



This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental and beyond the intent of either the author or the publisher.

Love Bites

BBA

An imprint of Torquere Press Publishers

PO Box 2545

Round Rock, TX 78680

Birds of a Feather Copyright 2008 by Dianne Fox, CatsEye Copyright 2008 by C.C. Bridges, Marked Copyright 2008 by BA Tortuga, Oliver's Famous Clam Chowder Copyright 2008 by Erin O'Riordan, Plus One Copyright 2008 by Camren August, Quittin Time Copyright 2008 by BA Collins, The Regular Copyright 2008 by Giselle Renarde, Tilt a Whirl Kisses Copyright 2008 by Vic Winter

Cover illustration by Stella Price

Published with permission

ISBN: 978-1-60370-414-4, 1-60370-414-0

www.torquerepress.com

All rights reserved, which includes the right to reproduce this book or portions thereof in any form whatsoever except as provided by the U.S. Copyright Law. For information address Torquere Press, Inc., PO Box 2545, Round Rock, TX 78680.

First Torquere Press Printing: June 2008

Printed in the USA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Plus One by Camren August -	4
Oliver's Famous Clam Chowder by Erin O'Riordan -	16
CatsEye by C.C. Bridges -	39
Birds of a Feather by Dianne Fox -	63
Tilt-a-Whirl Kisses by Vic Winter -	81
Marked by BA Tortuga -	94
Quittin Time by BA Collins -	110
The Regular by Giselle Renarde -	130
Contributing Authors -	144

PLUS ONE

CAMREN AUGUST

Prologue:

Richard Banks stared at himself in the bathroom mirror, noting the scratches and bite marks on his chest and arms. He grinned ruefully as he reached up and wiped lipstick away from one of them. Looking closer, he thought he might even have a little razor burn on his chest and—he looked down—one thigh. Make up was definitely going to have to cover up some vicious hickeys. He looked like he'd spent the night fucking a pack of wild animals instead of just the two he'd left in the bed. He looked marked, claimed, owned, and he couldn't have been happier.

The door to the dressing room slammed open, banging against the wall.

"So, you're the son of a bitch that's gonna come between us!"

Ritchie looked up to see a tall, thick-chested blond heading toward him with a frown. He froze for a moment, his mind running rapidly over ex-girlfriends, not that there had been that many. Then he realized who the guy was, a moment before the slender, dark-haired woman popped through the door, rolling her eyes as she took in the scenario.

"Oh my God! Please ignore him; sometimes he has problems with reality."

He stood up as Antoinette "Please, for the love of God, call me Toni" Dubon made her way over, moving between them and offering her hand with the same smile he'd found so captivating when he first met her that morning. He'd tested for the role with her reading opposite him, and it was easy to play lovestruck with her on the other side of the words.

"Ritchie, right?" When he nodded she continued. "It's nice to see you again. And this big lug with me is Trey Whitman."

"Otherwise known as Carter Haywood, the guy whose wife you're going to be banging." There was a low drawl in his voice that reminded Ritchie of every cowboy movie he'd ever seen. As a matter of fact, so did Trey himself. Large-framed, tanned, and with a wide-open grin, he looked like he should be riding the range with Randolph Scott or something, not pounding the boards in

New York City. Toni backhanded Trey in the stomach, drawing an 'oof' from him and a grin from Ritchie.

Ritchie held up his hands in a conciliatory gesture. "But only on the show."

Trey nodded, grinning as well as his large hand engulfed Ritchie's. "Damn straight!"

That first meeting set the tone of their relationship. Toni and Trey took him under their weird, funny wings. They'd both been on the show for years, Toni since she was ten and Trey since he was seventeen. They'd also both left and come back several times, so they knew the ins and outs. Who to suck up to—the catering crew, make up and the writers; who to ignore—the bitchy diva that had been on the show since it started forty years ago; and who to watch his back around—the gossip, cutthroat leading man. Ritchie appreciated not having to feel his way blindly along. He also appreciated making new friends so quickly. His college friends were scattered far and wide, making their way in the big bad world, and his New York friends had really been Sasha's, as he'd found out when they broke up.

Over the next few months, the three of them became pretty much inseparable. They worked their schedules to have lunch together whenever they could, met after work, and spent most weekends hanging out. On their show, Trey's character was mature and level-headed, and Toni's character was a wild child, always coming up with crazy ideas and getting into trouble. In real life, Ritchie found it was just the opposite. It was always Trey with a new scheme or joke, the twinkle in his eyes inviting you to play along, and Toni with the voice of reason and caution. As scripted, however, he was somewhere in between, and somehow it worked for them. Ritchie hadn't fallen into such a quick, easy friendship since he was a kid.

"So, when are you going to ask her out?"

"What?" Ritchie looked up from his script to frown at Trey. They were sitting, watching Toni weep on cue for the fifth time as 'Shara' confronted her mother about trying to sabotage her relationship, and waiting for their own scene. He got an exasperated sigh in return.

"Out. Date. The two of you?"

"I'm not."

"Why not? She's gonna say yes."

"What are you? Her pimp? Look, I like both of you and no way I want to get in the way of this weird 'thing' you've got going on." Their 'thing' was a freaky off/on relationship they'd had since they were teenagers. According to Toni, when they were a couple, it was great except for the part where they fought like Democrats and Republicans, and made decisions just as bad. When they weren't a couple, they managed to be the best of friends.

Trey slapped him on the shoulder. "Don't worry about it, son. You have my permission." He let all of the good ole Southern boy he used to be slip into his voice.

Ritchie rolled his eyes. "I don't need your permission, 'Hoss'."

"Well, apparently you do, because you haven't asked her out yet. Don't tell me it's because you don't want to. She's hot." He leered comically, his expression reminding Ritchie of the old cartoon wolf.

"You're a freak, you know that, right?" Ritchie shook his head and went to get a last minute touch up before the cameras rolled. He couldn't help thinking about what Trey had said while Cherry blotted and dabbed, though. He didn't need permission exactly, but Trey was his friend and he didn't want to mess that up either. Yeah, Toni was a hottie. He'd wanted her when he first met her, dressed in simple jeans and a tee that hugged her slender curves, and grinning up at him with bright, hazel eyes. He'd always had a thing for the girl next door look. So now, Trey seemed to be okay with it and he'd said that Toni would say yes. Ritchie just had to work up the nerve to ask her.

In the end, all his planning and cheesy pick up lines were wasted, because Toni asked him out. He wondered if she'd gotten the 'Trey Whitman seal of approval—so get off your butt and do it already' speech as well. Whatever the case, before he knew it, they were a couple. Ritchie wasn't sure what he'd expected, but Toni was the easiest relationship he'd ever had. They went on a few traditional dates—dinner, the movies, that type of thing. But mostly the three of them still hung out. And Trey was true to his word, seemingly not bothered at all by the two of them as a couple.

Truthfully, things weren't that different from when they weren't a couple, except for the sex. There was lots and lots of sex, which was another surprise. It wasn't like he had a lot of experience—a few semi-serious relationships in college and Sasha, his 'New York' girlfriend, which was how he always thought of her—but he'd never been with anybody as enthusiastic about fucking, and hand-jobs and blow-jobs, and being eaten out, as Toni. There was a little part of him that couldn't help but wonder if she had been like that with Trey, couldn't help but think about what they had been like together—he mostly tried to ignore that part.

Ritchie was the only one without a roommate, so, even though his apartment was so tiny it didn't seem like it would fit one person sometimes, the three of them wound up spending most of their time there. Trey would camp out on the couch and Ritchie and Toni would be in the bedroom, frequently fucking as quietly as possible, so Trey wouldn't hear. Something about straining to be quiet while she swallowed his cock, or reaching a hand up to cover her mouth and muffle the moans when he slid into her, something about knowing that Trey was twenty feet away, maybe listening, made those nights especially intense.

Toni was already half asleep, stretched across the seat, butt in Ritchie's lap, and legs spread over Trey, when the cab pulled up to the curb. They'd had dinner, and then caught a late movie.

"Are you sure you don't want to come back with us?"

Trey shook his head. "Nah, I'm good. I've got an early call in the morning. And no offense Ritchie Rich, but your couch ain't the most comfortable thing in the world. Besides, the two of you don't need me cramping your style." He grinned. "You might want to wrestle naked in the living room or something."

Toni opened her eyes, kicking at Trey with her bare foot, her shoes having bit the dust as soon as they got into the car. "Fine, go sleep in your comfortable bed, then. See if we care."

He laughed, shaking his head, and got out. He leaned back into the window. "Off you go, kiddies. See you tomorrow."

Watching him get out and go up to his own apartment felt so weird—almost wrong—that Ritchie realized just how much time the three of them had been spending together. As Toni curled back into him and the cab took off, he closed his own eyes, trying to ignore the feeling that they were leaving something behind.

Ritchie flew back home for a couple of days for his mom's birthday, and spent most of the time on the phone talking to Toni or Trey or both. He missed New York, and them, more than he could ever have imagined a year ago. When they met him at the airport with a huge sign, balloons, and a stuffed gorilla, he felt more at home than he had returning to the place where he grew up. He laughed as Toni jumped into his arms, raining kisses over his face like he'd been gone months instead of days, and he was still laughing as Toni moved aside and Trey grabbed him up in a bear hug, actually lifting him off the floor.

It wasn't the first time Trey had touched him, he was always quick to throw an arm over Ritchie's shoulder or give him a friendly slap on the back. They'd never had their arms around each other, though, and Ritchie was surprised to find it gave him a strange thrill. He wasn't...didn't think about guys like that, but this wasn't a guy, it was Trey, one of his best friends, and maybe it should have felt weird, but it didn't. When Trey put him down and backed away, there was a look in his eyes for a moment that made Ritchie think he'd had the same experience, but then it was gone and they were back to normal. And it wasn't something he dwelt on, or even thought about after that.

