fade. And you can get your car out anytime you want it. Just open the garage door and start backing out. The idiots will either move or get the surprise of their lives. But they're on your property."

"I wish they would go," she murmured nervously, running a hand through her hair. "I didn't get to the beauty shop this afternoon."

"You look beautiful to me, Mom. I'll make sure you get to the shop tomorrow, okay?"

"But my standing appointment is on Thursday. My stylist sees other people on Friday and won't be able to get me in."

Steven squeezed her shoulders gently. "Mom. This might not have sunk in yet, but you have choices, now. I'm pretty sure if your stylist has a brain at all, she'll work you in tomorrow. If she doesn't, we'll buy a salon just for you, and you can go whenever the mood strikes. How does that sound?"

Norma appeared confused. "Why would we do that?"

"Because we can." He let go of her and stepped back. "Ninety-seven million dollars, Mom. I won *ninety-seven million dollars*."

She screwed up her face into a scowl. "I've been thinking about that. Someone your age has no business with that much money. You need to figure out what to do with it. Imagine what the church could do —"

Her words were cut off when the front door opened again, which was fine with Steven. She did *not* want to get started with him about the church.

"What in the world?" Steven's pretty, blonde-haired sister-in-law entered the foyer. "It's a madhouse out there!"

"Hey, Cheryl." He placed a kiss on her cheek. "Where's my brother?"

"I lost him back there, somewhere, in that crowd."

The door opened again, and Tim came through, closing it firmly behind him. "I made the mistake of talking to one of them, and he wouldn't let me go. Holy shit!"

Steven rolled his eyes. "Don't mention anything 'holy', please."

Tim grinned, his dark eyes dancing mischievously. "There you are, you son of a gun. What, you couldn't win a big jackpot, you had to settle for ninety-seven mil?" He scooped Steven into his arms, and they hugged.

“Finally, someone who’s happy for me.” They separated, and Steven glanced into the living room where his mother and Cheryl had migrated, talking with nervous looks on their faces. “I mean, look at them. The damned reporters will be gone soon enough. They really shouldn’t get all upset about them.”

“I can’t speak for what’s going on inside Mom’s head – wouldn’t even want to try – but you’ll have to give Cheryl a little time with this. Everything is just too fresh. She hasn’t been happy for so long, I’m not sure she remembers how.”

Steven put his arm around Tim’s shoulder and ruffled his closely cropped hair. “How you doing, bro? Getting along?”

Tim shrugged. “Have to. Much as some days I want to lie down and quit, I just have to pick myself up and keep going.”

Steven hugged him from the side as they walked into the room with the ladies. “So, I went to the Lottery Commission today. My accountant and I talked about it, and we went with the thirty year annual payout instead of a lump sum.”

Tim’s eyes lit up. “Did you call Paul?”

“As a matter of fact, I did. He’s been very helpful.”

“He’s a great guy! I knew you’d like him.”

‘Like’ is an understatement. Steven decided not to open that particular can of worms. “Anyway, Paul said they used to recommend taking the lump payout, even though it was less money. But in this economy, I’ll get a better return if I take the payments. It’s going to be something like two point five million after taxes.”

“A year?” Tim whistled.

Norma frowned. “Just don’t be stupid like all those other lottery winners. They blew all the money and got themselves into huge debt. One guy even killed himself.”

Steven exchanged glances with Tim, and both of them bit back laughter. “Okay, Mom. I’ll be careful. But you all have something to think about now. I’m going to buy you whatever you want. New houses, new cars, you name it.”

“Oh my God!” Tim hugged his brother again. “That’s incredible. I can’t believe it. Thank you so much.”

Norma fretted nervously but didn’t speak.

Cheryl’s face crumpled. “You can’t buy me what I want.”

Heart breaking, Steven touched her arm. "I know, sweetie, and I'm sorry. But what I can do is to make sure all your medical bills are taken care of. You won't have to deal with any of that from now on."

Tim nodded. "That's huge. You wouldn't believe how those co-pays add up. Getting rid of those debts will be a big relief."

Before anyone else could speak, Cheryl erupted in a fit of rage. Red-faced, with tears flowing, she spouted, "Why did this have to happen now? Why couldn't it have come a year ago when the money might have done some good? They're always discovering new cures with research. Maybe, if they'd had unlimited funds, they'd have found something for Mattie!"

She's blaming me for the timing of my lottery win? Steven was incredulous. "Cheryl, I—"

Tim interrupted. "Honey, that's not fair. You could make yourself crazy with 'what ifs'. It's not Stevie's fault he didn't win the money last year. I think he's being very generous, and we should consider taking him up on his offers."

"I'm not moving," she insisted, giving her husband a cold stare. "That house is where Mattie was. I'll never leave it." She stomped into the kitchen.

Steven turned to his brother. "I'm sorry, man. I didn't mean to upset her."

