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Ménage & More

A Future for Three

Rachel Clark

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A FUTURE FOR THREE

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Letter from Rachel Clark

Regarding Ebook Piracy

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With deep gratitude,

Rachel Clark

DEDICATION

For my brothers who love me even if they don't understand me.

A FUTURE FOR THREE

RACHEL CLARK

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Chapter One

"You're late tonight."

Emma said it without turning around, busy washing vegetables so she could make sure her two ridiculously overworked roommates would get a proper meal at least once a day. She heard the chair scrape across the floor as it was pulled away from the table and glanced over to give Casey another lecture on looking after herself.

Vegetable peeler poised at the ready, she turned to her best friend and...swallowed the words when she saw the exhaustion written on Casey's features. Her face was pale, the skin beneath her eyes smudged a deep purple. She slumped in the seat, and it was obvious by her unfocused look and thinned lips that something was terribly wrong.

"Case?" Emma hurried to the table, noticed she still held the peeler, pitched it into the sink, and then dropped to her knees beside Casey. "Hun, are you okay? You look like hell."

"I'm fine." The words were mumbled out, but Casey obviously made an effort to focus on Emma and tried a small smile. "Seriously, I'm all right."

Emma must've been wearing her stern no-nonsense face because Casey, aka the queen of frivolous banter, looked at her more clearly and reiterated her words. "I'm okay."

"Who's okay?" Jason walked into the room, but his steps faltered when he saw Casey's face. He hurried over to the table, practically knocking Emma over as he pushed passed and lifted Casey onto her feet and into his embrace.

"What the hell happened?" He glared at Emma, his eyes narrowed at her as if she should be able to magically provide the answer.

Her own temper flaring, Emma snapped, "We haven't gotten to that yet. She says she's fine."

"She's not fucking fine. Look at her."

"I said I'm okay!" Casey wriggled out of Jason's arms and pushed past them both to go into the kitchen. Jason turned to Emma, glared his annoyance, and then moved to follow Casey. Emma followed a step behind, her concern for her best friend overriding her anger at Jason's reaction. She'd kick his ass for it later, but right now, she needed to figure out what was going on with Casey.

Her best friend stood at the refrigerator, staring at the contents as if she had no idea why she'd opened the door.

"Casey, talk to us. What happened?"

"I'm okay," she said again, barely glancing in their direction.

"Hun, it's obvious that you are not okay. You're about as far away from okay as you can get. Did something happen at work?"

Casey huffed at Emma's persistence but then closed her eyes as she mumbled, "There was a robbery. No big deal." When she opened her eyes again and saw the look of disbelief that Emma could feel on her face, Casey rubbed a shaking hand over her forehead and then breathed out tiredly, seeming to sag just a little bit more. "Look, it's fine, and you are both very sweet to worry about me, but no one got hurt, so it's not a big deal. I just want to grab something to eat and have an early night."

Emma wanted to wrap her arms around the slim blonde, but judging by the way she'd pushed Jason away earlier, Emma didn't want to risk upsetting her further. They'd been friends since she could remember, and it really hurt to see Casey so exhausted and feel so unable to help her. Despite Casey's words, it was obvious that it had been a very trying day. Armed robbery at a large inner city bank branch *was* a big deal, and despite all the safety precautions the bank kept in place, it would still be a traumatic experience.

"Food. Good idea." Emma stepped back to the sink, attacking the vegetables with single-minded purpose. "Dinner will be ready in twenty minutes. Why don't you go have a shower, and I'll call you when it's ready."

Jason grabbed Emma's hands and glared at her, but stepped aside so that Casey could head toward the bathroom.

"What the hell?" he mouthed at her silently.

At Emma's confused expression, he grabbed the vegetable peeler, turned her around, and whispered, "Go help her."

Finally understanding his irritation, Emma leaned up to drop a soft kiss on his cheek before she followed Casey down the hallway. She stopped at Casey's bedroom, loitering in the open doorway, unsure exactly what to do next. She figured that offering to hold her best friend up while she took a shower probably stepped outside the realms of a best friend relationship, but short of actually offering to do just that, she wasn't sure what to do next.

"Stop hovering, Em. I'm fine, really. Just tired." Casey sat heavily on the mattress.

"I'm sorry. Jason and I are just really worried about you."

"The fact that you're here and Jason is peeling vegetables says a lot." She smiled then, a tired smile, but a genuine smile nonetheless.

"Do you need some help? I could run a bath for you?" That sounded more within the best friend's duties area, didn't it? Casey looked up and smiled slightly.

"That would be lovely." As usual, Emma melted at the sight of that smile. Casey, even as exhausted as she was right now, had the most attractive features and a way of making any recipient of that smile feel like they were the only person in the world. Emma had spent the last fifteen years watching boys, and now men, trip over their own feet just to be the one Casey smiled at.

"All right, back in a minute." Emma closed her eyes briefly, trying to find the steady, easygoing friend personality that she wore whenever she and Casey spent time together. Loving your best friend while living as roommates *and* trying to hide the attraction was proving more and more difficult every day. Emma couldn't exactly pinpoint the moment the attraction started, but she sure as hell knew it was growing.

She hustled into the bathroom, quickly twisted the taps, and began filling the bath with water and the room with a great deal of steam. Emma grabbed the bath salts, dropped about a handful of the fragrant crystals into the water, and then decided to drop in some more. The soothing scents of lavender and vanilla filled the steamy room.

She glanced up to see Casey standing at the door, holding herself steady against the frame.

"Do you need a hand to get undressed?" *Frik! Best friend mode. Best friend mode* . The mantra played over and over in her head, but she couldn't help wishing that Casey would accept her offer. A strangled groan threatened to escape her throat, and she swallowed the noise before Casey could hear the distress in her tone. Casey needed her best friend right now, not some crazed stalker wanting to see her naked. *Shit* .

"Nah. I'm okay, really."

Emma stayed sitting on the side of the tub as Casey moved into the room and sat on the closed toilet seat a few feet away.

"Did you ever expect that you would do one thing in a crisis and then actually do another?" The words were soft, tired and spoken in an almost monotone voice.

"I'm not sure what you mean."

Casey shook her head and studied the floor tiles. "It doesn't matter. I'm tired, and I don't think I'm making a whole heap of sense." A soft laugh filled the room as she raised her head and looked directly into Emma's eyes. "I'm sorry, hun. A good night's sleep and I'll be fine."

"Uhm, well, I'll uhm...go get dinner ready while you have a good soak. I'll call you when it's ready." Emma escaped the bathroom, only to collide with Jason as she headed toward the kitchen. He grabbed her to stop her from falling, hauling her against his chest as she lost her feet. For a just a moment, he held her close, rubbing a warm hand up and down her back, and then he stepped away.

"Is she okay?"

Emma nodded and tried to push past him to get to the kitchen, but he stopped her with a hand on her upper arm.

"Are *you* okay?"

She tried to stop the tremble in her arm muscle that she felt sure he could feel, she tried to hide the anguish she knew showed on her face, but he felt it and saw it anyway. Obviously confused, he pulled her against him, pressing her face against the warmth of his muscular chest.

"She'll be fine. She's got us, and we'll make sure of it."

She nodded against his chest, grateful for his confidence and reassurance. She resisted the urge to breathe deeply and drag his unique scent into her lungs. Hell, no wonder she couldn't stop shaking. In love with both of her roommates—talk about pathetic.

Emma squeezed her eyes closed, grinding her teeth against the onslaught of emotion. Jason held on a moment longer and then stepped back again to look at her. She stifled the urge to squirm under his gaze and looked up to his face.

"Vegetables are peeled. Anything else I can do in the kitchen?" He said it very seriously, but she smiled anyway. Jason had always been a disaster in the kitchen. He knew it, and he knew his roommates knew it too. If any of them wanted to actually eat tonight, Emma was their best chance.

"Thanks, but I can take it from there. Why don't you ask Casey if she wants a glass of wine? It might help her to relax."

He grinned then, the salacious bad-boy grin that she'd been seeing since high school.

"Did you just suggest I visit our very naked roommate in the bathroom?" She'd known him long enough to know what he was doing. He was trying to distract her, trying to put the *normal* back into the evening, and she felt very grateful for his effort. Maybe she wouldn't kick his ass for his earlier behavior.

"Gutter brain," she said, using the insult she'd been using for almost fifteen years.

"Spoilsport," he countered, a huge grin spreading across his face.

Emma rolled her eyes at the absolute lack of remorse, swatted his arm, and turned back toward the kitchen. "Ask through the door— *without* opening it." She didn't quite catch the smart-ass retort as she headed into the kitchen, but she could always guess. Fifteen years was a long time in any friendship, especially when the three of them had lived in the same house for the last five.

She grabbed the knife from the chopping block, quickly sliced the vegetables, and dropped them into the water to boil. She turned to the refrigerator, grabbed the steaks she'd marinated earlier and dropped them into the broiler, glad to be moving, comforted by the normality of her actions. She loved cooking, had one day hoped to have a family including a few kids to cook for, but being in love with her two best friends, and having absolutely no chance with either of them, didn't really bode well for her future dreams.