A month or so later, they were in the dressing room they shared, running lines for a scene he had later. Toni was still on set and Trey was reading Toni's part. She slipped in at some point, but she refused to step into Trey's spot, insisting on watching them instead, and heckling from the sidelines. When they got to the kiss, Ritchie leaned in playfully, and met Trey's lips in a brief peck. His mouth was warm, and softer than Ritchie thought another man's would be.

Toni hooted from the corner. "Come on, you can do better than that."

He blushed but rose to the challenge, pulling Trey into the type of dramatic kiss that soap romances thrived on. One minute they were still playing, and the next, Trey was flush against him, devouring his mouth, and Ritchie's cock was getting hard, pressing against the other man's stomach as he gave as good as he got. He moaned low in his throat as Trey ground his cock against Ritchie's. It took the gasp from the other side of the room to pull him back to his senses. Trey's eyes met his for a moment, filled with confusion, and something Ritchie couldn't figure out, before he cleared his throat and looked away.

Ritchie stepped back, flushing, and ran a hand through his hair. He was feeling pretty confused himself. "Oh Jesus! I'm sorry. That was...."

"Hot!" They both turned to stare at her. Toni's face was slightly flushed, her eyes bright, and she was breathing hard.

They all three jumped at the knock on the door, and Ritchie had never been so glad to be called to the set.

Trey disappeared somewhere after he was done shooting for the day, which Ritchie was actually grateful for, since he'd spent the entire morning trying to keep from staring at the other man. Not exactly easy when they had scenes together, but every time he looked at Trey, he was back in the dressing room, the feel of Trey against his body, and the taste in his mouth.

They probably needed to talk, because he didn't want something stupid and minor to fuck up their friendship, but he was glad for the reprieve, and a chance to figure out exactly what was going on with him. This had been the airport magnified a hundred times, and it wasn't going to just go away this time. It wasn't like he'd never had a passing thought that a guy was attractive--their business was filled with gorgeous people—but it had never been more than a thought until now. Until Trey. So, he needed some time to work this out.

Only, when he went back to their dressing room that afternoon, Toni was waiting for him. Despite what she'd said earlier, he expected her to be pissed or at least upset. What he didn't expect was for her to practically jump him as soon as he got in. She locked the door behind him, and then shoved him down on the couch, making quick work of opening his pants and freeing his cock, which, happily ignoring any ramifications, got hard immediately under her hands.

Toni didn't bother to get undressed, just slipped her panties off and straddled him, sheathing his cock with a soft sigh. She was very wet, and as she began to rock against him, Ritchie groaned with pleasure. He slid his hands up to cup her breasts, thumbs rolling and teasing the nipples through the thin material.

"I've been so fucking horny all day, just thinking about it. You and Trey."

Ritchie tensed, stifling a groan as his mind went back to that morning. For a second he could feel stubble under his hands and Trey's hard length against him again.

"I wasn't kidding, you know. Two guys, it's hot. All hard muscle and hard cocks, stroking each other, sucking each other." She began to ride him faster as her words excited them both. "Did you like it?"

"Yes."

She leaned in, nipping at his earlobe. "Were you hard?"

He nodded, groaning softly as she ground down against him.

"I want...." She trailed off as she clenched around him and shuddered to a climax.

Toni lowered her head, leaning against his shoulder until she caught her breath, and then she began to rock against him again. She leaned in to kiss him, nuzzling his ear. "I want to see the two of you fuck."

He moaned and thrust one last time, coming in warm pulses, her words ringing in his ears.

Ritchie didn't take Toni seriously, figuring it was just sex talk, something to get them both off. That was a mistake. He didn't know what she'd said to Trey, but somehow they found themselves, all three, at his place the next Friday night.

They all stood there staring at each other, and Ritchie fought back the urge to giggle.

Toni sighed in exasperation. "Okay, this is ridiculous." She grabbed the hem of her shirt and pulled it over her head, tossing it on the floor.

She put her hands on her hips, full breasts jutting out, and Ritchie lost any desire to laugh.

"Well? Ante up, boys."

Trey shrugged and began stripping off his own shirt, and Ritchie swallowed hard and did the same. Again they all stood there. He sighed. "Maybe there should be liquor involved."

Trey rolled his eyes. "Maybe this was a bad idea."

"Maybe you guys are pussies. Now get naked, damn it!"

Ritchie found her demanding tone actually kind of hot. Of course, the sight of her standing there in just a short skirt might have helped. He stripped off the rest of his clothes, neatly folding them and putting them on the chair, while Trey did the same. Ritchie surreptitiously eyed the other man's emerging body, taking in the thick, muscular chest, flat stomach and light sprinkling of golden hairs leading between his legs, where his thick shaft lay. Like Ritchie, he was already

partially aroused, and he grinned ruefully when he caught Ritchie's eye. It wasn't that he hadn't seen Trey's body before. They'd showered at the gym, changed in the same dressing room, but he'd never viewed it with the eye of a lover before. Even though he was nervous as shit, he'd had that firm body against him once, and shivered with pleasure at the idea of taking things all the way this time.

Ritchie sat down on the bed. Toni moved between his legs and pulled his head up for a kiss, her tongue running over his lips and sliding inside, and after a moment he relaxed into her. This was familiar. This was easy. The knowledge that Trey was watching only heightened all the sensations. He heard Trey move and opened his eyes, watching as Trey slid tanned hands down Toni's back and around, cupping her breasts. She moaned softly, and Ritchie's cock, completely hard now, throbbed at the sound. He reached down and slid his hand up her thigh and under her skirt. Like the bra, the panties were a no-show, and his fingers delved, finding her already wet. She moaned again, bucking against him a little as he slid two fingers into her, thumb plucking at her clit.

Toni tilted her head back to meet Trey's mouth while he kneaded her breasts, pulling and twisting the chocolate-colored nubs. Ritchie continued to finger fuck her with one hand, but the other found its way to his own cock, stroking slowly as he watched them. He could feel her slick walls tighten around his fingers before she shuddered, and came with a gasp.

"Jesus!" She twisted around and kissed Trey again, then turned back, leaning down to lick her way into Ritchie's mouth before shoving him backward onto the bed. Ritchie lay flat, thighs spread and cock jutting toward his stomach. Toni unzipped her skirt and stepped out of it, kicking it to the side. Then she knelt between his legs, running her nails up the inside of his thighs, which drew a gasp of pain/pleasure from him. She took Ritchie into her mouth, tight and wet around him, skill and familiarity combining to make him groan in delight, Trey momentarily forgotten. He closed his eyes, one hand slipping down to grab the top of her head, instinctively wanting to guide her. He didn't try, though, because he'd learned early that Toni moved at her own pace, and the faster you urged, the slower she moved.

Ritchie felt the bed dip, and he opened his eyes just as Trey stretched out next to him. He smiled, giddy and high with lust and pleasure, any sense of strangeness or oddity fading away completely. "Hi."

Trey smiled back, one large hand wrapping around the back of Ritchie's neck and pulling him in for a kiss. It started off tentatively, but soon enough Ritchie was enveloped by the dual sensations of Toni's mouth on his cock and Trey's tongue in his mouth. He bucked gently, one hand still resting on Toni's head, the other clutching Trey's arm. He could easily come like this.

Toni pulled off of him with a wet slurp, and Ritchie slid his mouth away from Trey and groaned in protest. She nipped the inside of his thigh, making him yelp and flinch.

"Don't be greedy." She stood up, climbing into the bed on his other side.

As soon as she pulled away, Trey rolled over on top of him, aligning their cocks. Ritchie could only groan again between pants as he thrust up against the unfamiliar weight, sensations overwhelming him. He'd been close to coming with Toni's mouth on him, and the feel of their cocks sliding together, precome and saliva slicking the way, quickly brought him back to the peak. He could hear Toni talking in the background and he tried to focus, but nothing existed but the feel of Trey against him, over him, around him—heat and friction and pleasure—until he arched off the bed and came and came, liquid pulsing over their stomachs. Trey groaned and cursed, speeding up his thrusts, until he followed a few seconds later.

They lay sprawled in the sheets, sweaty and sated for the moment. Toni leaned up on one elbow and gave them a smug grin. "I have the best ideas."

They never talked about it. Never sat down and said, this is what it is. But the first night after, Trey came up with them and they all three went in the bedroom. He never slept on the couch again. Gradually they adjusted to each other, found out the pleasures and hazards of making three work where there'd only been two. Ritchie kept waiting for it to get weird or uncomfortable, but it never did. If anything, it felt like this was just the next step to things; it felt natural, though he was sure that plenty of people wouldn't agree. He could imagine the dropped jaws if he wrote home about his girlfriend and his boyfriend.

Trey did a model twirl. "Well, what do you think?"

Ritchie took in the tailored black slacks clinging nicely to Trey's firm thighs and ass, the jacket that fit perfectly over broad shoulders, and the silk shirt that pulled out the startling blue of his eyes. "I think you look...." Ritchie slid his arms around him, pulling him in for a kiss. "Fuckable."

Trey grinned. "Yeah? Prove it." He pushed Ritchie back against the wall, and began rapidly unbuttoning the other man's shirt.

Ritchie had his own hands under Trey's jacket, pulling his shirt out of his pants. The undressing was hampered by the frequent stops for kissing, but they were soon shirtless, and Trey's hand was down Ritchie's pants, while his own pooled around his ankles.

"Starting without me, huh?"