Tim scowled. "All it takes is a fly in the house to upset Cheryl these days. I'm grieving, too, but you'd never know it the way she treats me." He exhaled and shook his head, visibly distraught.

"She just needs time," Norma told them.

"Yeah, well, so do I." Tim faced Steven and said quietly, "I hope our marriage can last the amount of time she needs. It's been touch and go for a while, now."

"I'm so sorry." Steven didn't know what else to say.

"Look. I built the house we're living in, and I think Cheryl's right. The memories of Mattie there are too vivid. We can't leave. But my work truck is on its last legs. I sure could use something better. And when Cheryl goes back to work—if she goes back to work—" he rolled his eyes. "She'd probably appreciate a nicer car."

Steven nodded. "Whatever you want, bro, whenever you want it. I'm supposed to have the first instalment in a few days. So get your bills together. We'll knock off all of your debt, first thing."

Tim pulled him into a bear hug. "You're a prince. I always suspected it, but couldn't prove it until now."

"Shut up," Steven joked back. "You know I always wanted to be the princess."

His brother laughed and released him. "I'll go check on Cheryl. Thanks again, man."

Steven watched him go into the kitchen then turned to his mother. "I feel awful for them."

"I know. I keep saying it, but they just need time. Time is the only thing that can make this easier for them now."

He smiled. "So what about you, Mom?" He pulled her into a bear hug and squeezed. "Interested in a new place to live? A new car? A mink coat? It's a multiple choice question, A, B, C or D—all of the above."

Norma shook her head and looked up at him. "I don't need anything, Son. This house is where you boys grew up. I'm comfortable here and can't imagine moving. Your father's old car gets me around just fine. And I never go anywhere fancy enough for a fur coat."

Steven released her. "Mother, Dad's been gone for five years. He drove that car for at least two or three years himself. You could really do with something new."

She waved a hand. "Just quit trying to buy me stuff. Do you know what I really want? Donate some of your good fortune to charity. I know my church could really use it."

Steven felt his chest get tight. "Mother, I have every intention of donating money, but I have to tell you, it's going to be the charities of my choice."

"But my church—"

Frustrated beyond belief, Steven saw red. "*Your church* won't allow me to be a member, but they'd happily accept my donation, is that what you're saying? Come on, Mom! Don't you think I'd want to choose some place that was at least somewhat gay friendly?"

Her eyes bulged and nostrils flared. "I can't believe you just said that. So you're telling me you'll give me money as long as I spend it on what *you* want?"

That does it. "No, Mother, of course not. The money is a gift. You can spend it however you wish. But if you choose to donate it to the church, it'll be from you, not me." He turned and headed for the door. "I've got to go. I'll talk to you soon."

"I thought you'd stay for dinner!" she called after him.

"Next time. Thanks." He slammed the door behind him and elbowed his way through the paparazzi to his car.

"Mr. DeLong, have you made any provisions for your family, yet?"

"What about the stripper who picked the numbers?"

Ignoring the questions this time, he hurried to his old black Dodge. He certainly wouldn't mind a new car, something small and sporty. *I'll see if there's enough left over after Mom funds the church.*

He smirked at the irony of the situation and squinted when he reached the Charger. There were a dozen or so scraps of paper under his wiper blades. Steven yanked them off and got into the car before looking at them.

Joni Smith, out of work, three kids. 555-4219.

Robert Evans. Please call me! Emergency! 555-2110.

Solada García. Niño enfermo. 555-3050.

Steven blinked. His Spanish was lousy, but he thought the last one meant 'sick child'. *What the fuck?* He shoved all the papers in his pocket and started the car, dodging reporters as he pulled out.

This was what Paul meant when he said people would be crawling out of the woodwork. Everyone wanted something, and a new multi-millionaire looked like an easy mark to get it from. He sighed and pointed his car in the direction of home.

He turned onto his street and saw them—more reporters, more cameramen and women, people of all kinds milling in the yard of his apartment complex. The crowd was so large it spilled over into the street.

The sun had almost completely set, but Steven grabbed his sunglasses and slapped them on while he drove by. He didn't stop, just kept going, and tried to figure out what to do. There was always a hotel. He could afford a nice one, now. *Once I get my first payment, that is. Fuck!*

He had ten bucks in cash and a couple more in change. Not enough for any nice hotel he knew of. Steven inhaled and tried to decide what to do.

Paul. He still hadn't decided if the handsome hunk was after him or his money. He sighed, wondering how much it mattered, anyway. One more night with Paul wouldn't hurt

anything, and it would help *a lot* of things. Like the seething frustration this money was already causing him and the aching hard-on that developed at the mere thought of Paul.

He'd left the accountant at his office with plans to meet up with him the following day. Maybe he'd be home by now. *Will he be glad to see me?* Steven thought about calling but decided to drop in unannounced.