Casey was beautiful, the quintessential example of blonde and gorgeous, with the perfect mixture of intelligence and caring. Emma had been half in love with her ever since they'd met as preschoolers. It hadn't been until a few years ago that she realized she was no longer only half in love with the woman. The startling, very private epiphany was quickly followed by an equally stunning realization that she loved Jason as well.

She must be a sucker for punishment. In love with two people so far out of her league that she'd need to grow a foot taller and lose fifty pounds to even be considered passably attractive, and of course, she was the homebody type, so that even when all her friends had gone off to college, she'd happily stayed behind, working at the local supermarket. She'd been dreaming of a home and family for so long, and been so convinced that it would happen just as she imagined it, that somehow she'd gotten to twenty-eight without really noticing.

Now she just felt pathetic.

Overweight, no career, bleak future, and two roommates who were barely home. Yup, pathetic. She grabbed the wine bottle from the back of the fridge, wrestled the cork out, and grabbed three glasses. She usually didn't drink alcohol. Not that she didn't like it. She just didn't really think of alcohol as necessary to her daily life. Her roommates on the other hand...

"Three glasses?" Jason's query over her shoulder was so unexpected that she jolted and poured wine outside of the second glass.

"Ah-ah. Wasting wine is a very big no-no." He grabbed the bottle and shooed her back to the cooking. "I'll do the honors. You see to the food." A few moments later, Jason placed a glass of chilled wine near her elbow, so she grabbed it quickly and took a large gulp. Well, not the brightest of ideas for a nondrinker, but she managed to mask the urge to cough and kept her head down until she was reasonably certain her eyes wouldn't leak.

But just to be certain, she waited for Jason to leave the kitchen before she opened the oven to check the steaks.

* * * *

Jason watched Emma from the corner of his eye as she tried to hide the effects of the alcohol. Both of the women in his life were acting strangely tonight. Okay, Casey was obviously tired and, despite her objections, traumatized by whatever had happened at the bank today, something he planned to deal with quickly. She might think she could handle it on her own, but she didn't have to. Both he and Emma would make sure of that.

No, the woman in his life acting the most strange was none other than his steadfast, reliable little homemaker. He'd never actually managed to tell her how much he appreciated that she'd stepped into such a role in his life, and maybe it was about time he tried again. He stifled a groan as he thought about how sweetly she filled his arms, her soft curves molding to him perfectly. He was fast running out of excuses to touch her, hold her, and a very small part of him was grateful for the events that had given him today's excuse.

Hell, he'd wanted to tell her so many times what was going on in his head and his heart, but the only time he'd found the courage to broach the subject, she'd laughed as if he was joking, swatted him playfully, and left the room. Unsure exactly what had happened or why, Jason had backed away from the subject, reluctant to lose the comfortable friendships he'd built with both Emma and Casey. He rubbed a tired hand across his brow. There seemed no doubt that he would be the one to lose everything if things went south. The women had grown up together, had been friends for years before they'd met him, and he knew that if it came down to choosing sides, they'd choose each other.

He grabbed one of the wine glasses and turned to leave the room, deciding to deliver Casey's wine to her, forgetting for a moment that the woman lay naked in the bathtub. He walked halfway down the hall before he realized. Standing at the bathroom door, he hesitated for a brief moment before knocking softly.

"Case? Casey?" He listened closely but couldn't hear a reply. He knocked again, a little louder, as the blood started to roar in his ears. She was tired and traumatized, and they'd left her in the bath all alone. What the hell had they been thinking?

"Casey!" His voice cracked in the middle of her name, and he belted the door a lot louder. He glanced up to see Emma hurrying down the hallway towards him. "Grab me a knife so I can open this door."

She nodded and turned back toward the kitchen, moving quickly. Within moments, she returned, handing him a flat butter knife so that he could twist the unlock mechanism from the outside. He barely heard the click over the pounding of his heart, but he pushed the door open even as his mind shied away from what he would possibly find. He fell to his knees beside the tub before he realized that he still held the wine glass in his hand. He thrust it onto the vanity counter, vaguely surprised that it didn't break from such rough treatment.

Emma dropped to her knees beside him, her hands reaching for Casey's pale face. The beautiful blonde was asleep, breathing softly, but most definitely asleep.

"Casey?" she called as she shook the other woman gently. "Casey, honey, wake up."

Her groggy, bloodshot eyes opened a fraction and then closed as she groaned.

"Babe, you can't sleep here. You're too exhausted and liable to drown," Jason said.

She didn't open her eyes again, but Casey managed to produce a sleepy smile. It was, without a doubt, the sexiest smile he'd ever seen on the pretty blonde. The type of smile that had a man thinking about sucking on those full lips as he buried himself to the hilt in her welcoming flesh. His lascivious thoughts brought him back to the realization that he was kneeling on the wet floor beside his beautiful, very naked roommate. Relief that Casey seemed to be all right warred with other, more dangerous thoughts, and he fought to control his body's reaction. Swallowing hard, he turned to Emma trying to figure a way out of the awkward situation.

What he saw on Emma's face made his cock leap to attention even faster. Emma, his sweet, timid Emma, caressed the other woman's face with such an open look of longing that it was clear to anyone watching that she was completely and utterly in love with her best friend. Jason had no doubt that Casey was a very beautiful woman, but the dreamy look on Emma's face stunned him.

Shit.

Understanding finally belted him over the head, and he stifled a groan as all the cogs in his mind slowly clicked into place.

Chapter Two

Emma felt so relieved that Casey hadn't drowned in the bathtub that for a moment she simply forgot Jason's presence. Casey looked absolutely exhausted, but still, the woman looked beautiful, her flawless skin apparent even with the dark circles surrounding her eyes. She breathed softly, the slow, rhythmic movement making the water tremble where it lapped gently against the upper swell of her breasts.

Emma reached out and ran an unsteady hand down the side of Casey's face, tenderness and love for the woman who'd been her best friend her entire life coursing through her. She almost leaned forward to brush her mouth against Casey's softly parted lips when movement beside her caught her eye.

Hell. Her heart thumped painfully as she realized her almost mistake. God, how embarrassing would that have been? *How to kill two friendships with one kiss—a real-life account by Emma Pace.* Yep, she was full of brilliant ideas tonight.

She pulled her hand back awkwardly and retreated to lean against the vanity.

"Uhm, I don't know what to do. We can't leave her sleeping in the bath, but she's so exhausted I doubt she'll wake up on her own."

Jason gazed steadily at Emma, a look she'd never seen before on his handsome face. He reached a hand

to cup her cheek, gently urging her eyes to his own. The sweet smile that he gave her melted her heart, and she wanted nothing more than to stay right here, basking in his warmth, being the center of his attention.

"Don't worry. I'll lift her out, and you can wrap a towel around her. Then we'll put her to bed." He said it with such quiet reassurance that tears misted her eyes, and she blinked rapidly to stop them from falling onto her cheeks.

"Em, she'll be okay." Jason pulled Emma into his arms and hugged her tightly, the emotions zinging around the room as confusing as they were comforting. He held her a moment longer than she expected, kissed the top of her forehead, and then he set her away from him. "Now let's get this done before she wakes up and kicks both our asses."

* * * *

They'd managed to lift Casey out of the bath without waking her. Between the two of them, they'd gotten her into her room, dried her off, and tucked her under the covers. Emma had dried Casey down, her movements fast and efficient, none of the emotions he'd witnessed earlier in evidence.

"She's still sleeping." Emma flopped onto the couch beside him. "She woke up just as I turned to leave, mumbled a few words, and then went back to sleep. I've never seen her so exhausted."

Emma tried to hold back tears. They filled her eyes, but she somehow managed to stop them from spilling over. Jason's heart twisted in anguish for her. She looked as tired as Casey.

"Babe, she'll be okay." Jason reached over and hauled her against him, tucking her warm curves against his side, and pressed her head against his heart. He'd wanted to hold her like this for almost as long as he could remember. How ironic that he finally got to hold her against him like this and it was because she loved someone else.

Hell, life sure had a twisted sense of humor.

For more years than he cared to remember, his fantasies all revolved around this woman—coming home to her and their children each day, family vacations, growing old together, and a lifetime of sweet loving. His cock twitched again as replays of all the ways he wanted to explore her body, mind, and soul ran through his head—her sexy curves and gentle smiles driving him to his knees in more than one fantasy. Just imagining the welcoming warmth of her body, as his cock drove deep into her, had him on the verge of violent climax every single time. Oh, how he'd love to drop to his knees and explore every inch of her with his tongue.

She rubbed her head against his chest, and he desperately willed his body to behave. He could hear her taking deep breaths, and despite his body's willingness to believe she was as turned on as he was, the rational part of his brain wondered if she was still trying to hold back tears. The answer to his unasked question came a moment later when she pulled out of his arms and surreptitiously wiped her eyes on the sleeve of her shirt. He wanted to pull her back into his arms, nearly overwhelmed by his need to protect her, but she wriggled off the couch and dashed into the kitchen.