They looked over to find Toni leaning against the door frame, arms crossed and a smirk on her face. They'd been so engrossed in each other, they'd never even heard her come in.

"Well, get over here, then."

She shook her head. "No, actually, I think I'll just stay here and watch."

"Seriously?"

"Oh yeah." She waved a hand. "Please, continue."

It would pretty much be sacrilege not to make an appearance at the cast Christmas party, but they hadn't exactly been kind to their clothes earlier, and neither of them kept dressy stuff at Ritchie's place. In a misguided attempt to save time, they decided to shower together, which of course led to other things. They wound up getting there well after the party had started. The plan was to stay long enough to be polite, and then head out. They separated to mingle, and of course Ritchie found himself stuck listening to Walter Connors, the set gossip, basically, well, gossip about anybody and everybody, whether Ritchie knew them or not.

"Whoa! Look at that."

He glanced over to where Walt was pointing and saw Toni and Trey standing under the mistletoe, engaged in a kiss that made his cock twitch in an almost Pavlovian response.

"Man, whose girlfriend is she, anyway? I mean, you know they used to be together, right?" Walt cocked a brow, and Ritchie could practically see the calculation behind the narrow, brown eyes. "You did know that, right?"

Ritchie glared at him, and he held up his hands in a conciliatory gesture. "Hey, look, I know you guys are the three Musketeers or Stooges or whatever, but I'm just saying, watch your back."

Walt wandered off, presumably to cause more trouble elsewhere, though Ritchie was sure this little story would be added to his repertoire. He turned back to the scene across the room. Toni and Trey were arguing now, though Ritchie could tell by their expressions that it was nothing serious. It ended up with Toni screeching as Trey chased her around for a while, only to catch her and swing her into a back bend that led to them waltzing across the room toward him, giggling.

Maybe he should feel jealous, but he didn't. He felt...connected, and that was the problem. He looked at them, and it was one of those moments of epiphany that he thought only happened in the movies. He realized that he loved them—was in love with them. His first thought was that he could stay like this forever. His second thought was 'fuck no!' because this was a fling, it wasn't serious, it was them playing around. It wasn't supposed to last forever, wasn't going to. Sooner or later Toni and Trey would get serious about each other again, and he'd be left with his nose pressed against the window. If he was lucky they'd stay friends, but he couldn't hope for more than that.

Lying in bed that night with them snuggled against him, he realized that the smart thing to do would be to get out of this now. He just had to figure out a way to do it that hopefully left them still friends. He spent the rest of the night awake, conscious of the weight of Toni's head on his shoulder, of Trey's arm across his stomach, savoring them, aware that this might be the last time he ever had this.

Ritchie had never broken up with anybody before—in his limited romantic life, he'd always been the dumpee, and he was beginning to feel a certain sympathy now for the dumper. It was hard. He'd look at them, and he could never get the words out. Finally, he decided the best thing to do was to just kind of ease out of the equation. He took a small part in an off-Broadway play that took up his evenings, canceled breakfast and lunch meetings frequently, and somehow managed to just...not be available. He met their questions and frustration with a feigned innocence, always suggesting they just go ahead without him. Meanwhile, he tried to gird himself for the time when they stopped asking.

Finally, Toni cornered him on the set while they were waiting for them to redo some props for their scene. "We need to talk, Ritchie."

"Okay, so talk."

She crossed her arms. "Don't play stupid, because I will have this conversation right here."

He believed her, too. Toni might be the mature, responsible one, but she was also the one with the most balls.

He agreed to meet them at the restaurant, because he knew anywhere private and he wouldn't be able to stick to his convictions. He felt the now-familiar pang when he watched them walk in together. Trey had an arm around Toni's waist, and she fit against him perfectly, with no room—certainly not for him, anyway—between them.

They sat down, Trey next to him and Toni across the table, and he had to look away at the pain in her eyes. It wasn't that they didn't care about him, he knew that, and he hated that he was taking the coward's way out, but his life was already wrapped up around them to the exclusion of pretty much everything else. If it was this bad now, after knowing them a year, after the three of them had been together only a few months, he could see what it would be like at the inevitable conclusion.

"What the fuck is going on with you? Why'd you go?" Toni cut straight to it.

"I don't know what you're talking about, I'm right here." Maybe he could bluff this out.

Trey shook his head. "Bullshit! We practically have to make an appointment just to see you, and even when you're with us, you're not with us."

He stared at them both miserably, and thought about lying, and saying he was uncomfortable or bored, or hell, even that he'd met somebody else. He thought about protecting himself even more, but they at least deserved the truth. None of this was their fault. "Because I'm in love with you."

They looked at each other, communing in that silent way they had that made him feel the years between them. Trey draped an arm casually across the back of the booth and it was all Ritchie could do not to flinch away. Touching either of them, even casually, would be a really bad idea.

"Which one of us?"

He shook his head, staring down at the table fiddling nervously with his silverware. "Both of you."

Trey sighed. "Well, that ain't exactly a reason to run off, son."

Ritchie finally looked up, glancing between them. "I just...I know the deal, okay? A good time all around and no hard feelings except it's more than that for me now, and I'm not blind. I know how the two of you feel about each other. I thought it was better to get out before it got too serious, before I got too serious."

"Ritchie, you're kidding, right?" Toni reached across the table and took his hand. "You know how it is with the two of us. We love each other yeah, but Trey and I are like day and night. You're the dawn that transitions it."

Trey snickered. "Real poetic, baby."

"Fuck you." She used her other hand to shoot him the finger.

Trey grinned at her. "Any time."

Ritchie couldn't stop the grin that escaped, couldn't stop the hope bubbling up, even though he told himself not to listen to them. Trey slipped a hand under the table and put it on Ritchie's thigh, squeezing lightly.

"She's right. We tried this off and on for like ten years and it didn't work, we didn't work—until you." He shrugged. "You fit, okay? You make us fit better. It wasn't a plan, you know that, but we...all three of us...we work."

Epilogue:

A small item appeared the next day on page six. It mentioned that the three of them, who were frequent companions, were witnessed in a very heated discussion at a restaurant, before leaving together. There was nothing noted about Toni's hand in his on the table, or Trey's on his thigh under it. Whoever witnessed the incident wasn't privy to the way they could barely keep their hands off each other in the cab or how quickly they got naked once the door to the apartment—his because it was the closest—slammed shut. And there was never going to be anything about how he woke up this morning, surrounded by them.

He trailed a hand over the love bites on his chest again, the slight soreness once more a pleasant reminder of last night. He was singing before he stepped into the shower, and he wasn't

surprised when, a few minutes later, the curtain was pulled back and Toni stepped in, followed by Trey.

Strong, soapy hands slid over his back. "We need to find a place with a bigger shower."

Sharp nails trailed down his chest. "And while we're at it, a bigger bed."

They could go apartment hunting tomorrow, but for now, he was enjoying having his lovers as close as possible.

OLIVER'S FAMOUS CLAM CHOWDER

BY ERIN O'RIORDAN

Natalie emerged from the bathroom, clean and naked. Matthew was right where she'd left him, sprawled out on the bed. His eyes were glazed. He seemed to be staring straight ahead, but if Natalie looked closely, she could see that he was actually staring at his still-erect penis. Meditating, she was sure, on how she'd just rocked his world. Or wishing that there was time for a second round, as she was.

Natalie went to her lingerie drawer and selected a matching bra and pair of panties. She put them on. As she walked over to her closet, Natalie kept her eyes on Matthew. How content he looked. She would have liked nothing more than to climb back into bed and press the entire length of her body against his. The smell of their mingled fluids still hung heavy in the air. She paused, considering burying her nose in the sweat-dampened black hair of Matthew's chest.

He surprised her by speaking. "When will the hags get here?" he asked.

She couldn't suppress a laugh. "Half an hour," she said. She took the gray silk sheath dress from its padded hanger and slipped it over her head. Dressed, she knelt on the bed and kissed Matthew's rough cheek. "But you shouldn't really talk that way about Martha and Jenny."

"I'll be ready," Matthew said, ignoring the second part. As he turned to face her, Matthew smiled, and Natalie's heart fluttered. That smile promised so much.

But what it promised would have to wait for later.

"I've got to check on the roast," Natalie said. Matthew nodded. Still hard as a diamond, he rose from the bed and took his turn in the shower.

Natalie paused to put on her makeup in the vanity mirror. Her long, chocolate-brown hair hung straight down, and she left it that way, adding only a choker of black freshwater pearls. She stepped into her shoes.

In the kitchen, she discovered that the roast was coming along nicely. It was tender, without a hint of dryness. She checked on the liquid refreshments next. The bottle of dark red liquid rested in the warmer, held at perfect body temperature. Natalie's mouth watered, but she resisted the temptation to pop the cork and take a taste.

Matthew came in moments later, dressed in a loose-fitting white shirt and black pants. He came up behind Natalie and wrapped his arms around her. She eased back into him, inhaling his scent.

"You look beautiful," Matthew said into her ear. "And the food smells delicious."

"I need to put out the appetizers," Natalie said, suddenly remembering. She didn't want to break free of Matthew's arms.

He let her go reluctantly, turning to stare out the window. It was a cloudless night, making the tiny sliver of the waning crescent moon stand out brilliantly. "Why did we make plans with Martha and Jenny tonight?" Matthew said out loud to himself.

Natalie knew what he meant. Nights like this were designed for lovers. She was meant to stay in bed with Matthew until the sun crested over the hills. She felt a small stab of regret as she lifted the black-and-white serving tray from the refrigerator.

She set the tray of neatly-arranged pinwheels of smoked salmon and soft white cheese on the bar. The doorbell rang, and Matthew went to answer it. Natalie followed him.