He felt slightly guilty approaching the building but kept going. He'd made it to the front door before he realised he'd have to buzz to be allowed entrance. So he wasn't totally a surprise.

Paul was waiting, door open, when the lift arrived at his floor. "Hi, there." He smiled at Steven warmly. "I'm glad to see you. You should have called."

"I should have, yeah." Steven stepped into the condo and glanced around. Nothing out of the ordinary, it looked the same as when he'd left that morning. A guilty lump formed in the pit of his stomach. "I'm sorry. I just—well, the reporters were crawling all over my mother's place, and when I tried to go home and saw more photographers there..."

"Hey." Paul cupped Steven's face with one hand. "You never have to call before you come over. I only meant if I'd known you were coming, I'd have hopped in the shower after work. I feel kind of grimy."

It was exactly the reception Steven had hoped for. He slid his arms around Paul's waist and pulled his body close. "I could use a shower, myself. Think there's room for two?"

"Oh, yeah. Come on." Paul tugged him by the hand down the hall to the bathroom. They both stripped quickly and eyed each other hungrily while the water temperature levelled out.

"Want me to get--" Paul nodded towards the bedroom.

Rubbers and lube. Options weighing in his mind, Steven shook his head. "Save those for later." They stepped under the spray, and he closed the shower door.

Paul grabbed soap and began lathering Steven's body.

Steven enjoyed the caresses for a moment before taking the bar away and rubbing it over his lover in return. He didn't remain on his feet for long. There was something he wanted. Something Paul could give him. He simply needed to make his desires known.

On his knees, Steven handed the bar of soap back and used both hands to massage Paul's thick erection. He palmed the heavy balls, soaped then rinsed, as he sucked the rod into his mouth.

Yes, exactly what I needed. Fill and be filled. To give and take with so much intensity, he didn't have to think about anything except whose turn it was for the next orgasm. He groaned and sucked the shaft in until it hit the back of his throat.

"Yeah, baby, that's good." Paul grabbed a fistful of Steven's hair and wound his fingers through it.

"Mmm." Steven nodded encouragement. He loved the feeling of his man grabbing him, vying for control. He wanted Paul to possess him, hold his head, as his lover emptied straight down Steven's willing throat.

Later, it would be his turn to possess. When they were out of the shower, Steven intended to don a rubber and kneel behind his lover. With Paul on all fours, he'd fuck him with every ounce of energy he could muster. The fantasy had his cock erect and weeping pre-cum down the shower drain.

Paul writhed against the tile wall. "Oh, yeah. Suck it. Damn, your mouth is hot."

Only for you. Steven kept up his ministrations until his lover shuddered and twitched. He steeled himself for the onslaught, and Paul didn't disappoint.

Spurts of warm cum filled Steven's mouth and slid down his throat. He swallowed what he could, lapped up the rest hungrily. He glanced at his lover, collapsed against the tile wall, and grinned. "Feel good?"

"I'd have to take that down a few notches to consider it 'good'." Paul ran a hand through Steven's hair. "It was fantastic. You're the best. I'm a little worried I'm getting spoiled."

Steven stood and nuzzled Paul's neck under the warm water spray. "Why would that worry you?" he murmured, lips against flesh.

Paul shrugged. "You've got a lot going on right now. Not sure exactly where I fit in."

A jolt of excitement stirred in Steven's gut. He chose his words carefully. He didn't want to sound needy. "Where do you want to fit in?"

Hands slid up, gripping Steven's waist. "Somewhere next to you. Half of the entity our friends will call *StevenandPaul*. You know, can't mention one without the other."

Steven chuckled, though he felt serious and nervous on the inside. He wanted them to be a couple, too, but couldn't get past the niggling worry of the timing. Hesitant, he added, "So, maybe I want that, too."

Paul kissed him hungrily, breaking it off after long moments to gasp a breath. "Tell me what you want. Right now. What can I do for you?"

"Wanna fuck." Steven returned the kiss. "You on your knees, me behind you. Bedroom."

"Yes." Paul groaned, their lips mashed together. He stopped the water and opened the shower door. A large towel hung on the nearby rack, and he grabbed it, wrapping it around them both.

Kissing and shimmying to take small steps, they somehow made it to the bedroom. Steven tossed back the covers, and they flopped on the bed before kicking off the towel constricting them. Lying side by side, staring at the ceiling, Steven panted and heard Paul doing the same. He looked over at the man who was rapidly stealing his heart. "I need a minute to catch my breath."

Paul rolled to his side and tucked his arm beneath his head. "It'll take more than a minute for me. You're amazing."

Steven smiled. "We're amazing together. I can't get enough. Good thing tomorrow's Friday. Let's spend the whole weekend here. Weekend, hell. I don't work anymore. We could spend a week. Two weeks." He wagged his eyebrows, the idea causing his cock to thicken again. *Hours, days, weeks to do nothing but ravish each other.* The possibilities seemed too good to be true.