He sat for a moment, unsure whether he should follow her or give her space for a while. He tried to take a deep breath to calm himself but realized it wasn't quite working as his legs carried him into the kitchen without having consciously made the decision.

"I think I can salvage the steaks." She peered into the oven, her jean-clad ass up in the air. Lust roared through his veins, his breath catching as all the fantasies that he'd woven played in his head again. He'd been dreaming about that softly rounded ass for years, and despite the inappropriateness of his response at this moment, his cock lengthened painfully against the zipper of his jeans. He quickly stepped up to the bench, cursing his too-tall height and the bench's too-low hang, before slipping onto one of the stools at the counter.

He thought he did a good job of hiding the hiss of pain from sitting with a too-hard, jean-clad erection, but Emma glanced over, her face a mask of concern. He tried a reassuring smile at the same time that he ground his back teeth together. Shit, at this rate she was going to start wondering about his sanity.

"Are you all right? Please tell me you didn't put your back out lifting Casey out of the bath."

He didn't quite know whether to be grateful for her concern or annoyed at her assumption that he could hurt himself lifting Casey out of the bath. Even wringing wet, Casey was a lightweight. He grinned instead, trying to get back to that safe friends ground that they'd occupied for too many years.

"Nah, I'm fine." He lifted his arm and flexed the bicep muscle, breathing more easily when she laughed at his macho behavior.

"Oh, I forgot how strong you are." She said it at the same time that she rolled her eyes to the ceiling. If Casey had been here, they would both have laughed at him. Neither woman had ever let him get away with anything. Emma and Casey had been a part of his life for so long that he couldn't imagine living apart from either of them.

Which bought him to an uncomfortable thought—what if Casey loved Emma too? Would he be the third wheel? Would the women expect him to find a relationship of his own and move away? Hell, he couldn't bear the thought of leaving either of them, but how could he stay? How could he hurt them like that?

Emma glanced his way again and tilted her head as she contemplated his expression. His only thought at that moment was escape.

"I'll just go check on Casey." Emma nodded slowly as a worried expression crossed her beautiful face. He almost forgot his erection in his haste to escape her scrutiny, and he breathed in relief when she turned back to the stove just as he lifted off the chair.

He called himself a thousand kinds of fool on his way to Casey's room. He'd lived with Casey and Emma for more than five years, had been half in love with both of them for all that time, but it was now, now when he realized that Emma loved Casey, that he couldn't keep his cock under control. Hell, it was every man's fantasy, his sexy roommates together with him watching, but he wasn't comfortable thinking of his two best friends that way. These women were far more important to him than just bedmates. He closed his eyes, took a steadying breath, and then tapped lightly on Casey's door. When she didn't answer, he pushed the door open slowly. The sight that greeted him was almost his undoing.

Casey lay sprawled on her back in the middle of the bed, the blankets tangled around her legs like she'd been trying to kick them off. Small, perfect breasts with dusky pink areolas drawn tight from the slight chill in the room teased his imagination. Again, his body kicked into overdrive.

He wanted to stretch out beside her, suck a nipple into his mouth, and play her body until she exploded in his arms. He could almost feel the moist heat of her pussy, almost smell her sweet arousal, almost taste...

What the fuck am I doing?

Hell, at this rate he might just have a heart attack before the night was through.

She moaned softly in her sleep, the words incoherent but the fear behind them obvious, and finally, *finally*, his body got the message and settled down. He hurried toward the bed, untangled the blankets, and pulled them up to her neck. She whimpered again in her sleep, so he slid onto the bed beside her and carefully soothed the hair away from her heated face.

Casey turned toward him, wriggling closer. Thank God he'd stayed above the covers. If she woke now, she'd probably kick his ass anyway, but at least he wouldn't have to explain how he ended up cuddled to her naked form.

Tenderness swamped him as she relaxed against his chest. She was beautiful, stunningly so, and every man who met her asked her out, but for this moment, this small moment in time, she was his. He let the fantasy unfold in his head slowly, unaware where his thoughts were taking him until he got there.

Holy hell. He wanted them both. Emma with her beautiful rounded curves, caring heart, and gentle love and Casey with her slim figure, kick-ass attitude, and steadfast loyalty. Somewhere along the way, he'd given them both his heart. No other woman in the world could come close to what these two women meant to him.

How fucked up was that? He was in love with two women who were most likely in love with each other. Talk about being a third wheel. He held Casey close, gently kissed her forehead, and then closed his eyes against the unexpected onslaught of pain.

* * * *

Emma lay in her bed two nights later rehashing everything that had happened in the last forty-eight hours. Casey looked even more tired than she had the day of the bank robbery. Emma knew that Casey was sleeping. In fact, she'd slept much more than usual. It just didn't seem to be doing her any good.

Tomorrow was Monday, and Casey would get up and go back to the bank. Emma had spent all weekend trying to think how she could stop the workaholic from working for a few days and then worrying that she could be overstepping her bounds as a friend.

She rubbed her eyes tiredly as the now familiar frustration inched through her.

Jason's behavior, though, had been even more bewildering. He'd been jumpier than a grasshopper and just as difficult to pin down. Every time she'd tried to find out what bothered him, besides the obvious worry about Casey, he'd found an excuse and left the room. She'd never felt so disconnected from her best friends in all her life.

Every fantasy she'd ever had revolved around these two people. Even as a teenager she'd dreamed of both Jason and Casey kissing her, touching her, learning her shape, and teaching her the secrets of her own body, and of her giving them pleasure in return.

She'd had boyfriends over the years, relationships that had been doomed to fail simply because she'd never met anyone who could compare to her best friends. She wasn't a naïve virgin, a few relationships had stumbled to that level, but even then she'd felt something missing, that life and sex held so much more than she understood.

But now? Her dreams were far more complicated than fabulous sex with two people she loved dearly. No. Now she also dreamed of children and happy futures and growing old together. She fantasized of all three of them living out their lives in each other's arms. And the hopeless part, the scared little part in her heart, knew that even if Casey and Jason did see her love for them, they would be kind and generous and do anything to avoid hurting her, but could they ever truly love her?

Tears threatened as exhaustion and paranoia pulsed through her. She'd seen the obvious affection between Jason and Casey and had acknowledged years ago that they would make a great couple. Was she the reason they'd never hooked up? They were a matched pair, really. Both were perfect examples of the human form. Casey tall, slim, and a natural blonde, Jason well built and good-looking. Both of them glowed with golden smiles and radiated easy confidence. People gravitated toward them like flowers leaned to the sun.

Emma was none of those things. She was at least six inches shorter than Casey but weighed a whole lot more. Quiet and mousy, most people overlooked her presence even when she stood right in front of them. No, she didn't belong here. If she moved out, would Casey and Jason finally find a way to be together? The thought twisted her insides. She loved them both, wanted them both, but did she have the guts to step aside so that the people she loved could be happy?

Hell.

Lying in her bed, staring at the ceiling, she could no longer contain the misery that swallowed her whole. Tears began to flow unchecked down her face, and her chest hurt as she tried to quiet the sobs that broke loose.

But when Casey's piercing, terrified scream reached her ears, Emma catapulted off the bed and ran down the hall without a thought to her own safety or sanity. She nearly collided with Jason as he reached Casey's door at the same time. She glimpsed the terror in his eyes as he grabbed her roughly, protectively shoving her behind him as he entered the room.

Casey screamed again, louder this time, and Emma managed to peer around Jason as he headed toward the bed. Casey was still asleep, her arms pushing outward like she was trying to push someone or something away from her. Thankfully, she was alone. Uncertainty swamped Emma again. Should she even be here?

Jason glanced back at her as she hovered in the doorway, his face a mask of indecision, his eyes pleading for her help. She stepped toward the bed uncertain whether to wake Casey but unwilling to let her nightmare play out. The woman seemed absolutely terrified.

Emma tried to calm Casey by running a soothing hand through her hair and down her face. The pretty blonde whimpered in fear, but she turned her face toward Emma. For a moment, Casey's eyes popped

open, and the absolute alarm that Emma read there made her do something she never thought she'd do. She slid onto the bed, wrapped herself around Casey's thrashing form, and held her tightly while making soothing reassuring noises.

Smoothing her hand over Casey's creased brow, she glanced up to see Jason standing on the other side of the bed, looking uncertain and uncomfortable. She was about to say something when Casey's panic suddenly increased and the bed became a flurry of arms and legs thrashing wildly. Emma strove to hang on, calling Casey's name over and over as her throat clogged with dread and her eyes filled with tears.

Strong arms wrapped around them both, and Jason pulled Casey and Emma toward him, cradling the two of them with his body. His deep voice rumbled beside Emma's ear.

"It's okay, babe. She's okay, babe."