Martha and Kelly crowded the door, huddled together. Kelly clung to Martha, but as Matthew greeted them, Martha dropped Kelly's hand.

"Good evening, ladies," Matthew said. "Come in."

Martha, the taller and paler of the two, stepped in, smiling. She wore the feminine equivalent of Matthew's white shirt and black pants, accented with wide silver hoop earrings and silver bracelets. Her calf-length leather boots were polished to a high shine. She stretched out her arms toward Natalie, and Natalie embraced her.

"How have you been, Nat, dear?" Martha asked. "Anything exciting going on in your life? I mean, other than the plain fact that you've moved in with this—" She looked Matthew up and down. To most women, he would have seemed large and imposing. Martha, however, was built according to the Amazonian blueprint. "—This charming creature." She gave Matthew a carefully choreographed wink.

Natalie was about to answer when Kelly cleared her throat. The petite, gray-eyed woman with bluntly cut blonde hair wore a red pleather jacket and matching pants with a pair of Timberlands. She stripped off her jacket, revealing a tight white tank, and used Matthew as a coat rack.

Kelly sniffed. "You smell like a wet dog," she pronounced.

"It's nice to see you again, Kelly," Matthew answered through gritted teeth.

"Manners, Kelly," Martha said, narrowing her green eyes. "We are guests in Matthew's home, and you know that Natalie and I have been friends for ages. Whatever you're making for dinner, Nat darling, smells simply divine."

"It's a roast," Natalie said, as Matthew hung Kelly's jacket in the coat closet. Natalie thought she heard a low growl as Matthew's back was turned, but it may have been her imagination. "Please, make yourselves comfortable at the bar. Can I get you ladies something to drink?"

"Something to drink," Martha repeated thoughtfully.

"We never drink . . . wine," Kelly added, in her worst Bela Lugosi accent, as Martha smirked.

"I have something I know you'll like," Natalie said. She started to get it, but Matthew jumped up from his seat.

"Let me get it," he said. "I'll leave you three to catch up." He disappeared into the kitchen.

"Have a salmon pinwheel," Natalie said, pointing out the black-and-white tray. She took a seat across from Kelly. Kelly snatched up one of the appetizers with each hand.

"I just adore salmon," Martha said. "I just adore seafood in general. Tell me, Nat, have you and Matthew ever been to the shore together?"

Natalie blushed. "A few times," she said.

Martha and Kelly looked at one another conspiratorially. "There's a little bed and breakfast on the shore, only an hour's drive from here," Martha said. "It's called the Horned Owl Inn. Ever been?"

Natalie shook her head.

"Oh, you have to go there," Martha said with rising excitement. "They have a restaurant there—"

"They cater to our kind," Kelly pitched in.

"*Our* kind our kind, or *your* kind our kind?" Natalie interjected, to Kelly's utter bewilderment.

Martha was about to clarify when Matthew reappeared. In one hand, he balanced a tray of empty wineglasses. In the other hand, he carried the bottle. Natalie rose to collect the glasses from the tray, and set one at each place. Matthew uncorked the bottle and poured.

Kelly got the first glass. She eyed the red liquid, sniffed at it suspiciously, and said, "Is this pig's blood?"

Matthew made a low sound that could easily have been a growl. "No," he said through gritted teeth. "This is something special. A deer. Natalie brought it down herself, on our trip to the north woods, last full moon. A doe. She was pregnant."

Martha's and Kelly's heads turned toward Natalie in unison. "The doe, not me," she clarified. "Highly illegal for a human hunter, but I wasn't human at the time." Natalie and Matthew looked at one another and laughed.

Martha sipped the blood delicately. She swallowed, nodded, and took a full swig. "Delicious," she pronounced. "Congratulations, Nat. That must have been quite a kill."

Kelly considered the blood for a moment, then took a sip. Her face registered pleasant surprise.

"Thank you, Martha," Natalie said. "Now, I think you were about to tell me about that restaurant at the B&B on the shore?"

Kelly's face took on a far-off, dreamy look. "The Horned Owl Inn," she said. "The chef's name is Oliver, and he's one of us."

"*Us* us," Martha interjected. "Not *you* us." She poured herself seconds.

Kelly ignored Martha. "He makes the best seafood I've ever tasted," she said. "Oysters, mussels, Maine lobster. He also makes the most amazing clam chowder."

"Clam chowder?" Natalie said. "I thought you two were strict carnivores. Isn't clam chowder full of diced vegetables?"

"You're thinking of Manhattan style, with tomatoes," Matthew said. "There's also a New England style, which is full of potatoes."

"Not when Oliver makes it," Martha said, cutting off Kelly's reminiscence. Kelly seemed to dream on anyway. "Somehow, he knows exactly what you want. He made a pot from scratch, just for Kelly and me, heavy on the cream and clams and no plant life." She said these last two words disdainfully. "And somehow, he makes this dish both elegant and exquisite."

"You have to try it," Kelly said, wiping a bead of drool from her lower lip.

Martha reached across the bar and took Matthew's hand. "You must take Natalie there to try Oliver's famous clam chowder," she said. "Promise me you will."

Matthew looked over at Natalie. She gave him a slight nod of approval. "Okay," he said. "I promise."

The night went on, as smoothly as could be expected. When Martha and Jenny left, Matthew surveyed the dirty plates and glasses. "Let's leave this mess until tomorrow evening," he said. His big body settled into the soft suede of the living room sofa.

"Agreed," Natalie said, kicking off her pumps. She joined him on the sofa, pressing her face into his chest and breathing his masculine scent. "You so do *not* smell like wet dog. But try not to take it personally. Kelly just doesn't like men."

"Or pregnant doe's blood," Matthew added. "Or medium-rare roast. Remind me again why we're friends with vampires?"

"Martha is an old family friend," Natalie said, snuggling in closer. "She knew my great-grandmother."

"Are you sure I can't kill them?" Matthew asked, chuckling.

"No, that would be murder," Natalie said.

"How about during a full moon?"

"Not unless you want to start another interspecies war."

"How about just Kelly, then?" he said.

Natalie laughed. "Let's just go to bed," she said, looking up at the old grandfather clock. "The sun will be up in another hour or so."

Matthew looked at the clock and frowned. Natalie rose, and he followed her. In the bedroom, Matthew watched as Natalie took off her choker of freshwater pearls and dropped it into the chaos on the vanity table. Watching himself in the mirror, he slid the straps of her silk sheath dress from her shoulders and let the dress fall to the floor. He looked into her eyes.

Natalie found Matthew's black-brown eyes full of desperate longing. She loved that look in his eyes. The love and lust were so deep, they went straight to her heart, her clit, and the animal center of her brain all at once. She didn't know whether she'd moved closer to him or he to her. Natalie only knew that her body was pressed against Matthew's and that her mouth was locked onto his. She could still taste the doe's blood on his tongue. The primal taste aroused her. She sucked his tongue fiercely.

More than the taste, though, it was the feel of Matthew's tongue moving inside her mouth that made Natalie's heart pound. The logical part of her mind drifted away. She was consumed wholly by the pleasure that Matthew's mouth brought to hers.

He pulled away, kissing Natalie, lightly, on the lips. She felt his retreat as keenly as if a part of her soul had drawn away. Natalie opened her eyes, almost panicked.

"Turn around," Matthew said in a cool voice. Without thinking, Natalie obeyed him. His hot mouth, kissing its way down the hard muscle where her shoulder met her neck, was a relief. The kisses were light, then suddenly deep. She knew what was to come, and that made her want it all

the more. As his teeth sunk into the sensitive flesh, Natalie's body tensed. She found the sensation purely pleasurable.

Natalie knelt on the bed. Matthew unbuttoned his shirt, slowly, from the bottom up. "Do you remember the night we spent on the shore? Our first full moon together?" he said.

"Of course," she said. "We spent the whole night running, making love and chasing crabs in the sand." She reached up to help him with the buttons, but he turned her hands away. "We woke up face-down in the sand, human again, surrounded by all the little holes we dug trying to get those crabs."

"I woke up face-down in the sand," he said. "You woke up face-down on top of me, your head and shoulders resting on my back. You sat up and brushed the sand off your body, and I shook the sand off me. I put my arm around you." He let his shirt fall to the floor and took off his pants. "You trusted me. That was such a good, safe feeling. I knew then that I wanted to be your mate."

She sighed, eager for another taste of the sensation his bite had provoked.

"Let me make love to you like that again, like we did on the beach that morning," Matthew said.

He sat beside her, taking her in his arms. Natalie breathed deep, imagining that she could still smell the sand, the salt water air, mixed with Matthew's sweaty, aroused scent. He laid her on her back, kissing her lips and then her neck.

"Do you want to know what I remember about you that morning on the beach?" Natalie said softly into Matthew's ear as he kissed her.

"Yeah," he said.

"Your face," she said. "You have such an expressive face when we make love. Most guys have the same stony, lip-curling, eyes-shut, forehead-wrinkled face that could indicate either extreme passion or a killer leg cramp." He laughed. "Oh, but not you, Matthew. You're gifted with range that Lon Chaney would have envied."

Matthew laughed so hard that she thought he forgot what he was doing, but not quite. His fingers traced their way down the silky flesh of Natalie's thigh. He pushed her thighs apart, looking down at her sex with eager anticipation.

"Yeah," she said. "Like that."

But tonight, Matthew was so hungry, so voracious, so deliciously wild and wonderfully rough around the edges. She wanted to watch his face, but she couldn't keep her eyes open. The pleasure was too intense.

Natalie sat on the edge of the large, heart-shaped bathtub. It was almost full now. The door was closed, the fan turned off, and the room was filled with steam. She pulled her hair back into a ponytail and banana-clipped it to the top of her head.