"Dream on, babe. This tired old accountant has to report back to work Monday morning. It's tax season, you know. Between now and April 15th, I'll be working seventy or eighty hour weeks to get it all done."

"No fucking way." Steven didn't like the sound of that. He was just warming up to the idea of his and Paul being a couple. He didn't want to share his lover's time with anyone. "We'll never see each other, or when we do, you'll be too tired to do anything about it."

Paul ran his fingers lightly over Steven's chest. "It's the biggest reason I haven't been in a relationship for a while. You've heard of football widows? Accountants have tax widows from January through April every year."

"That sucks." Steven's fingers played over Paul's. "What if you had a different job? Aren't there other things an accountant can do? People they can work for?"

Paul chuckled. "Like who?"

A thought occurred to Steven, and he blurted it out before considering all the angles. "Like me." They made eye contact. "I don't know if managing my money would be a full-time job, but I can probably match whatever salary you're making now."

"Are you serious?" Paul's eyes lit up.

"Why not? I can already tell I'm going to need help sorting through all this stuff. My mother wants me to give a donation to her church. An organisation which doesn't allow gay members, by the way. At least a dozen people left requests for money on my car windshield while I was at her house tonight. One woman said she has a sick child."

"Ugh." Paul rolled on top of Steven and sat up so he straddled him. Groins pressed together, he bent down to kiss Steven's ear and said softly, "You let me worry about all that stuff from now on. We'll figure out a decent amount for charity and exactly where it will go. Of course, if you want to be a good boy, you should make your mother happy and let her give money to her church. We can turn around and donate twice as much to the Gay Church of Christ. How about that?" Paul reached down and cupped Steven's balls.

Steven sighed. "That sounds perfect. I'm going to leave everything in your hands." He squirmed as his lover kneaded his flesh. "Yep—in your very capable hands." The orbs tightened and drew up at the same time his cock lengthened, begging for its share of attention. He caught Paul's eye. "Oh, and can that 'be a good boy' thing start later?"

Paul chuckled. "Much later."

Chapter Four

Steven padded to the kitchen for a cup of coffee. Wearing nothing but boxers, eyes barely open, he carried the mug to the window and sipped from it while looking at the view. Paul's condo was great, but was that where he'd like to live? He thought about it for a moment. *If I could have my choice of living anywhere...* He chuckled. *Which now, apparently, I can. Where would I choose to live?*

Chicago, of course. He wouldn't mind a little distance but didn't want to be too far from his family. His mother was alone, Tim and Cheryl were struggling. It didn't seem like the best time to leave.

So, Chicago. It still left a lot of options. *House, condo, apartment?* He had no ideas. Never having many options hadn't prepared him for the freedom he now experienced. He glanced around the empty condo, wondering if it could ever feel like home.

Paul had gone to the office hours ago while Steven had stayed in bed, dozing comfortably off and on. Neither of them had gotten much sleep. His muscles were sore in places he'd never known existed.

What a great feeling! Steven smiled—and jumped when the phone rang. He headed to Paul's desk, but by the time he got there, the answering machine had picked up.

Paul's voice sounded smooth and professional. "You have reached 555-1209. Leave a message, and I'll get back to you as soon as possible."

The machine beeped, and the caller said, "Hi, Paul. This is Tony at Beeman Jaguar Sales. I found that XK convertible you were asking about, in black or silver. I could have either one here in two days when you decide. I'll wait to hear from you. 555—"

Steven tuned out the rest of the call. Paul had been looking at Jaguar convertibles? He already drove a very nice Lincoln. *Odd.* He glanced down at a stack of papers on Paul's desk and realised they were bills. He tried to walk away but couldn't. Like a train wreck, he had to look.

He picked up the stack and leafed through them. Credit cards with balances totalling over *thirty-thousand dollars*. Steven gulped. A balance due on the Lincoln. Racquet Club dues,

a charge account at a pricey men's store downtown—those were only the top half of the stack. He dropped the papers back where he'd found them and carried his mug into the kitchen.

Paul either made one hell of a salary or was living beyond his means. The credit card balances led Steven to believe the latter and caused a lump to form in his stomach. He couldn't believe he'd found this out just as he'd started to get so attached to Paul. The timing of the whole relationship/lottery thing really did suck.

The front door of the condo opened, and he stuck his head around the corner.

"Hey, you're up!" Paul's eyes sparkled. "Damn! I'd hoped to catch you in bed and crawl right in there with you."

"I'm up." Steven gazed at him coolly.

Paul entered the kitchen and glanced up and down Steven's body. "Ooh, but not dressed. Maybe I am in luck." He slid a hand down the front of Steven's boxers and cupped his crotch.

"Not right now, okay?" Steven moved away. His voice had come out a bit sharper than he'd intended and seemed to catch his lover's attention.