It seemed to work for Casey as well as it worked for Emma. Casey stopped thrashing against the pillows, and her whimpers stopped. The urge to cry hit Emma again, this time in relief that Casey seemed to be calming down, not getting worse. The deep caring she could hear in Jason's voice pierced her heart as her love for both of these people threatened to overwhelm her. They deserved to be happy. They were the perfect couple.

Emma was the friend they didn't have the heart to shove aside. Why? Because that's the type of people they were—caring, considerate, unwilling to hurt another human being even to pursue their own happiness.

Emma closed her eyes and silently cursed her own weakness even as she relaxed into Jason's arms and held the woman she loved. Hell, she felt so selfish. She was the one getting in the way, she was the reason they weren't together as a couple, and she was the one who needed to leave.

She swallowed the sob that threatened to choke her, and then she held them both, silently promising them that she would find the strength to get out of the way.

Chapter Three

Jason's heart thumped painfully, the noise almost deafening to his own ears. Finally, he had both of the women in his life in his arms. Despite the circumstances, his body responded with embarrassing swiftness, and he thanked his luck that Emma lay on the other side and prayed for Casey to not wake up and notice the rather obvious erection pressed against her hip.

Hell. The woman had been having a nightmare just moments ago. He was trying to help, not jump her

bones, but his body acted like a teenager with his first crush. He silently willed his libido to calm down at the same time that he stroked his hand over Emma's tear-streaked face.

"She'll be all right, babe. I promise you, I'll do everything I can to help her through it. Help both of you through it."

Emma gave him a soggy smile that didn't quite reach her eyes and then dropped her gaze as she exhaled deeply.

"Do you think this is from the holdup?"

"Hard to say. She hasn't exactly been big on the details. She didn't say anything about being attacked physically. When we came in, it looked like she was trying to push someone away."

Emma nodded, the tears still dripping down her face.

"She's supposed to go to work in a few hours."

"I know, babe, but trying to talk her out of going to work is like trying to pin the ocean to the sand. I can't remember the last time she took a day off, even for holidays."

"I don't suppose she'd be pleased if I tied her to the bed and refused to let her leave."

She said it with a goofy smile, but it quickly faded. Did she see his reaction? Had he failed to hide the heat that coursed through him at the erotic thought? Hell, he knew she'd been trying to lighten the mood, but his body liked other ideas, and he barely resisted the animalistic urge to rub his erection hard against Casey's hip. Fuck, he'd really found himself in a prickly situation.

Right now, he wanted to caress Casey's sleeping form and lean over to kiss Emma. Those soft lips, swollen slightly from crying, taunted him, and his imagination filled in the rest, his body unwilling to calm down in the middle of one of his most amazing fantasies.

Except this wasn't a fantasy. This was reality, and in this reality, Emma loved Casey, not him. He wriggled slightly, trying to move his groin away from Casey, trying to untangle his limbs so that he could leave the room and let Emma hold the woman she loved.

Casey whimpered as he tried to pull away and turned to nuzzle her face against his chest. Emma let her go, her arms falling away as the slim blonde snuggled deeper into Jason's embrace. His heart raced again at the same time that he ached for the heartbreak that flashed over Emma's features. She looked so tired and vulnerable. She started to sit up, but he knew he couldn't let her leave.

He grabbed her wrist as she tried to roll to the edge of the bed.

"She needs us both, babe." His voice stayed low and quiet, a desperation behind it that he hadn't really recognized until he'd heard it in his own ears. Emma shook her head, her eyes filling with tears that she somehow managed not to let spill.

"No, she needs you, and I've been in the way too long."

She twisted her wrist in his grip, trying to shake him off, but he knew with everything in him that letting her go right now was the last thing he could do. She made a whimpering sound as she struggled harder to

get away from him.

"Babe, shhh, babe. Please stay. Please listen to me."

She shook her head, but she stopped struggling.

"Emma, honey, stay here. We'll both hold Casey until she wakes up, and then we'll talk to her about work and sort something out."

Emma closed her eyes and nodded slowly before turning on her side and facing him. She didn't cuddle up to Casey the way she'd been before, but he noticed that she toyed with strands of Casey's honey-gold hair, running her fingers through the tresses and smoothing out the knots.

He couldn't help himself. He reached out a hand and gently ran the back of his knuckles down her cheek. Her eyes were so sad that he wanted to gather her into his arms and never let go.

"It's gonna be okay, babe. We'll work it out together." *Like a family*. The thought flitted through his mind, surprising him a little at just how much he wanted it to be true. They'd been best friends for years. Surely they could figure out a way to be a family together.

His heart squeezed, and for once, his cock behaved. Family was about much more than sex, and even his libido understood. He hugged Casey closer and reached his other arm over to lay a possessive hand on Emma's hip. Hell, he couldn't lose them now. Suddenly it was more important than ever to try to convince them that they belonged together—all three of them.

* * * *

Casey was having such a lovely dream.

In her dream, she held Emma's soft curves spooned against her front while Jason's harder, leaner body pressed into her back. She sighed, her dream self wondering ruefully if she'd ever have the guts to do it for real.

Fifteen years of friendship had somehow morphed into so much more, and she'd wanted both of them for longer than she could remember. Every time she envisioned the future, she and Emma and Jason were a threesome, sharing the highs and lows of family life, buying a home together, having children. Every one of her fantasies revolved around loving and being loved by the two most important people in her life.

But she'd watched Jason watching Emma and Emma watching Jason, and she'd known she was the interloper, the one who should move away, but she'd been unable to give them up. It had been her idea that they move in together. She'd been incredibly selfish, in hindsight. She'd hoped that proximity would give her the miracle she'd hoped for, but instead she'd only managed to keep Jason and Emma away from the happiness that they should have found together, would've found, if it wasn't for her interference.

Damn, she was self-centered. She'd been so concerned with what she wanted, she'd denied the two people she loved the most from having the happiness they both deserved.

In her dream, she knew that it was almost time to get up, but she didn't want this dream to end. She pulled Emma closer and nuzzled her neck, placing a soft kiss on the sensitive spot just below her ear. Casey pressed back against the hard body behind her, wiggling her hips against the thickening bulge pressed against her lower back.

She sighed happily. This was the part where Jason would push her onto her back and kiss her with all the wild, pent-up passion he'd been holding back for years. Emma would wake slowly, with that sexy smile on her face, crawl over, and demand a kiss from both of them. It's the way her dream always went—Jason's kiss, Emma's kiss, and then Jason and Emma kissing each other, and then the real fun would begin. Always it was the same, and Casey's dream self held her breath waiting for the magic of her dream world to sweep her into ecstasy.

But, it never came.

Confused, Casey struggled toward wakefulness, annoyed but not surprised by the thumping headache. She'd slept badly since the holdup, and she'd spent a lot of the weekend analyzing her reaction to it. It felt slightly ridiculous that a holdup that she'd barely been aware of could affect her so significantly. She'd started to wonder just how self-centered she really was. First, the friends she couldn't let go, and now, the holdup where she needed to be center of attention but didn't really have a valid reason.

Shit.

She pulled the woman in her arms closer to her, nuzzling her neck like she'd done so many times before in her dreams, the sweet scent of vanilla reaching her senses.

Vanilla?

Confusion clattered through her brain even when she opened her eyes.

Emma, her sweet Emma, curled in sleep and pressed against Casey's front. Startled, Casey went to move back, but the strong arms wrapped around her from behind tightened their hold, and a low, rusty voice spoke soothing nonsense into her ear.

"Jase?"

"It's okay, babe. You had a bad nightmare last night. We came to help." The familiar, yet unfamiliar, sound of that sleep-roughened voice sent desire skittering through her body, and she didn't quite suppress the contented sigh that escaped her.

Jason's quiet, rumbling laugh tickled her spine as she pulled Emma closer to her, kissing the top of her head.

"You love her, don't you?"

The denial sprang to her lips, but she was so close to actually living her fantasy that she couldn't voice the lie. She nodded, her head gently bumping the underside of his chin.

"You should tell her."

She nodded again even as words tumbled from her mouth.

"So should you. I've seen the way she looks at you. She loves you, you know?"

Jason's muscles stiffened, and she wondered why he would be surprised. Twisting awkwardly, she tried to get a better look at his face without letting go of Emma. It proved impossible, so she settled for asking.

"Why are you so surprised? Surely you've seen the way she looks at you."

She could feel Jason trying to slow down his breathing, and he swallowed before he spoke.

"She looks at you the same way." His arms tightened around her before he took a deep breath and relaxed his grip slightly. "Do you think...that maybe...she loves us both?"

"Wouldn't that be wonderful?" The words whispered out of her mouth before she could stop to think of the implications of such a confession.

* * * *

Jason tried to hide his reaction, a whirlpool of emotions and questions zipping through him. Would it be possible for them both to love Emma? Even if Casey didn't love him, surely he would still have her in his life. But, would it be right to live such a blatant lie? Probably not. No matter how seductive the temptation was to hide behind the illusion. He needed to be honest, needed to put it all on the line.