Matthew knocked on the door. "Come in," Natalie said.

He stepped in through the steam, carrying a martini glass. Inside it was a pale orange slush, with a bright pink straw sticking out from the side. He handed it to her.

"What's this?" Natalie asked.

"A peach smoothie," Matthew said. "I made it with vanilla frozen yogurt."

Natalie took a sip. "Delicious," she said. "Thank you."

"Yeah," he said, taking a seat next to her on the edge of the tub. She set the drink down and looked at him. Matthew had shaved and was dressed to the nines. He wore his favorite smoke-gray suit with the red-and-pink striped tie she'd bought him.

Natalie sniffed. She smelled Matthew's aftershave, a thick, spicy, woody scent. Underneath it, Natalie smelled Matthew. He was in no danger of a transformation tonight, yet Natalie could smell the predator in him, alert, ready to strike. It both thrilled and frightened her.

"You're going out," she said without emotion.

Matthew nodded. He let the back of his hand fall across Natalie's naked thigh. She shivered at the gentle touch. "Are you upset?" he asked her.

Natalie shook her head, reaching behind him to turn off the hot water. "You know I'm not the jealous type, Matthew." She smiled, baring her teeth. "I'm just going to stay in, drink my peach smoothie, and read my book in the tub."

She didn't have to tell him that she'd just started her period. He knew. The moon was new, and just like last month, the new moon ushered in Natalie's bleeding. She was as regular as the phases of the moon, and in perfect synch with them.

So was he.

Suddenly, forcefully, Matthew lifted Natalie off the edge of the tub and onto his lap. He kissed her mouth violently, crushing her breasts flat against his chest. He took all that he wanted from her, drinking in her mouth, biting her lip until he tasted blood, and then kissing the blood away.

Matthew broke away, squeezing Natalie's body in a tight hug. He brought his mouth to her ear. "I love you," he growled fiercely.

Natalie's hands gripped his shoulders tightly. "I know that," she said. "Go." She laid a soft kiss on his lips.

"Really?" he said in a gravelly, raw voice.

"Really," Natalie said. "This is our regular thing now, Matthew. The moon is new, I'm in the tub, and you're out on the prowl." She got up from his lap, stared down at him for a moment, and stepped into the tub.

He laughed nervously. After one more deep, searching, penetrating kiss, Matthew was gone.

He came home early in the morning, in daylight, just as Natalie was settling down to sleep. His suit was rumpled, and he needed to shave again. He went straight to the shower. When he crawled into bed beside her, Natalie no longer sensed the predator. His scent was muted, calm.

Natalie never asked Matthew where he'd been, or whom he'd been with. It didn't matter. She was being sincere when she said that she wasn't the jealous type. Besides, it wasn't as if werewolves could pick up human diseases. At worst, he'd met another werewolf and picked up a few fleas. For Matthew, Natalie could put up with a flea collar.

The water was hot, but pleasantly so. No longer hot enough to scald and redden tender flesh, it suited Natalie just fine. Jasmine-scented steam rose to Natalie's nostrils, filling her lungs, making her light-headed and drowsy.

She opened her eyes as another wave crashed over her, disturbing this peaceful soak in the heart-shaped tub. Matthew was restless again. She sat up, cupping bath water in the palm of her hand. She poured it down Matthew's chest and watched as the oil-slicked water cascaded between the black hairs.

"Hey," Matthew said, "I thought we agreed; no splashing."

"You splashed me first," she said.

"Not on purpose," he argued. "I was just changing positions. I can't help it if this tub isn't quite big enough for the two of us."

"Don't blame the tub," she said. "We'd be fine if you weren't so restless. Are you ready to get out, or what?"

"I'm ready to get out," he said. He looked through the glass-block window, spying the near-full moon through the trees.

She lifted herself from the tub and sat on the edge, dripping. The cool surface felt good after the heat of the bath. Matthew chivalrously stood and reached a towel for her.

"Want to sneak into the zoo again?" Natalie asked him. "We could chase the gazelles around the enclosure . . ."

Matthew smirked, wrapping himself in a towel. "Two nights from now, maybe. It isn't as much fun when you're human." He looked in the mirror, briefly, then looked back at her. "I had a different idea, actually."

"Oh yeah?" she said, hanging her wet towel back on the rack. "What's that?"

"Road trip," he said. "To the shore. I can't stop thinking about it, ever since that night Martha and Jenny were over. I keep remembering how it felt that morning, waking up beside you on the beach, making love in the wet sand with the tide washing over us."

"And the night before," she added dreamily. "Running wild in the moonlight."

"Catching crabs," he said. She looked at him funny, so he said, "I mean, chasing crabs around in the sand, digging them up, eating them. Nat, let's go to that B&B the hags were talking about."

"You really shouldn't call them . . ."

"I know," he said. "But that's not the point right now. We need to get back to the beach, Nat. I need to find out if that clam chowder is as good as they say it is."

"It's already one in the morning," she reminded him. "By the time we find the place, it'll be close to four."

"I know," he said again. "Dangerously close to sunrise. I know it sounds kind of crazy, Natalie. I know it might be a complete waste of time, but I really need to get out of the house, and I think we should go tonight."

He looked at her, his black-brown eyes shining with the promise of mischief. There it is again, Natalie thought. The predator. And the predator couldn't be reasoned with.

"Okay," she said. "I'll get dressed, and we'll go."

Matthew pulled her to him and planted a soft kiss on the top of her head. "That's my girl," he said.

Natalie laughed. Matthew let go of her, and she wandered into the bedroom to pick out a t-shirt and skirt. Being nocturnal saved them from suffering most of the heat of the summer days, but still, it was a hot night. She chose a plain black tee and her flirty, too-short, green plaid schoolgirl skirt. It was perfect for the beach.

"I love that skirt," Matthew said, pulling on his favorite light blue button-down. "Your ass looks great in it."

"Thanks," she said. "Why don't you wear those black cotton shorts?"

"I thought you said they were too tight on me."

"I did," she said. "I didn't say I didn't like it." He smiled, showing just a bit of fang.

A quick Internet search turned up the location of the Horned Owl Inn, complete with driving directions. Natalie printed out the map, and they got in Matthew's car. Taking the interstate, they headed north until they found the obscure county road that would take them east, to the Inn. Or so they thought. It turned out that Matthew had confused County Road 19 with State Road 119, and they were lost for almost an hour. By the time they pulled into the Horned Owl's parking lot, Natalie could sense that the sun was about to break over the vast, black ocean.

"We're too late," she said quietly, as Matthew walked around to her side of the car.

He put his hand on the small of her back. "No," he said. "It's still dark. There's still time."

The Horned Owl Inn was a three-story historical home in the grand Victorian style. On the parking lot side, all the windows were heavily shuttered to keep out the sunlight. The house had a wide, screened porch. Through the patterned art glass of the thick, oak double doors, they could see the sleepy-looking attendant, a young woman, sitting at the front desk. Natalie looked up at the two enormous brick chimneys and imagined the fires roaring on a chilly night.

"It looks cozy," she said.

Matthew nodded. "Let's walk around to the beach side," he said. They followed the battered oak boardwalk around to the ocean side of the house. On the ground floor, there was another set of heavy oak doors, leading out to a partially-enclosed porch that joined the boardwalk. The second and third floors each had terraces, adorned with ornate gingerbread woodwork. The windows were open on this side, letting in the night breeze.

"I'm guessing the vampires get the rooms on the other side," Matthew said. "I wonder how we get to the restaurant?"

"There," Natalie said, pointing out a faded wooden sign where the boardwalk ended and the sand began. Its white letters were half-hidden behind overgrown beach grass. As she approached, though, Natalie could make out the words "Oliver's Café," and an arrow pointing them back toward the parking lot.

Matthew took Natalie's hand and led her back to the lot. Only then did they notice the windowless, dome-shaped, metallic building, unconnected to the Horned Owl Inn. The neon sign flashed "Oliver's" in red letters.

Cautiously, Matthew pushed open the heavy door. Natalie followed him into the blackness inside, leaving them in a narrow hall. Making their way slowly, feeling the walls as they went,

Natalie and Matthew found a second door. Natalie pushed and heard the sound of sleigh bells; they hung from the interior side of the door.

Once inside, Natalie and Matthew found themselves alone in a round, dimly lit dining room. Eight tables of various sizes were spread throughout the room, each with a gleaming white tablecloth and a set of chairs clad in red vinyl. On the far side, a set of swinging doors indicated the kitchen.

"Should we sit down?" Matthew asked, looking at Natalie.

"We're closed."

Natalie and Matthew looked around, trying to determine where the woman's voice had come from. Suddenly she was there at the kitchen doors. Dressed in a pink-and-white uniform, her stark white hair done up in a bun under a hairnet, the old-fashioned waitress seemed to be at least seventy years old. She gave Natalie and Matthew a good, hard look. She addressed them as if they were children, and perhaps a little slow. "I said we're closed. We'll open again in a few hours, when the relief cooks come in. Oliver's had a very busy night, and he's exhausted."

"We're friends of Martha and Kelly," Matthew said hopefully.

"I don't care if you're friends of Martha Washington," the old woman said. "We're closed."

Matthew looked at Natalie as if in apology. She shrugged. "We'll get a room at the inn," she said. "Maybe Oliver will have had his rest in time for dinner. After the sun goes down." She said these last words carefully, scanning the waitress's face for any sign of recognition. There was none.

They were just about to leave when Natalie heard soft footsteps. She turned to see a young man standing beside the elderly waitress. He wore a stained white apron and chef's hat. Surely this was Oliver. Oliver didn't seem to be any more than seventeen, though it was impossible to tell for sure. He had very short black hair, long sideburns, and uncommonly bright green eyes. He wasn't exceptionally handsome, but there was something compelling about him.