"What's wrong, babe?" Paul asked softly, expression serious.

"I don't know. This is all happening too fast." Steven went into the other room and stopped at the desk. "I have a strange feeling all of a sudden."

Paul followed and paused a few feet away, folding his arms across his chest. "What brought this on?"

"A phone call, for one thing. Your machine got it, but I heard the message. You're checking out Jaguars?"

Guilt clouded Paul's face. "Shit, you weren't supposed to hear that. I thought I gave that bastard my cell phone number. I wanted it to be a surprise."

Steven rolled his eyes. "It was a surprise, all right."

Paul smiled hopefully. "I didn't know if you'd want black since the car you have now is that colour. I really liked the silver one, myself. I asked him to check for both and figured you could make the final choice."

"I could?" Steven blinked, confused.

"Sure. It's a gift for you. I knew you'd been thinking about sports cars and thought you'd look hot in the Jag XK. I guess it was kind of a selfish gift." He grinned.

It was all more than Steven could comprehend. "I appreciate the thought, man, but can you really afford that right now? I mean, I came over here to answer the phone and spotted these bills. I know I shouldn't have looked..." He trailed off, feeling like a jerk for reading Paul's personal papers.

The accountant's face flushed deep red. "Oh, I get it. You're checking up on *me*, now. Frankly, sweetheart, I'm not your biggest concern at the moment. I looked into most of the names on those slips of paper you gave me, and they're an interesting bunch, to say the least. My friend down at the police department told me that several of them have prior arrests for drug habits, and the one with the sick kid, Solada García? Far as we can tell, she doesn't have any kids. She's a hooker on the Eastside with a record longer than my dick." He grew agitated as he spoke.

Steven tried to focus. "Okay, we expected some of that. It's exactly why you offered to handle this for me."

"Precisely!" Paul snapped. "But you have to trust me. If you're concerned about me spending your money, this is never going to work."

"What was I supposed to think? I'd never met you before I showed up in your office with my lottery ticket. Now you're talking about *Steven and Paul* like we're a couple, and suddenly finding expensive ways to spend my money."

All the colour drained from Paul's face. "Wait just a god-damned minute, here. What you and I shared was completely separate from the lottery ticket. The minute you walked into my office, you knocked my socks off. Before I knew anything about the ticket, I was trying to figure out if you were gay and how I was going to get you back to my place. I've never had feelings like that about anyone before, ever."

Steven ached to believe him, but it was simply too much. He muttered the first word that kept coming to mind. "Convenient."

Paul growled in obvious frustration and anger. He turned towards Steven, his face red again. "Look at me. Remember *being* with me, as close as two people can be? Do you honestly believe any of that was staged? I'm no actor, and I never could have faked one moment of

our time together. I'm crazy about you, Steven." He turned and pounded his fist against the wall. "Or maybe I'm just fucking crazy."

Heart breaking, Steven wanted to reach out to Paul and say he understood. With a sweep of his arm he could clear the desk then bend his lover over and take him right there, ravaging his body, heart and soul. But something niggling deep inside wouldn't let him. "I'm sorry," he muttered and walked to the bedroom to gather his clothes.

Paul followed, incredulous. "You're fucking leaving? Oh, my god! I can't believe this. You really think I'm after you for your money?"

Steven didn't speak, just dressed and bent down to slip on his socks and shoes.

Paul stared out the bedroom window as he spoke. "I guess it's better you go now, before either one of us falls any deeper into this thing. And you're right, it would never work if you didn't trust me. Meet with Goodrich, the lawyer, and he can help you get things straightened out. Or find a lawyer of your own, since you obviously doubt my judgement."

"Paul." Steven stood and stared at him. "It's not that."

The handsome man's eyes flashed at him coolly. "Don't bother to explain. Just go."

Steven grabbed his jacket and walked out. He felt worse than he'd ever recalled feeling in his life, but knew, somehow, he couldn't stay. The door slam echoed loudly behind him as he left and rang for the lift.

Paul never reappeared.

Mind racing, Steven made it to his car and sped away like a madman. He drove around for an hour before he wound up at the construction site his brother worked at. The afternoon had slipped past, and many of the workers were shutting down for the day. He found Tim staring at a set of blueprints, but his brother's eyes didn't seem to be focussed.

"Long day?" Steven stepped up beside him.

Tim startled and faced him. "They're all long days, man. What are you doing here? I thought you'd be out shopping for cars or something."

Steven scowled. "Sore subject. I dunno, I thought maybe you could use a beer as much as I could."

"Hell, yeah. Let me put this stuff away. I'll meet you at the pub down the street."

"Sounds good. I'll get us a table." Steven nodded and slipped back behind the wheel of his Charger, wondering for a moment what driving a Jaguar XK convertible might be like.

He shook his head and drove to the pub where he parked, walked in and secured a table near the back.