All or nothing.

His courage faltered for a moment, his chest squeezing painfully against the understanding of all he could lose.

"I love Emma, that's true, but," he held Casey still as she tried to turn in his arms, "but, I love you too."

"You love me?" The question was so quiet, spoken in such a small, tight voice, that his stomach cramped painfully as he forced the words passed his teeth. Hell. All or nothing was beginning to look like he would end with nothing.

"Yes, babe. I love you, and I love Emma, and I think of both of you as mine. I dream of homes and families and watching you both swell with my babies." He bit off the rest, unwilling to burden her more with his futile dreams. She lay very quietly in his arms, and it took a moment to realize she was crying.

"Awww, hell, babe, I'm sorry. I know it's impossible. You love Emma. I get that, I really do, and I want you both to be happy. I'm sor— *oomph*." The sharp elbow was so unexpected he felt the impact clear to his toes.

"Don't you dare take that back. I've been waiting fifteen years for you to say that, and I want you to repeat it as soon as I can wake Sleeping Beauty."

A smile spread across his face, happiness bubbling through him.

"Fifteen years? You've loved me since you were twelve?"

She laughed in his arms, twisting her head to nip at his jaw with her perfect white teeth.

"Well, maybe thirteen, but I've loved Emma just as long. Come on, Sleeping Beauty, it's time to wake up." She shook Emma gently, and he reached over Casey to press his palm against Emma's pale cheek.

Chapter Four

"Wake up, sleepyhead."

Emma woke slowly, her eyes fluttering until she realized where she was. Her entire body jolted as she focused on Casey lying on the pillow facing her, Jason's arm draped protectively over her stomach.

"Uhm...I'm sorry...you were...uhm...dreaming, a nightmare..." She sucked in a deep breath, a part of her realizing that this was it, this was the part where they explained how much they loved each other. Tears threatened to spill, and her voice jammed in her throat. Desperately swallowing, Emma inched backwards, trying to untangle herself from the blankets and Casey's slender limbs.

"I should go."

She'd almost made it off the bed when Casey leaned over her and did the last thing she expected, and the one thing she'd been hoping for. Casey pressed her lips to Emma's as she wrapped her slender arms around Emma's waist.

Emma groaned and opened her mouth against the insistent tongue that slid again and again against her lips. With a soft sigh, Casey deepened the kiss, pushing Emma back onto the pillow at the same time that she felt Jason's hands smoothing over the rounded curve of her stomach and up to the underside of her breasts. Large, warm hands cupped her sensitive flesh, thumbs rolling over her nipples as they stiffened and sent shooting arrows of warmth straight to her clitoris.

Smaller hands began to unbutton her pajamas, and Emma wished she'd thought to wear her sexy silk instead of her comfortable flannelette pair. She was probably blushing, but considering that Casey still kissed her, their tongues dancing, sliding together, she somehow didn't care.

Jason groaned as the final button came undone and the material fell away from her chest.

She felt the bed shake as he maneuvered his way over to her side and slid down to suck a turgid nipple into the hot cavern of his mouth. Emma squeaked against Casey's mouth as he caught the rosy pink nub between his teeth and bit gently. Heat pooled between her legs as his hands scooped into the waistband

and began ever so slowly pushing the pajama pants and underwear down her legs and off her feet.

Emma broke the kiss, both of them breathing heavily, and Casey gazed into her eyes before giving her one of her amazing smiles and then lowering her head to the breast Jason had abandoned. Emma nearly lifted off the bed when Jason pushed her legs apart, wedged his shoulders between her thighs, and used his fingers to separate the folds that hid her clit. She moaned in sweet ecstasy when his warm tongue laved the rapidly swelling flesh, and then almost forgot how to breathe when he slid closer to gently suck on her clitoris. He pressed her to the bed, her pulse pounding in her ears, as he flicked and tortured the captured nub held between his teeth. She panted as her muscles coiled tight, Casey worshipping her breasts and Jason setting off electrical charges in her womb.

Tension arched her spine, her legs lifting her pussy and breasts into heated mouths. Her embarrassment fled, and only ecstasy remained. Jason gripped her tighter, his big hands kneading the soft flesh of her ass as he tilted her tumescent flesh closer to his mouth. Gasping for air, Emma threw her head back and screamed as every muscle shook violently and liquid heat coursed through her. She jolted against them again and again as they continued torturing her sensitized flesh until they'd wrung every bit of ecstasy from her climax.

Jason laid his face against her rounded stomach, breathing heavily as Casey lifted her head and kissed Emma sweetly.

"You are so beautiful, Emma. So responsive, so natural."

A deep, rumbling chuckle escaped Jason's mouth as he lifted himself closer to kiss Emma and smile into her eyes.

"Ditto."

Then he turned to Casey, his smile lascivious as he asked a question Emma had only ever heard in her dreams. "Do you want to know how sweet our Emma tastes?"

Casey nodded her head and smiled as she leaned toward Jason and licked his lips before kissing him as thoroughly as she'd kissed Emma earlier. Emma could only watch in amazement as they kissed above her at the same time that they both tweaked her nipples. Electrical pulses again sent desire coursing through her, and she moaned in appreciation when Casey moved to lie between her thighs and Jason helped Casey remove her silk negligee and panties.

As naked as Emma, Casey smiled as she slid two fingers into Emma's dripping pussy, sliding her slender digits in and out, seeming to search for something at the same time that she watched Emma's face.

As those clever fingers ran over a particular spot, Emma moaned before she could even understand where the sensation came from. Again, the sensation, again the moan, again the fingers moved inside her. Casey lowered her head to Emma's swollen flesh and licked from where her fingers pressed into Emma's vagina all the way up to her highly sensitive clitoris.

Emma jumped as Casey sucked the flesh of her puffy lips and then moaned against her mound. Jason winked at Emma as his hands lifted Casey into a kneeling position and toyed with her breasts, pulling and tweaking the rosy pink nipples as he watched Casey's fingers continue their rhythmic plunge and wiggle into Emma's pussy.

Emma watched Jason watching her.

"Come for us," he commanded, and something inside her snapped. Emma's body stiffened and then pounded against the mattress as her orgasm slammed through her, cream pulsing from her pussy and covering Casey's fingers.

Carefully Casey withdrew her hand, lifting her fingers toward her mouth but Jason grabbed her wrist and guided them into his own mouth, his tongue licking thoroughly, his appreciative groan filling the air.

He lifted Casey to her knees and helped her to straddle Emma's trapped body. He kissed the side of Casey's neck as he encouraged her knees wider, the open lips of her pussy almost touching Emma's stomach.

Strong, tanned fingers slid down Casey's smooth stomach and tangled in the deep blonde curls, separating the shiny lips and circling the swollen flesh of her clit. Jason pressed lower and pushed his fingers into Casey's slick flesh, pumped into her again and again as he held her body tight against his. She moaned as he slowly withdrew his fingers, and lifted them toward his mouth before smiling at Emma.

"Would you like to taste?"

Emma nodded eagerly, lifting herself toward the blunt fingers dripping with Casey's unique flavor. Jason groaned as Emma flicked her tongue over the coarse flesh, licking every drop of Casey's passion from him, sucking his fingers deeper into her mouth.

When Emma finally released him, he moved his hand back toward Casey's mound again, pushing two fingers through her curls and pressing them apart so that the sweet pink nub of Casey's clit stood up, begging for attention. Emma slid lower on the bed, slithering in between both Casey and Jason's knees as she positioned herself so that her tongue could lave the swollen, shiny flesh. The first stab of her tongue into Casey's vagina had the woman moaning and writhing in Jason's arms. Jason tightened his grip on Casey as Emma pressed her tongue deep into Casey's slippery flesh over and over. Jason's fingers toyed with Casey's clit as the beautiful blonde moaned her pleasure. She gasped, her breath stalling, her body quivering violently. Then she cried out as she splintered in release, her body shaking in Jason's secure grip.

Emma laved the quivering flesh, gentling her strokes as Casey's breathing slowed. Carefully, Jason lowered her to the bed, placing himself in between the two women and pulling them both into his arms, pressing their faces against his chest.

Emma lifted her head and pressed a kiss to his mouth, sharing Casey's divine taste.

* * * *

Lust roared through Jason's body as Casey's flavor mingled with the lingering taste of Emma. He swept his tongue into Emma's mouth, sliding against hers as he curled his hand into her hair and held her still for his gentle assault.

When he finally lifted his head to breathe, Emma looked at him, a small frown creasing her brow.

"You have way too many clothes on."

He chuckled as he felt both women push his T-shirt up over his body and grab his sleep pants. Luckily, they noticed the heavy bulge in his pants and lifted the elastic carefully over his erection. He barely had time to breathe a sigh of relief before his engorged flesh was engulfed in moist heat. Jason lifted his head trying to figure out who was deep-throating his rock-solid cock, and almost came hard and fast when he realized it was his sweet Emma sucking him like he was the most delicious thing she'd ever tasted.