"Agnes," Oliver said. His voice was not loud, nor particularly deep, yet it commanded attention. "You didn't tell me that we had guests, Agnes."

Agnes seemed a bit confused. She shook her head. "I was just coming to get you," she said.

Oliver nodded. "You can go, Agnes. I'll serve them myself."

Still looking as if she needed to collect herself, Agnes began to untie her apron as she went into the kitchen. "I'm sorry about that," Oliver said, leaning against the nearest table. "Agnes is only human. She wouldn't recognize a pair of werewolves if you bit her on the ass."

He laughed at his own joke. Natalie thought, briefly, that it wasn't Agnes's ass that she'd like to bite. Oliver was shorter than Matthew by a head. Natalie was tempted to think of him as thin, but no, he was simply composed entirely of lean muscle. From where she stood, looking at Oliver from the side, Oliver had a very nice ass.

"Sit down," Oliver said. "Please."

Matthew pulled out a chair for Natalie, but Oliver said, "Not there. Not at the smallest table. There wouldn't be room for an appetizer and a drink." The couple sat down at a table with room for four. Oliver came closer, close enough to press his hip into the tabletop. Natalie breathed in, analyzing the scents of fresh seafood, spices, and very male vampire that clung to Oliver. Matthew's familiar scent came to her as well, and the mixture made her feel a bit light-headed.

"I'm never too tired to cook for your kind," Oliver said. "Werewolves are my favorite customers. Do you know why?"

Matthew shook his head.

"Because you're omnivores," Oliver said. "You have the sophisticated palates of modern human beings, and the raw instinctual thirst for blood of ancient predators. No ingredient is off the list. It brings out my—" He paused, looking Natalie up and down. "—Creativity."

Natalie glanced over at Matthew. The proximity of another male, especially one who was showing signs of interest in Natalie, should have triggered jealousy in him. If Oliver persisted in eyeing Natalie as if she was on the menu, Matthew would growl a warning— and then strike. But Matthew didn't seem to notice the special attention that Oliver was paying to Natalie.

In fact, as Oliver crouched down beside Matthew to look him in the eyes, Natalie got the impression that Oliver's interest in the two of them was omnivorous as well. Far from being threatened by this, Matthew looked interested.

"Appetizers," Oliver said suddenly, laying his palm down flat on the tabletop. "You like oysters, I think."

Natalie had often wondered, through the years that she had known Martha and Kelly, if vampires could read minds. Oliver concentrated on Matthew intensely. He seemed to be scanning Matthew, flipping through his pages, searching. If Matthew found the scan unpleasant, his face didn't show it. From the fluttering of Matthew's dark eyelashes, it seemed to her that he was rather enjoying it.

"Raw," Oliver concluded. He rose, slightly, bringing his mouth very close to Matthew's ear. Natalie had to listen very hard to hear him say, "You like the taste of the sea, how the salt water gets inside living things and makes them . . ." Natalie couldn't tell whether or not he'd finished the sentence. Oliver's voice was too soft.

Now he turned his uncommonly bright green eyes back to Natalie, and she breathed deeply. Matthew reached across the table and took Natalie's hand, squeezing her fingers in his palm. She felt how rapidly his heart was beating.

"But not for you," Oliver said. "You like raw oysters, but they're not what really does it for you." His stare was intense. It was only a stare, though. Only Oliver's eyes, looking into hers. She relaxed. It wasn't as though she could feel his mind moving inside hers. "Oysters casino? No, that's not it. Something even more exotic. Oysters Rockefeller. It's the anisette that reminds you of something."

Natalie swallowed. She had always loved oysters Rockefeller. And the sharp black licorice taste of anisette did remind her of something . . . of being a teenager and, together with her sister, raiding their parents' liquor cabinet. Anisette tasted like forbidden delights, like a secret and dangerous joy.

Oliver nodded. "I'll be right back," he said. He went into the kitchen.

Matthew got up from the table, coming to sit in the empty chair beside Natalie. He pulled the chair close to hers and gripped her hand tightly once more. "What the hell just happened?" he said. "Why do I get the feeling he was doing more than just taking our order?"

"We didn't tell him what we wanted," she said. "He read it out of our minds, or something. He made me remember things that I hadn't thought about in years."

"Yeah," Matthew said. "He made me remember things, too. Nat, is it cold in here?"

"No," she said. She hadn't noticed until just then that her skin was covered in goose bumps. "What did he make you think about, Matthew?"

"You," he said. "The taste of you, that morning on the beach. Kissing you, licking the salt water off your skin."

Matthew didn't ask Natalie what Oliver had reminded her of. Instead, he pulled Natalie's chair even closer, so close she was practically sitting on his lap. Matthew pressed against her, snuggling up to kiss her ear. Natalie felt the hammering of his heart. His tongue lapped her earlobe, slid down her neck. His teeth sunk into their favorite place, that delicious hard knot of muscle between her neck and her shoulder. He purred a pleased growl in her ear.

Natalie stroked Matthew's chest through his thin shirt. Her hands dropped to his smooth, hard belly. She wanted to open his shirt and feel that naked belly pressed against her, basking in his incredible heat.

Then she remembered where she was. They were alone, for the moment. But Oliver was lurking somewhere, nearby, in the shadows of the kitchen.

Matthew knew no such restraint. Underneath the table, he stroked his way up her thighs and busied himself under her skirt. She closed her eyes and let the feverish sensation wash over her. All at once, he was deep inside her, penetrating her with two fingers. Her body shook, stunned and delighted by the sudden intrusion. Matthew worked those fingers skillfully, reaching all the spots that he knew would drive her crazy. She bit her lip and came quietly.

Matthew withdrew his fingers. Natalie didn't have to open her eyes to know that he'd wanted to taste her. He sucked first one finger, then the other.

Natalie breathed in. She smelled her own juices, then Matthew. Then Oliver. She opened her eyes. Oliver stood on the opposite side of the table, intimately close, hip touching the tabletop. He carried a silver tray of raw oysters, oysters Rockefeller, and two vodka martinis with lemon twists.

"For the lady," Oliver said, setting a drink and the oysters Rockefeller in front of Natalie. She straightened in her chair.

"For the gentleman," Oliver said with a sly wink. Matthew pulled his middle finger out of his mouth and tried to look dignified as he took the martini glass from Oliver's hand.

Oliver sighed, sounding pleased. "I'll be back in half an hour with the main course," he said. "The clam chowder. I apologize for the wait, but you see, I have to make each batch from scratch." He lingered for a moment, then turned away and was gone.

Matthew turned to Natalie, after he'd downed half his cocktail. She sat beside him, looking dazed, inhaling the fragrances of oysters, spinach, bacon and anisette, a strong and heady mix. Natalie couldn't wipe the deeply pleased smile from her face. Her mouth watered, but she took a moment to savor before she dug in.

Matthew sniffed at the raw oysters, wet and shimmering in the dish.

"Don't you trust them?" Natalie asked him, gesturing at the raw oysters with her fork.

"That's not it," he said. "The oysters are fresh and delicious. It's . . . it's the way Oliver makes me feel."

"How does he make you feel?" she asked, though her senses already told her. Both Oliver and the oysters had the same effect on Natalie as they had on Matthew. Oliver and his cooking aroused more than hunger.

Matthew took an oyster shell and sucked the flesh from it. "When he made me remember that morning on the beach," Matthew began, slowly, "It felt like it was happening all over again. I could smell you there, Nat. I could taste you. And then . . ."

"What?" She took another mouthful of hot, sinfully delicious oyster.

"I remembered it wrong," he said, almost reluctantly. "Instead of remembering you, I started to think that I was on the beach with—" He laughed to himself.

"With him," Natalie finished for him. She put her hand on Matthew's arm to reassure him. "We can't help our appetites, our cravings," she said. "They just come to us unbidden. We can't control what we want." She raised her eyebrows. "But, you know, sometimes things that aren't usually on the menu can be part of a healthy diet."

He grinned. "Are you suggesting that I should eat Oliver?"

Her hand moved from his arm to his thigh. "The other week, when the moon was new and you went out while I stayed home, I wondered where you went. I thought about what you could be doing. But I wasn't jealous, Matthew. I was just curious."

"Curious," he repeated, nodding. "I like that about you, Nat. Your inquisitive mind. I've always been a curious person myself." He picked up another oyster. "Want one?"

She nodded. He fed her a raw oyster, as she fed him one of her hot oysters Rockefeller. They sealed this loving gesture with a kiss. The time passed in a blissful haze as they slowly enjoyed the appetizers and finished their drinks.

As she took the last sip of her martini, Natalie felt satisfied and drowsy. She closed her eyes and leaned her head against Matthew's shoulder. Seconds later, she heard soft footsteps and smelled the mouth-watering combination of hot clam chowder and hot chef. She sat up.

Oliver set his tray down on a nearby stand. He passed out another round of vodka martinis with lemon twists, this time keeping a glass for himself. Instead of vodka, though, Oliver's glass was filled with warm blood. Cow, if Natalie's nose was correct.

"I hope you don't mind if I join you for a moment," Oliver said. "I just want to see that you're enjoying everything I've prepared."

He served Matthew first, setting the steaming bowl on a plate before him. The chowder was New England style.

"Not strictly a clam chowder," Oliver explained as Matthew took up his soup spoon. "I used quite a bit of fresh crab, too. It's very creamy, though. The way you like it." He and Matthew locked eyes, briefly. Then Matthew tasted the soup.