The first pitcher of beer had just been delivered when Tim joined him. "That looks good. Pour me one and hold the foam."

Steven tossed his brother a sceptical look as he produced two perfect mugs of beer. "Foam? Are you serious? *Please*," he chided.

"Well, hey. I figured you're not a bartender anymore, you might have forgotten the technique." Tim sipped from his stein and smacked his lips. "Yeah, that's nice."

"My techniques are just fine, thank you." Steven fiddled with a napkin. "So, how's Cheryl doing?"

"I don't know, man." Tim shook his head. "She bitched at me all night long. Almost seemed pissed about your good luck. Not that it has anything to do with what happened to Mattie. I sure as hell don't know what she's thinking."

Steven shifted uncomfortably. "I'm sorry. I thought some good news might cheer her up. Put a smile on her face for a change."

"I can't remember the last time Cheryl smiled."

A thought occurred to Steven, but he was hesitant to say it out loud. When he looked at his brother and saw the pain in Tim's eyes, he knew he had to. "Do you think she'd feel guilty being happy? Like maybe she's being disloyal to Mattie or something?"

Tim looked at him incredulously. "Why in the hell would she think that? Life has to go on, doesn't it?" He knocked back his beer.

When he went to pour another, Steven saw his hand shake.

"Of course it does. It just —"

"Goes on without Mattie." Tim's voice cracked. "Oh, Jesus. Why didn't I see it before? I've been so wrapped up in my own guilt, because I had to keep working the whole time Mattie was sick. She was able to take time off and be with him, but the bills kept pouring in. I had to work."

"I know. You did what you had to do. All of us understood that. But I think Cheryl feels guilty, too."

"Why should she? My god, she did everything for that kid. She couldn't have done any more."

Steven touched Tim's arm. "And he still died."

Tim curled up his fist and pounded the table. Their mugs and pitcher jumped, but nothing spilled.

The waitress headed in their direction, but Steven waved her off. "Have you and Cheryl been able to talk about this at all?"

"No." Tim shook his head, his face flushed red. Tears brimmed in his eyes but didn't flow.

"Maybe it would help both of you to talk about how you feel. Losing a kid is a hell of a thing."

"She asked if I wanted to go see someone, a therapist or someone like that, but I brushed her off. Didn't think we needed it."

"What do you think now?" Steven asked gently.

Tim swiped the back of his arm across his face. "Might not be a bad idea." He drained his glass, refilled it and topped off Steven's beer. "So why did you come see me today? I get the feeling there was more than Cheryl and me on your mind."

"Aw, shit." Steven ripped his paper napkin to shreds. It'd felt good putting his problems aside for a moment and not so good dredging them up again. "I don't know what the hell to do."

"What?" Tim nudged his arm. "Mustang or Ferrari?"

"Jaguar," Steven smiled wryly. "Paul picked it out for me. He said it was for me, anyway."

"Paul, eh?" Tim grinned. "So what's up with you and Paul? You know I think he's a really great guy."

"Yeah, I think so, too. I guess. I mean, the timing really sucks. We start a relationship the day I show him my winning lottery ticket."

"Oh." The reality of the situation seemed to dawn on Tim. "Gotcha. You think he's more interested in your money than your charm and good looks?"

"I suspect I got a lot better looking and more charming when the ninety-seven million dollars arrived."

"Hmm," Tim grimaced. "I wouldn't be so sure of that. I've always gotten the impression Paul's pretty well set himself. He drives a nice car."

"And lives in a nice condo, I know. I also know he has a stack of bills sitting right on top of his desk, like he's been going over them recently. They add up to more money than I made last year. The last three years, probably."

"Oh yeah? That's tough." Tim polished off the pitcher and flagged the waitress for another.

"You don't sound too concerned about it. What am I missing?"

Tim shrugged. "You like the guy?"

Steven's heart lurched. *Oh yeah.* "That's not the point."

"I wasn't making a point, yet. I asked if you like the guy."

Truth? "'Like' is an understatement."

Tim nodded. "You think he cares about you? Money aside, how do you really think he feels about you?"

"That's just it. I can't put the money aside. I don't know how."

The waitress brought a full pitcher, and Tim poured another round. He sat for a moment, squirmed uncomfortably in his seat and finally said, "I don't want to get too personal, and for god's sake, I don't want details. But when you're together, and he looks at you—how do you think he feels?"

Steven thought back to the shower with Paul. The look in his lover's eyes after Steven had just sucked him to completion... He smiled. "The same way I do."

Tim slapped a hand on the table. "Okay. So if the two of you had been dating before you won the money, and he had all these bills, would you have hesitated to pay them off?"

"Of course not. But—"

"But...what's more important to you, little brother, love or money? Say you pay his bills. It's a drop in the bucket to you. But it makes him happy." Tim's words slurred as his beer consumption increased. "You know the saying, 'When Mama's happy, everyone's happy'." A strange expression crossed his face. "How does that work with two gay guys?"