Casey's hand cupped his balls as Emma tortured him to ecstasy.

"Stop, babe," he groaned, his control about to snap. She let his cock slide from her mouth as she looked at him, the vulnerability in her eyes almost his undoing. He leaned forward, hauling her up onto his chest, and pressed an urgent kiss to her mouth. "I'm close to coming, and I really want to be balls deep inside you when I do."

She gasped in surprise at the same time that she half sat up and then wriggled lower toward his cock. The word "condom" was about to fall from his lips when he felt Casey's hands rolling one onto his cock. No longer able to contain his patience, he lifted Emma, aligned his cock against her pussy and thrust into her in one deep stroke.

Emma quivered as he held her beautifully rounded hips in his hands and controlled the pace of their joining. Casey lay beside them, her hands roaming over both of them as she watched Emma come apart for the third time.

Emma was so beautiful, her head thrown back, the flesh of her chest and shoulders mottled and pink from her arousal, and Jason groaned as her flesh squeezed him rhythmically, milking him as she climaxed.

He held her still as his own orgasm gripped him, the tingling sensation in his balls exploding through him as his cock pulsed his seed into her quivering flesh. She fell forward onto him as he cradled her possessively against his chest.

He smiled at the love he read on Casey's face. Love for Emma? Love for him? Could she really love them both equally?

The future beckoned brightly, his love for both of these women suddenly seeming more sane, more likely to lead to happiness, not heartache. He couldn't wait to make things official, tie them to him, watch them pregnant with his children. He wanted to throw the condoms out and start making babies right now.

He almost laughed as his flesh stirred and Emma lifted her head to look at him sleepily. She licked her lips as she lifted away from his body, holding the condom against the base of his cock so that it wouldn't spill. She pulled the used condom off, disposed of it, and then grabbed another. Jason's flesh tightened when she smiled and rolled it onto his rapidly recovering cock.

Chapter Five

"Come here, honey," Emma said to Casey. Emma knelt beside Jason's body and helped Casey into the same position, pressing Casey back against her own naked flesh. Despite her incredible orgasm, Casey's flesh thrilled at the touch of the woman she loved. She sighed as Emma wrapped her arm around Casey's middle, sliding her hand up to cup a small, firm breast and flick over the hardening nipple.

Emma lowered her head to Casey's neck, nipped at the flesh and then licked away the erotic stings. Casey felt her entire body quicken, the woman she loved making love to her from behind, the man she loved watching her as his arousal grew. Casey smiled and leaned forward to kiss Jason as his eyes darkened again and his cock grew stiffer.

"Come here, you two." Jason grabbed them both, wedging Casey between him and Emma as he pulled her over his body. "Casey, I need to be inside you."

She nodded, wriggling to angle her body so that she could take him inside her. His cock was thick, and her body took a moment to stretch around him, the muscles squeezing against his every small movement.

"Babe," he groaned, his voice rough and low, "you feel so incredible."

Casey moved slightly, her body twisting as Emma's fingers found her clit. Her pussy throbbed around Jason's thick cock, every muscle pulled tight. She puffed, trying to drag air into her lungs, barely remembering how to breathe. Jason pumped harder, slamming into her and pulling out again and again, the slick slapping sound filling the room as they both raced toward orgasm.

"Wait." Jason held her still, Emma's hands falling away as they both looked at him expectantly. He grabbed Emma's hand, tugging until she fell onto the pillow beside him, and then lifted Casey off his cock and arranged her on all fours so that her head hovered over Emma's pussy. She breathed deeply, inhaling the sweet smell of Emma's arousal before she dipped her head lower and ran her tongue through the pink flesh to circle Emma's clit. Emma cried out and grabbed Casey's hair, holding her head against her needy flesh.

She flicked her tongue over and over against the hardened nub, enjoying Emma's unrestrained reactions. She'd almost forgotten about Jason when he grabbed her hips and thrust straight into her from behind. Her breath caught as she was pushed deeper into Emma's moist flesh, the crisp curls tickling her nose, Emma's sweet sounds filling the air as she again shook with desire.

Jason grunted as he pounded into Casey, his hand straying to her clit and pressing against the stiff button of flesh. Her rhythm faltered, her body shaking, her anus pulsing as her body tightened for her own release.

Emma cried out, her pussy coating Casey's tongue with her cream. A loud slap on Casey's ass had her jumping back at the same time her own orgasm gripped her, the flesh tightening and gripping Jason's cock, milking his orgasm from him. Molten lava coursed through her veins, her flesh heating as her release flooded through her.

Jason held her to him for a moment, kissing the damp flesh of her back and shoulders, and then he

carefully removed his cock and went to dispose of the condom. Casey fell forward, wriggling a little so that she could pull Emma's pliant body into her arms.

"I love you," she whispered to the woman who held her heart.

Emma didn't reply, and it took a moment to realize that she'd fallen asleep, her breathing soft and even, her eyelashes resting against her pale cheeks.

Jason slid back onto the bed, circled Casey with his arms and rested one large hand on Emma's hip.

"I love you," he said as he pressed a soft kiss to the sensitive flesh under her ear. "Is Emma asleep?"

"Yes." She pulled her beautiful lover closer, unwilling to let the woman go now, even in sleep.

"Tomorrow, we need to talk about the future. I want so many things for the three of us. I barely know where to start."

Casey laughed quietly, her happiness bubbling through her. "I think this was probably a good place to start."

Jason chuckled in her ear, the deep sound reverberating against her spine. "I think you might be right, but tomorrow, tomorrow we start making plans. I have an almost overwhelming need to see you both pregnant to me."

She laughed. The thought of motherhood suddenly a much more appealing and interesting idea than it seemed just a few hours ago. Work didn't quite feel so important anymore. Damn— *work*—one little four-letter word that changed her entire mood.

"What was that?"

She tried to shrug, but he saw right through her.

"Case, were you thinking about what happened at work?"

"Sort of. More along the lines of not going to work."

He moved back a little and then rolled her toward him, making it impossible to hide her face.

"I have never known you to take time off, for any reason. Want to explain what happened at the bank on Friday?"

She shook her head, grimacing when he narrowed his eyes.

"Case," he said in a voice that held more warning than appeal. She closed her eyes and gave in, knowing that, considering the way both he and Emma cared for her, they at least deserved an explanation for her bizarre behavior.

"The problem is that nothing actually happened to me. I was barely even aware that there was a robbery taking place. I was in my office with a client going over a loan application when I heard yelling and screaming. I didn't even open my office door. I just grabbed my client, and we both slid under the desk and stayed there until it was all over." She shook her head in bewilderment, her eyes filling with tears

even though she couldn't fathom why.

"We were never in any danger. The alarm was already tripped, so I didn't even need to make a phone call. We just hid until it was all over. I don't understand why I'm having nightmares or why it affected me so badly."

She felt Emma roll over and glanced over to see the other woman watching her with concern.

"The other day, you asked me if I'd ever expected to do one thing in a crisis but then did another. Do you remember that?"

Casey nodded, uncertain where Emma was going with this line of thinking.

"Do you think maybe the holdup has you reevaluating the person you thought you were against the person you are?"

"Sounds like a whole lot of psychobabble to me." She couldn't cover the smile that broke when Emma, in typical Emma fashion, rolled her eyes at her offhand comment.

"Maybe it's something worth thinking about." Jason's deep voice sounded very serious, and for a moment, she regretted her frivolous answer.

"Have you considered that you did exactly what you were supposed to do?" Emma asked in a soft voice. "You had a client who needed to be protected. You kept that person safe."

Casey shook her head a little, unwilling to accept the easy answer. She didn't feel like it had been the right thing. It had felt childish and cowardly to hide under her desk while other people's lives were at risk.

"I guess I expected more from myself. You know, the leader type who keeps things calm and makes sure everyone is all right. I'm not saying I'd jump in front of bullets like a superhero, just that I didn't quite expect to be the one hiding under a desk huddled up to a terrified client."

"Casey, I once read an article about how sometimes little things like the holdup can be a catalyst for other issues to surface."

Emma, sweet little Emma, nodded her head, agreeing with Jason. They were tag-teaming her again, except this time she knew it was because they both loved her.

"Casey, honey, I think you need to take some time to work through this. Maybe talk to the psychologist at the bank or," she quickly added when a deep shudder worked through Casey's body, "talk to us. Either way, I think you need time to work through whatever is going on in your head right now."

Casey nodded. She hadn't taken holidays for years, so she definitely had a few weeks owing. She'd speak to her boss in the morning, see if she could get some time off.

"Fine. I'll take some time off, but first I need you to kiss me. It's been so long I can barely remember what you taste like."

Emma giggled as Casey pulled her closer, and licked her tongue over the seam of Emma's lips before pushing past her teeth and exploring the dark cavern. She kissed Emma thoroughly, taking her time to learn what she liked. Jason wrapped his arms around them both, pulling Casey's back against his solid

chest.