"Damn," Matthew said. Natalie actually thought she saw a little tear in his eye. "Kelly and Martha didn't even begin to describe how good this is," he said. "Not even close. I . . ." Lost for words, he took another bite. Oliver grinned triumphantly.

The smell of Natalie's soup was driving her crazy. As soon as Oliver set it down, she attacked it and ate greedily. Natalie's bowl of Oliver's clam chowder looked a bit different from Matthew's, though. While his was pinkish from the crab meat, hers was yellow.

"You also have pleasant memories of tearing into raw crab in the moonlight," Oliver said. "But you're not as easy to please as your mate. I had to dig a bit deeper."

The spicy soup did remind Natalie of something. It took a moment for the images to come, and when they did, they hit her like a tidal wave. Before she met Matthew, Natalie had loved a man named Sanjay. The blend of spices that Oliver used in Natalie's chowder, this cumin and curry and saffron and cayenne pepper, tasted just like the aroma of Sanjay's kitchen. Natalie's eyes welled with tears.

Matthew, it seemed, was too busy gorging himself on soup to notice. As Natalie glanced over at him, he'd picked up the bowl and was licking the bottom.

"No," Oliver whispered, his mouth dangerously close to Natalie's ear. "Don't remember how you and Sanjay broke up." Oliver barely laid a finger on Natalie's cheek, and all the sadness disappeared. Instead, she remembered sitting on Sanjay's kitchen counter. She was naked, her legs wrapped around Sanjay, making love. But no, she wasn't remembering Sanjay at all. She closed her eyes and imagined Oliver, moving inside her, in the warm, spicy comfort of Sanjay's kitchen.

Matthew growled.

The bite happened so suddenly, Natalie wasn't sure at first that it was really happening. Oliver struck with the precision of a cobra. His fangs sunk in deeply, but there was little pain. Only dizziness as Natalie realized that her blood was leaving her and flowing into Oliver.

He was torn away from her in one violent motion. There was a crash, loud enough to make her believe for a moment that the world shook. Natalie struggled to her feet. The table lay overturned, and Matthew and Oliver grappled on the dining room floor.

"Matthew, no!" Natalie shouted, cupping a hand over her bleeding throat. "He couldn't help it!" She didn't know how she knew this, but she knew it was true.

Matthew had Oliver pinned to the floor, and seemed about to throttle him. Natalie knelt beside them, trying to pull Matthew's hands away from Oliver's throat. Matthew let her win.

"Not my mate," Matthew said angrily. "You don't hurt her." He turned to Natalie, suddenly tender. He turned her head to one side and examined the damage. Natalie's neck bled freely. She tried to cover the wound with her fingers again, but the bleeding continued. She started to feel weak, and fell into the nearest chair.

"Let me close the wound," Oliver said urgently.

Matthew acquiesced, letting Oliver up from the floor. Natalie moved her hand away, shuddering as Oliver licked the wound closed. He started to lick away the spilled blood, but Matthew pulled him back.

"He didn't mean to hurt me," Natalie said. "He was just so hungry. They get so hungry this close to dawn."

Matthew looked at Natalie, then at Oliver. "It's true," Oliver said. "I'm so sorry, Natalie. I didn't mean to hurt you. I'm sorry, Matthew." He tried to catch Matthew's eyes, but Matthew looked away.

"No more tricks," Matthew said. "You've been screwing with our heads all night."

"No," Oliver said. "I've only been trying to serve you. You two have been screwing with me, whether you know it or not. You don't know how hard it's been to hold myself back. You don't know how badly I want the two of you." He reached out for Matthew's hand. To Natalie's surprise, Matthew didn't pull away. Their fingers intertwined. Matthew's nose flared as he tried to sniff out Oliver's intention.

"You don't touch her," Matthew said, looking at Natalie. "Not unless she gives you her permission. If you still need to feed, you take from me." Oliver's green eyes shown as he looked Matthew up and down. Natalie could almost feel his immense hunger.

Matthew examined the closed wound at her throat. He touched the wet blood on her black t-shirt. "You okay?" he asked her.

"Yeah," she said.

"I'll bring you some more soup," Oliver said to Natalie. "There's more on the stove."

"No," she said. "I'll get it." As she walked into the kitchen, Matthew still held Oliver's hand, though he looked uneasy.

Oliver's kitchen was stocked with supernaturally clean stainless steel appliances. The only evidence of food at all was the two pots of soup simmering away on low heat on the stove. She found a bowl and a ladle and served herself a generous helping of the yellowish, curried soup. She wished she knew where Oliver kept the vodka.

She returned to the dining room to find that the overturned table had been righted, though there was still clam chowder and vodka on the floor. Matthew was sitting, his black shorts and briefs hanging over the back of a second chair. Oliver knelt on the hardwood floor, between Matthew's legs. He drank from an artery in Matthew's thigh. Oliver's hand stroked Matthew's erection.

Natalie took a seat at the smallest table. She ate the clam chowder, watched, and listened. With a growl of pleasure, Oliver licked Matthew's wound closed. Without a moment's hesitation, Oliver's mouth moved from the bite marks to Matthew's cock. Matthew stroked Oliver's black hair gratefully.

Natalie held her soup spoon with one hand and reached into her skirt with the other. She'd never seen Matthew like this before: so dominant, and yet so vulnerable. She felt it in her clit. Just hours before, she wouldn't have believed how much it would turn her on to watch Matthew with another man.

She couldn't stop eating the clam chowder, though. Its Sanjay's-kitchen flavor, together with Matthew's increasingly fervent moans, were the perfect backdrop to the erotic images playing in her mind. She imagined the three of them on a blanket on the beach under the moonlight, she sucking Oliver off and tasting his semen while Matthew made love to her from behind. And occasionally, Oliver would lean in and steal a kiss from Matthew's lips . . .

Matthew cried out sharply, and Natalie knew he was nearing a climax. Oliver was about to get his dessert. Perfect timing, as Natalie was just about to reach her own climax.

Just then, there was a soft thud. Natalie opened her eyes. Oliver had dropped to the floor. He was asleep.

"What happened?" Matthew asked.

"It's the sunrise," Natalie said, laughing. "They can't help it. When the sun comes up, vampires go to sleep whenever and wherever. I once saw Martha pass out in the middle of eating a filet mignon. She might have drowned in *au jus* if we hadn't put her to bed."

Matthew laughed helplessly. Natalie dropped her spoon, stepped around the gently snoring Oliver, and took Oliver's place between Matthew's legs.

"No," Matthew said. "Not with your mouth."

Natalie nodded approvingly. She tugged off her panties and positioned herself in Matthew's lap. "You're so wet," he whispered as their bodies fit together. He tightened his grip on her ass and growled.

Natalie was surprised by Matthew's sudden aggression. He'd been so passive, almost submissive, to Oliver. Maybe that was why she so enjoyed this sudden role reversal. The pleasures of voyeuristically watching Oliver and Matthew together were still vivid in her mind. Now she imagined herself in Matthew's place, captive to the desires of a beautiful, but dangerous, stranger. She could only imagine how it felt to be Matthew at that moment.

Matthew reached up to pull off Natalie's blood-stained tee, and she took off her bra for him. As he suckled her nipple, Natalie closed her eyes tight and imagined that the gorgeous sensation that Matthew's mouth gave her breast was the same feeling that Matthew felt as Oliver suckled him. She moaned, dangerously close to her climax. Matthew then slid his hand between their intertwined bodies, down Natalie's belly, and found her clit. The gentle, but insistent, pressure of his fingers was all it took to send Natalie over the edge.

Matthew seemed to be trying to hold on, but it was no use. Soon Natalie felt his cock spasm inside her.

When they'd caught their breath and pulled their clothes back on, Matthew looked down at Oliver. "Should we leave him like that?"

"There was a hallway off the kitchen," she said. "Maybe he has a room where he can sleep during the day." She went through the kitchen door and explored the hall. She was pleased to find a dark little bedroom hidden behind a shelf of canned goods in what appeared to be a storeroom. The space was just big enough for the king-sized bed, covered in black sheets. "I found it," she reported back to Matthew.

Matthew lifted Oliver's limp body off the floor. Natalie held the kitchen door open as Matthew carried Oliver through. He laid Oliver's head on the pillow. Natalie took off Oliver's apron, hat, and shoes and covered him with the sheet. Oliver rolled onto his side, smiling.

"We should go," Natalie said. "That old waitress said that a relief cook was coming in. They probably have to serve bran flakes and bacon to all the human guests, and we don't want to stick around for that."

Matthew yawned and sat on the edge of the bed. "Bran flakes and bacon sounds good," he said. "I'm exhausted, Nat. I say we lay down and nap for a while."

"In his bed?" Natalie said. "Uninvited?"

Matthew stretched out beside Oliver, sharing his pillow. "If he were awake, he would probably have invited us. While he was drinking from me, I saw things inside his head. Things he wanted to do with you. Things he wanted all of us to do together." He gestured for Natalie to lie beside him. She turned off the storeroom light, then came to bed. Matthew wrapped his arm around her protectively.

"Really?" Natalie said. "What kind of things?"

"I'll tell you about it in the evening," he said as they settled into a comfortable, spooned position. It felt strange, to be hiding away in a stranger's bed. In a restaurant, of all places. But she trusted Matthew, and her body *was* tired from the early hour and the blood loss. Soon Natalie was asleep.

She awoke in the crook of Matthew's arm, her face pressed against him. She smelled Matthew's familiar, comforting scent. She smelled food—an entire day's worth, prepared and served while she and Matthew were sleeping. The day cooks made oatmeal, toast, coffee, clam chowder out of a can—ordinary human things, not deep-inside-your-brain things like Oliver made. The human guests had no idea what they were missing.