Steven laughed. "Not sure you've had enough beer, or possibly you've had too much, to figure that one out. But here's my problem. What if I pay his bills, everyone's happy and next thing I know, he takes off? Wham, bam, thank you ma'am."

Tim nodded thoughtfully. "It's a possibility. I think you're going to have to search your heart. Decide if you're willing to take the gamble or not."

A fuzzy tingle settled in Steven's stomach. He looked at the bottom of his empty mug, wondering if it were the beer or something stronger causing the feeling. "I've been known to take a gamble now and again. It's just..." His hand started to shake, and he set the glass down. "If he did that, I'm not sure I could trust anyone again."

Tim put a hand on the back of Steven's neck and squeezed. "Look at it this way, Stevie." He refilled both their steins and lifted his, gazing at Steven over the top of his glass. "At least you'll be able to sit. Paul won't even want to think about it after I've kicked his ass to Springfield and back."

Steven laughed and raised his mug. "Thanks, bro."

Tim grinned. "Shall we order another pitcher?"

Regardless of what happened in the future, Steven realised what he had right there was something special. *Something I should be grateful for.* He had so many things to be grateful for. "Why not?" He smiled. "I'm buying."

* * * *

Steven rode the lift up to Paul's floor with a neighbour so he didn't have to announce himself. He rang the bell and tried to keep his breathing calm while he waited for the door to open.

When Paul didn't answer, Steven's second thoughts kicked in. He ran a hand through his messier-than-usual hair. He'd barely slept, and while this had seemed like a good idea earlier... He turned around to leave just as Paul answered.

"What are you doing here?" Paul looked worse than Steven felt. He looked like he'd slept in his suit from the day before, if he'd slept at all. The dishevelled hair and unshaven chin didn't suit him.

"I, uh, wanted to talk to you." Steven caught his eye. "Needed to see you."

Paul waved a hand in the air. "So, look at me. Here I am. Now, you'll have to excuse me. My last gold-digging gig fell through, and I'm scouring the adverts for my next easy ride."

"Paul, listen. Can we talk, please?"

Unmoving, Paul stared at him.

"Inside?" Steven tried to convey a confidence he didn't feel.

Paul stepped aside and motioned him in. "Whatever. If there's anything left to say."

"I think there is." Steven entered the condo and closed the door behind him. "Look, I'm sorry about what I said. This whole lottery-winner thing has turned my life upside down, and I'm not handling it very well. All of a sudden, it seems like everyone wants something from me."

"Of course they do, you fucking idiot! My phone's been ringing off the hook since I made those calls yesterday. You need to set up a trust, or a foundation, and start filtering people through there. Otherwise, you'll never have a moment's peace."

"I know," Steven admitted. "The voicemail on my phone is full. I haven't listened to any of it."

Paul folded his arms across his chest. "Good thing I didn't try to call."

Steven caught his eye. "I wish you had."

"Why? You never checked your messages."

"Christ." Steven held his head in his hands. "You know why I didn't. Don't do this to me. I'm here to tell you I need you, Paul."

The accountant waved him off. "You don't need me. I told you to call Goodrich. He can fix you right up."

Steven pressed Paul's shoulders up against the door. "I know what you told me. You said Goodrich is gay, but I'm not sure he's my type. *You're* my type, babe. I've already got that figured out."

"Oh, now, wait a minute. Yesterday you accused me of going after you for your money. You think you can waltz in here and say you're sorry and everything's back to normal?"

He nuzzled his face against Paul's ear. "I thought so, yeah."

Paul squirmed against the door but didn't push him away. "You're a jerk, you know that?"

"Honestly, I'm just trying to go into this thing with my eyes open. You told me yourself, it's hard to know whom to trust. I thought about this all night long. I want to trust you, Paul. I want to believe that what happened between us would have happened anyway, with or without the lottery ticket."

Paul cupped Steven's chin. "It would have. I said I flipped for you the moment we met, and I meant it. I've never felt this way about anyone before."

"Neither have I. That's why I had to come back. I'm not sure what the future holds for us, babe, but I have a few thoughts about it. And I know I'd like to make things work with you." He pressed his lips against Paul's.

Paul pulled back. "I have a confession. Those bills you saw—they were a client's, not mine."

Steven nodded. "When I really thought about it, I wondered if that might be the case. In fact, I—"

The downstairs intercom buzzed, and Paul slapped at the box. "Go away."

Steven smiled and pushed the button again. "Come on up."

"What are you doing?" Paul's hands roamed his chest and shoulders. "I don't want to see anybody. I want to crawl inside you and never come out."

"Soon." Steven kissed him one more time. "There's one more thing I need to take care of." He tugged Paul away from the door and opened it.