Eventually they had to come up for air, so Casey gentled the kiss, sipping at Emma's lips before kissing her on the nose.

"Get some sleep. We'll talk in the morning, Em."

Chapter Six

Morning came too quickly. Jason woke slowly, a smile spreading across his face as he realized that the dream he'd been having for too long had suddenly become his reality. Casey turned in his arms, kissing the underside of his chin as she mumbled a sleepy good morning.

"Are you going to work today?" He didn't want to badger her, but he admitted to having an ulterior motive. He wanted to make plans for their future, and it would be a whole lot easier if he could keep the three of them in the same room. He knew Emma didn't work Mondays, and he had nothing at the office that couldn't wait until tomorrow, so all he needed was to get Casey to stay home and he could spend the day convincing them both to marry him and have his babies.

"I'll call my boss at seven and see if I can wrestle a few days off. Maybe we could plan to take a holiday together."

"That's pretty much what I've been thinking, but I was thinking along the lines of a honeymoon." He almost laughed at the comical look on her face when he said the word "honeymoon." Okay, so it wasn't exactly legal for him to marry them both, but they could figure out some sort of commitment ceremony, and if he was really lucky, he could convince them both to change their legal names to his own.

"Oh, Jase, I've wanted to hear you say that for so long, but I never believed that it would happen. I couldn't even imagine how the three of us might build a life together, and now suddenly here we are." She ran a gentle hand down the side of his face. "I love you."

"I love you too, and if our sweet little temptress would just wake up, I'd be more than happy to demonstrate just how much I love you both."

Casey rolled over to try to wake Emma, but Jason took one look at Emma's sleeping face and decided to wait a little longer. Emma looked really exhausted. They could wait until she woke by herself.

"Don't," he whispered against Casey's ear. "She hasn't slept very well this weekend. We can wait until she wakes up." He dropped soft kisses against Casey's ear and shoulder. "I've loved you both for a very

long time. I can wait a little while longer."

She gently withdrew her arms from around Emma, rolled toward him, and wrapped them around his neck. The first touch of her lips sent a pulse of need straight through him, his cock surging to throbbing life at the first tentative touch of her tongue against his. He moaned loudly as she pressed her front against him, her naked breasts squashed against his chest.

He took control of the kiss, grasping her head as he aggressively pushed his tongue past her teeth and explored the moist cavern. She moaned softly and rubbed her lower body against the thigh he insinuated between her legs. Lost in the glory of finally being free to kiss Casey the way he wanted to, he almost missed the soft noise as Emma woke behind the blonde and tried to slip away without them noticing.

Breaking the kiss, Jason dived half over the top of Casey and grabbed Emma before she could leave. Casey squirmed about so that she could also wrap her arms around the woman she loved.

"We have something we need to discuss with you."

The panicked look that crossed Emma's features as her gaze alternated between them almost broke his heart. He knew her well enough to know what she was thinking.

"Nope. Wrong, babe. Well, right and wrong," he conceded. "Yes, I love Casey, but I also love you." The confusion on her face was almost comical, and if it hadn't been so important for their future, he would've teased her about it, but right now, he needed to find the words she needed to hear.

"We love you, babe. We love each other, and we think you love both of us as well."

* * * *

Emma was fairly certain that she wasn't dreaming.

Her head pounded from way too little sleep, and her chest ached where her heart beat an erratic tattoo, so she was fairly certain that she was awake. Maybe she was delusional?

She'd woken to find them kissing, the beauty of their naked bodies entwined nearly breaking her heart with the perfection. The two of them belonged together, and finally they'd found each other.

Maybe she'd imagined Jason's words because her broken heart and muddled mind wouldn't accept the obvious.

"Emma? Honey?"

Casey's voice sounded so unsure, so *un - Casey-like*, that she turned to see her friend's face.

"Emma, I'm sorry. I thought you loved me too. Please don't leave. Stay and talk to us."

Emma took a deep, steady breath. Somehow, she'd always known they'd have a conversation like this, but she hadn't understood just how it would weaken her knees with the cowardly need to stay with

them or that her throat would threaten to close against the words. She swallowed hard, trying to dislodge the lump that tried to clog her throat.

"Casey, Jason, I do love you both, but I don't expect you to deny your own happiness just for me. You're good people and wonderful friends, but you don't need to include me in your relationship just because you think being together might hurt me."

They both wore identical looks of shock, and Emma shook her head sadly. Surely, they knew her well enough to know that she wouldn't accept their pity. She needed to move out and let them live their life together.

"Hurt you?" Casey's smile had vanished, a wounded look flashing across her face before she could hide it. "That's what you think this is about? Us trying not to hurt you?"

Jason wasn't quite so restrained.

"A pity fuck? You think you're a pity fuck? That we'd both use you like that just so we wouldn't hurt you? What the hell?" He sat back and ran an agitated hand through his hair. Emma's breath caught when she realized his hand wasn't quite steady.

"Emma?" Casey's quiet voice claimed her attention again. "Honey, did you like what we did together last night? Did you enjoy it?"

Emma felt the blush all the way to the tops of her ears. Of course she'd enjoyed last night. She'd made love to the two people who meant more to her than anyone else in the world, and she'd had more orgasms that she could count. Yes, she'd enjoyed every moment, but that didn't mean anything. She was still the third wheel, still the pathetic loser friend that they were looking out for.

She knew at this point that she should probably start lying, let them off the hook, tell them that she didn't really enjoy it, but thanks anyway.

Against her better judgment, she nodded her head.

Both Casey and Jason exhaled the breaths they must've been holding.

"Babe, we love you. I've loved you for a long time. I've lost count of the times I've tried to tell you that, tried to explain how much I want our relationship to move forward. How one day I want to watch you swell with my child." He wrapped his arm around Casey and pulled Emma onto his lap. "How much I want to watch both of you as you carry my children. I know I probably sound like the most selfish guy on Earth, but I can't let you go. Either of you. Please say you'll stay. Say you'll have my babies. Say you'll grow old with me."

Emma wrapped her arms around Casey even as she snuggled closer to Jason, tears flowing down her face as she realized her dream was becoming a reality.

"Yes," she whispered.

Chapter Seven

Eight months later

Emma smiled as she heard Casey come through the door. She'd been trying to peel vegetables at the sink like she'd always done, but with the big belly getting in the way, it got more difficult every day. Any moment now, Casey would waddle in and take her to task for overdoing things in her last trimester.

She snorted a little as she tried to hold back the laughter. As if Casey could lecture her on how to behave during pregnancy. She was further along than Emma, and yet she still worked at the bank, albeit on reduced hours, but still working a tight schedule.

Casey waddled into the kitchen, her belly leading the way.

"Emma..." she groused warningly, "you are supposed to be off your feet."

"I could say the same to you."

"That's why I'm trying to sit down."

Emma glanced over to the bench as she realized with a growing sense of horror that Casey was trying to lift herself onto the stool at the bench.

"No way." She pointed the vegetable peeler at Casey, thinned her lips in disapproval, and stared at her until she moved toward the kitchen table and then lowered herself onto the chair. It wasn't until the woman finally sat down that Emma realized what she'd been trying to hide by sitting at the bench. Casey's feet and ankles were so swollen that the skin had dimples where she should've had ankles.

"Oh, Case," Emma expelled softly, her love for this woman overwhelming her at the sight of the uncomfortable swelling. She walked over and pulled out the chair beside Casey, lifted her feet, and placed them carefully on the padded seat. "Hon, have they been like this all day?"

"No, just the last hour or so."

"Case, maybe you should take leave earlier than you were planning. This kind of swelling can't be good for you or the baby." Emma braced herself for the argument to follow. Casey loved working. She loved her job. She loved the challenge. Getting her just to take holidays had been almost impossible, so Emma wasn't really ready for Casey's next words.

"Already done. As of today, I am a stay-at-home mom. At least for a while."

Relieved, Emma wrapped her arms around Casey, an interesting exercise now that they both had baby bellies.

"Do you remember Jason's face when I told him I was pregnant? He looked like a man who could fly if he wanted to. He was so happy."

Emma nodded, remembering the day only a month later when she'd told her lovers the same thing. It had happened so fast. They'd been eager to start a family, but of course, as with the best laid plans, nature had thrown them way more than they'd bargained for. The news that Emma carried twins had thrown them all for a loop. Jason had joked that the babies were probably all girls. He'd lovingly grouched about having no sons to teach football and had made them both promise to keep having babies until he had at least one son, maybe two.

The broad grin on his face had shown just how much he loved the idea of a big family.

"I don't know how he's put up with us both being pregnant." Emma laughed softly as she remembered some of the hormone-induced arguments that she and Casey had had in the last few months.

"Poor man must be completely insane to still be sleeping in the same bed with us. Between this baby kicking him and the twins rolling around, I doubt he's had a decent night's sleep in months."

"He has been rather brave when you think about it. How many men survive pregnancy with one wife without getting yelled at every other day? Maybe we should take some time to pamper our man before the babies arrive."