Tim and Cheryl got off the elevator. Tim looked as rumpled and sleep-deprived as the other men did, and she looked pissed as hell. It looked like she'd been ragging on him for hours.

"What are we doing here?" she muttered to her husband angrily. "First you stay out all night drinking, and now you drag me downtown without so much as an explanation."

Steven took her arm and led her into the condo. "Cheryl, relax. You're here because Tim and I have something we want to tell you. You know Paul Aspen."

"Yes, sure." She tugged her arm away and rubbed it, seeming embarrassed.

"Hello." Paul appeared just as surprised to see her and unsure of what to say.

"Let me cut right to the chase," Steven told them. "My brother and I had a long talk last night. A thought-provoking, amazing talk."

"I think there was a massive amount of beer consumed," she scoffed to Paul.

"Oh, yeah, there was at that." Steven grinned. He waved his hands in the air. "But it helped us clear the air and figure some things out. The most important thing is—Paul, I want to be with you."

Paul scrubbed a hand over his face. "Well, yeah. I want that, too. But only if you can be sure we're in this for the right reasons."

"I guess you can say I'm taking a little leap of faith on that. And I want you to take the leap with me. I want to start a foundation with my money. A certain amount of each annual payment will go into the fund, and people will have to apply for donations. It's going to involve some work, and I'll need someone I can trust to set it up and run it. I realised last night that was you."

"So you do trust me." A smile lit Paul's face. "I would love that job. But it's going to be a strictly salaried position, and the books will be open to inspection by anyone at any time."

"We'll work out the details later. But there's one other thing. Weeding out potential beneficiaries is going to be a big job. I'd like to bring in some help. Cheryl, would you agree to co-chair the foundation with Paul? I think you could bring a valuable perspective to the process."

"Me?" She blinked in obvious surprise.

"You'd be perfect for the job." Tim kissed her temple.

"I-I don't know..."

Steven touched her hand. "Tim and I tossed this around last night. What do you think of naming it The Matthew DeLong Foundation?"

"Oh, Stevie!" She squeezed his neck.

He felt her tears flowing. He hugged her then eased her away. "So, what do you think?"

Cheryl threw her arms around her husband. "I think that's the sweetest thing I've ever heard. And yes, I would love to co-chair the foundation."

Tim smiled at his brother over his wife's head.

Steven grinned and turned to Paul. "Does that work for you?" He was surprised to see a single tear brimming in the other man's eye.

"Hell yes, it works for me." Paul scooped him into a hug. "I think it's a fucking fantastic idea."

Steven grinned again and murmured in his ear, "You have a filthy mouth."

Paul chuckled and whispered back, "Ooh, baby. I'm just getting started."

Tim spoke loud enough for all of them to hear. "No one ever asked what Stevie and I will be doing while the two of you are running the foundation."

“What?” Cheryl asked, smiling and out of breath.

“We’re going to design and build a house.” Steven looked from them to Paul. “Maybe something with a nice view of the lake. I haven’t gotten the details figured out yet. I’m just starting to decide what I want.”

“Is that so?” Paul nodded with approval.

“Oh, yeah.” Steven grasped his lover’s belt and pulled him close. “First things first, of course.”

Paul grinned. The look in his eye was exactly as Steven remembered it the morning before, full of love, lust and brimming with hope for the future.

Tim wrapped an arm around Cheryl. “We’re going to take off. We have a lot to talk about. Finding a therapist we both like, the foundation and Mattie.” He looked at his wife. “I’d really like to talk about Mattie.”

She snuggled next to him. “Let’s go home.”

They waved at Steven and Paul and walked out, still clinging to each other.

“See you later.” Steven closed the door behind them. He turned to face Paul. “I think they’re going to be okay. Talking is good. It’s the first step.”

Paul smiled. “You’re right. Want to know something? I don’t feel like talking at all.” He extended a hand.

Steven wagged his eyebrows. His heart pounded, and the beginnings of an erection formed in his jeans. “Got something better in mind?” He clasped the hand and let Paul drag him down the hall.

“Many, many, time consuming things. All these plans you’ve been making? I hope they don’t start until later.”

They tumbled onto the bed and grinned at each other.

“Much later,” Steve agreed, and they kissed.

About the Author

Jenna Byrnes could use more cabinet space and more hours in a day. She'd fill the kitchen with gadgets her husband purchases off TV and let him cook for her to his heart's content. She'd breeze through the days adding hours of sleep, and more time for writing the hot, erotic romance she loves to read.

Jenna thinks everyone deserves a happy ending, and loves to provide as many of those as possible to her gay, lesbian and hetero characters. Her favourite quote, from a pro-gay billboard, is "Be careful who you hate. It may be someone you love."

Email: byrnes.jenna@yahoo.com

Jenna Byrnes loves to hear from readers. You can find her contact information, website and author biography at <http://www.total-e-bound.com>

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