"Okay, as long as it can be done sitting down."

* * * *

Jason rushed to get home. It wasn't that he didn't enjoy work. It was just that his priorities had shifted somewhat in the last few months. He considered himself the luckiest man on the planet. After years of waiting and hoping for his future with Emma and Casey to begin, he suddenly had not one, but three babies on the way.

Emma glowed with her pregnancy. Even carrying twins, it was obvious that the woman was born to make babies. Casey hadn't fared quite so well. After months of morning sickness, queasiness, and vomiting, she'd found a few weeks' peace only to end up with swollen feet, toes, fingers, neck—the woman had lived through so much just to have his baby that there were times when he wondered if she'd resent him for it.

His shoulders shook with suppressed laughter and he smiled as he remembered some of the arguments he'd refereed over the past few months. Both the women in his life had suffered hormonal swings but had spent most of their energy getting on each other's nerves. He'd been lucky. Oh, he'd copped a hormone-induced lecture or two, but for the most part, he'd loved every change, every movement, every kick of both their pregnancies, and he wouldn't change anything of the past eight months.

Finally realizing they loved each other had been miracle enough. That they'd been blessed so quickly

with the family they all wanted was a gift he would never take for granted. He slipped his key into the front door, a goofy smile spreading across his face when he heard the laughter coming from the kitchen.

"How are my favorite ladies?" He walked into the room, frowned at Emma standing at the sink peeling vegetables, and then walked over to kiss Casey. He didn't quite make it all the way to her mouth before he saw the state of her ankles. "Babe." He knelt beside her legs, his voice seizing in his throat. Her soft hand touched his face.

"I'm okay, Jase, just overdid it a little today."

"Oh, Casey," he said, carefully trying to conceal his need to order her to look after herself better. Giving Casey, or Emma, for that matter, a direct order never, ever went down well. "Maybe you should think about taking leave earlier than you were planning." He really did not want to look at the fury that would be written all over her face. Ever since she'd worked through the emotions of the holdup eight months ago, she'd taken a little more time for herself, but she still pushed herself just a little harder than she should, especially now that she was nearly eight-months pregnant.

"Today was my last day."

He sought her eyes, relief flooding through him when he realized that she wasn't messing with him.

"I'd rather stay home and have a healthy baby."

He lifted her into his arms and sat her on his lap before he captured her lips in a very thorough kiss. "Thank you, babe. It'll make it so much easier to worry about you both if you're together." He meant it exactly the way it came out, so the bark of laughter caught him by surprise.

"The way we've been arguing lately, are you sure having both of us home, all day, together, is going to lessen your worries?"

He turned to Emma's cheeky smile. She stood at the sink, her sassy stance lost behind the growing bulge where their twins grew. He watched as she waddled toward them and pressed a kiss to the mouth of the woman held securely in his arms. Yes, it would lessen his worries. No matter how many arguments they had, it was obvious that they loved each other just as much as he loved them.

Emma placed her warm hand against his cheek, kissed him softly, and stepped back.

"Why don't you two go lie down for a while? Dinner won't be for at least another hour."

Jason stood, lifting Casey high against his chest. Even eight-months pregnant, she was a lightweight. "Good idea. I've been dreaming of getting you naked all day."

"Ah, yes, so you can admire my lovely swollen ankles."

He laughed again, happiness filling him as he carried Casey into their bedroom. A quick glance around suggested that Emma had probably been pushing herself too hard as well. The room was spotlessly clean, not a thing out of place. Nesting instinct, she called it. Jason shook his head in defeat. What a fucking joke. If Emma kept this up, her ankles would be just as swollen as Casey's.

He lowered Casey to the edge of the bed, and carefully helped her to undress. She wore a simple maternity dress, and when he lifted it, he saw the angry red lines gracing her hips and buttocks.

"Casey," he said quietly as he knelt beside her and ran a gentle hand over several of the stretch marks.

"Yeah, ugly, aren't they?"

"I'm sorry, babe. I had no idea pregnancy would be so rough for you." He dropped his head for a moment, unsure how to say what he wanted, no, *needed*, to say. Her voice sounded so sad. The marks didn't detract in any way from her beauty, but if he'd been able to do something so that she could've prevented them, he would've moved heaven and earth.

He shuffled over so that he knelt in front of her and then smoothed his hand over the small lump at the top of her belly that the doctor had said was most likely the baby's knee. He lifted his other hand up to cup the side of her face, gently urging her to look at him.

"Sweetheart, I love you more and more every day. I love everything about you, including your stretch marks. I love that you love me enough to have my child, that you love Emma as much as I do, that—"

Casey placed a hand over his mouth and smiled down at him.

"I get it."

He could feel his face heating a little with embarrassment. He wanted so much for her to understand how she and Emma meant the world to him, how much he appreciated that they were willing to have his children so that they could all be one big, happy family, but the smile on her face held his words silent.

"I love you. Can you kiss me now, please?"

He laughed quietly as he lifted to his feet and pressed his lips against hers in a gentle kiss. It was Casey who deepened the kiss, Casey who wrapped a hand behind his head to hold him to her, and it was Casey who moaned in arousal.

He pulled away carefully to look at his beautiful wife, and, as was her habit lately, she wore that innocent, yet sexy smile that usually preceded demanding that he make long, slow love to her.

"Babe, are you sure? You look so tired, and your ankles are so swollen, and Emma's getting dinner ready..." He broke off when he saw the flash of hurt cross her features. Hell. That was the exact opposite of what he was trying to do.

"Casey. Look at me." When she finally lifted her gaze to his, he took a deep breath. He realized now that the words weren't nearly as important as his actions. He pressed a kiss to Casey's lips, running his tongue over her smile and then delving deeper into her moist heat. His cock thickened as he ran his hands over her body and undid the catch to her bra. Her heavy breasts spilled into his hands, and she moaned softly as he gently rolled his thumbs over the stiffening nipples. Her pregnancy had made them so sensitive that she moaned and held his head to her while he gently worshipped the tender flesh with his warm tongue.

Casey was whimpering and squirming by the time he stood up, lifted her in his arms again, and placed her in the middle of the bed. Carefully he stretched out beside her. He roamed his hands over her breasts and her belly, worshipping her with his touch, adoring her shape and the evidence of a life growing inside her.

He had a sexy, beautiful woman carrying his child and wanting to make love to him. What more could he ask for?

And then, Emma wandered into the room, wearing a sultry smile and stripping off clothes as she approached the bed.

He smiled. He was a very lucky man.

* * * *

25 years later...

His hands shook as he tried to tie the little black piece of material into something resembling a bow tie. "Damn it!" Two amused chuckles sounded behind him, and he glared at both of his wives in the mirror for a moment before laughing with them.

"You have no chance of getting that right today." Casey smiled as she stepped forward, tied the material for him, and then kissed him tenderly. "It's okay to be nervous. After all, it's not every day that a father walks his little girl down the aisle."

He smiled again even as his gut squeezed tight. Emma and Casey had been working hard for months to convince him that his eldest child, and only daughter, was happy and getting married for all the right reasons, but as her father, he wasn't so sure.

Emma stepped forward into his arms, and hugged him tightly. "Jase, she's a smart girl. She knows what she wants, and she goes after it. You know that."

"Em, I know she's old enough to make her own decisions, but I'm still allowed to worry about her."

"Of course you are, but now she'll have two husbands to worry about her too."

Yup, there it was, the one thing guaranteed to make his stomach clench with anxiety. Two husbands. His little girl was getting married to not just one overbearing, overconfident man, but two. Two husbands? Was the girl insane?

Emma pulled away, her face very serious.

"If you think for one moment that they won't love her forever and protect her with their lives, then you are very, very wrong. You know our Stacey—do you think she'd ever let either of them step out of line?"

He smiled and pulled Casey into his arms as well. He held both of his women close as he relaxed just a little and then laughed quietly as the truth hit him. His new sons-in-law would never hurt his girl, but heaven help them if they ever upset Stacey.

She was only twenty-four, but she had both her mothers' independent streaks, and she'd been riding

herd over her six younger brothers most of her life. Hell, when it came down to it, he should probably be worrying for her husbands.

Smiling, he looked over to the doorway where Stacey stood, hands on hips.

"I would like to get married sometime this century. If you're finished with the sentimental BS, I would like to walk down the aisle now?"

He laughed as he moved toward his beautiful daughter and she sent him that happy smile that had always manipulated him into giving her everything she ever wanted.

Yup, he should probably be worrying for her husbands.

THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born and raised in Australia, Rachel *happily* lives a *romantic* story all of her own with her *wonderful* hubby, *precious* teenagers and menagerie of *perfectly behaved* animals...and well, okay, for the real story you'll need to replace romantic with hectic, add mostly before wonderful and you can probably guess about the teenagers and animals. But hey she loves to read great romance stories and when life lets her, she scribbles a few of her own.

Also by Rachel Clark

Ménage and More: *No Use By Date for Love*

Ménage and More: *Accidental Love for Three*

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