She smelled Oliver, awake and alert and drenched in sweat. Natalie never realized before that vampires could sweat.

Natalie lifted her head. Oliver's green eyes stared into hers in the very dim light. He smiled, hesitating for just a moment, the same moment it took her to realize that Matthew's other arm was around Oliver. Then he kissed Matthew's cheek. His kisses were gentle at first. As Matthew warmed to the attention, though, Oliver's kisses grew more fervent.

Oliver unbuttoned the top button of Matthew's shirt and kissed Matthew's chest. Matthew sighed, his eyes still shut tight.

Natalie lowered her lips to Matthew's. He opened his eyes, then he took his arm from around Oliver and devoted both hands to touching Natalie as they kissed. She shoved her tongue in his mouth with intense concentration. Oliver's tongue worked its way around Matthew's hard nipple. He gave the nipple a teasing little kiss, barely scraping it with his teeth, then unbuttoned the rest of Matthew's shirt. He looked up from the last of Matthew's buttons and said, "I'm sorry about last night."

"It wasn't your fault," Natalie answered. "It was the sunrise." She kissed her way down Matthew's throat and stopped at his collarbone.

With a sly smile at Natalie, Oliver ran his hand down Matthew's bare chest. He reached for the zipper of Matthew's black shorts. Matthew's eyes widened, but Natalie stopped him. "Mine," she whispered. Matthew groaned.

"I just want to finish what I started," Oliver said. He breathed deeply, reaching across Matthew to touch Natalie's arm. She was surprised by how good, how welcome his touch felt. "I just want to make you—both of you—feel good."

As Natalie unzipped Matthew's shorts, she remembered how Oliver's teeth had felt sinking into her neck. The pain, and the intimacy, of Oliver's bite excited her. She got a little thrill from the thought of her blood and Matthew's mingled inside of Oliver. Suddenly, she wanted very badly to see him naked. Oliver seemed to sense this, and stripped out of his white shirt.

Matthew helped her get his cock out. Thoroughly enjoying the ravenous look on Oliver's face, Natalie positioned herself on her side between Matthew's legs. She slipped the head of Matthew's cock into her mouth, then out again. "Join me, Oliver," she said.

Matthew put one hand on each of their heads as Oliver and Natalie took turns licking and sucking him. Natalie watched Oliver out of the corner of her eye. His lean, pale-skinned and hairless chest was more beautiful than she'd ever imagined. Unable to stop herself, she reached over and touched, gently, the skin over his ribs.

Oliver returned Natalie's feather-light touch, caressing her thigh. Good, Natalie thought, but I want more. Oliver, obviously pleased, got bolder, reaching up Natalie's skirt. He tugged aside the crotch of her panties and found her clit. Natalie gasped, amazed at the way Oliver knew exactly how to touch her, neither too rough nor too gentle.

She closed her eyes, breathing in the scent of Matthew's arousal. That familiar perfume combined with Oliver's exotic musk: cooking smells, the soup and the oysters, mixed with vodka, mixed with her own blood and Matthew's, and the earthy smell of Oliver himself. Together, the bouquet of smells intoxicated and aroused her. She could feel the moisture between her legs, just millimeters away from where Oliver's fingers worked her so skillfully. Her pussy ached, wanting so badly to be filled.

"Natalie, I want to be inside of you," Matthew said suddenly.

Oliver looked away, obviously disappointed. Matthew reached out and put his hand under Oliver's chin, forcing Oliver to look at him. "And I want you inside of me, Oliver."

Natalie peeled off her panties as Matthew crawled out of his shorts. She lay on her side, and Matthew faced her and pulled her to him. She kissed him until she could hardly breathe. Natalie was vaguely aware of Oliver's weight shifting on the bed. He seemed to reach for something under the bed, then come back with it in his hand. Some kind of lube, from the smell of it. The thought of what he would do with it excited her.

She wrapped her leg around Matthew, and he slid inside her easily. He lay still while she worked her body up and down, grinding into him. This felt so right. Matthew, her love, her life. She couldn't stop kissing his lips as her hips pumped against his.

She watched as Oliver finished undressing. Oliver pressed in on Matthew from the other side. Oliver felt his way across Matthew's chest, then reached out to fondle Natalie's breast. He pinched her nipple gently, and Natalie moaned. How right it felt that they were so intimately joined. Matthew's hips drew back slightly, and Natalie felt the rush of pleasure through his body as Oliver penetrated him. Oliver covered the back of Matthew's neck with great, hungry, sucking kisses.

"Yes!" Natalie cried out. "Fuck me. Fuck him!"

Natalie was on the verge of orgasm, but held on, wanting this feeling to last. She couldn't believe how it turned her on that Matthew—big, strong Matthew, her protector, her predator—was so vulnerable, so open. Totally hers, yet possessed by Oliver. Oliver, that stunning creature whose pale body she wanted so badly to know, explore, taste.

Oliver tenderly caressed Natalie's breast with the back of his hand. He lovingly touched his way down her ribs and the smooth hollow of her belly. Then, half tender and half forceful, he gripped her hip tightly, pulled her toward Matthew, pushing Matthew deeper inside her. Natalie could hold out no longer. She bucked her hips with every ounce of strength in her body.

"Don't stop," Natalie said breathlessly to Oliver. "Ride that ass. Harder."

Oliver obeyed her. Matthew's body rocked, and Natalie could tell from the ecstatic noises that escaped his lips that he was in the midst of the deepest pleasure. She held onto Matthew tightly as he came inside of her, growling, the predator that she loved so well.

Oliver couldn't hold out, either. He tried not to scream, and instead bit down on Matthew's shoulder. He drew blood, but Matthew didn't seem to notice. Oliver licked the blood away with long laps of his tongue, his eyes closed tight. Natalie wondered if the men had come as hard as she had. She wondered what Oliver's cock would feel like inside her, while his teeth sunk into her neck at the same time. She imagined her blood flowing into him as his semen flowed into her.

Reluctantly, they separated. Oliver lay on his back, staring at the ceiling, and Natalie settled back into the crook of Matthew's arm.

For a moment, all was silent except for their labored breathing. Then Oliver said, "Please tell me you're staying another night." He paused to catch his breath. "I'll make steak tartare and wild mushroom soup. I think I can swing a reservation for two."

"Sounds nice," Matthew said, laughing. "And then we can take a walk on the beach, Nat."

She nuzzled the dark hairs of his chest. "That does sound nice," she said.

Oliver sat up. "I have a shower here, too," he said. "I need to get cleaned up and get cooking. Will you join me in the shower?"

Matthew squeezed Natalie a little tighter. "Give us a minute," he said. "We'll be right behind you."

Oliver nodded and walked off. "You okay?" Matthew asked Natalie.

"Fine," she said. "More than fine."

"Did you like that?"

"Yeah," she said. "I never would have imagined you and me doing *that*, but I liked it."

He kissed her forehead. "Do you want to see him again?"

She wanted desperately to see Oliver again. Only the next time, she wanted to be in the middle. "Maybe," she said coolly. "After the next full moon."

Matthew opened the bathroom door and came in through the steam. Natalie sat up in the tub, and he handed her a glass. "What's this?" she asked him.

He sat on the edge of the tub. "Vodka martini," he said. "We didn't have any lemons, so there's no twist. Sorry."

She took a sip. "That's okay," she said. She looked up at him, dressed in those too-tight black shorts and a white button-down. He'd showered and shaved, and was wearing his spicy, woody cologne. He looked good.

"Natalie," he said, "you know I love you, right?"

She set the drink on the edge of the tub, stood, and leaned in to kiss him. She didn't want to get his clothes wet, but Matthew didn't seem to care. He hugged her to him, and they kissed.

"Tell Oliver I'll see him next week," she said.

"I will," he said, looking out the window at the new moon. "And I'll bring you back a cup of his clam chowder."

CATSEYE

BY C.C. BRIDGES

Jason knew how to appreciate a good view: perfectly-shaped pink lips, a narrow jaw with just a dusting of stubble, cute upturned nose underneath slanted cat-like eyes that flicked upward to gaze at Jason.

“What?” Cooper looked up from his books, the tip of his pencil eraser pulling at his lower lip.

“What?” Jason repeated.

“You’re staring at me.”

“No, I’m staring out into space, trying to deconstruct deconstructionism.” Jason quirked a grin.

He couldn’t help it; Cooper sat there looking so broad and manly, curled forward in the tiny library seat. Jason knew his crush had gotten out of hand, but it had been so long since he’d finally rid himself of Jack, that jerk. He caught himself thinking about Cooper’s hazel eyes, how they changed color depending on Cooper’s mood – dark when angry, blue when amused, green when mischievous. He couldn’t help but wonder what those cat eyes looked like when filled with desire.

“That will only help if the answer suddenly appears on the wall behind my head,” Cooper sucked the tip of his pencil into his mouth, pale pink lips caressing the little yellow stick of wood.

Jason shifted and adjusted himself; hopefully Cooper would assume the hard wooden seats provoked the movement and not anything else.

This isolated table in the upstairs corner of the library had become his place shortly after finding out he couldn’t check out a graduate carrel, but he could please put his name on a waiting list, thank you very much. Instead, he had found this room where the print indexes went to die. The only time he encountered anyone up here, he had startled the librarian removing a dead spider plant from the top of one of the bookshelves.

Jason had hoped to escape to his sanctuary one afternoon, only to find his table taken by one rather large excuse for a young man. He had paused in the doorway and stared at the individual sitting there, books and papers spread out all over Jason’s table.

He considered what to do: turn around and find another table, stand around and clear his throat annoyingly until the guy got the point; or sit across from him and attempt to share the table. Jason had opted for number three all those months ago, and from the moment Cooper looked up and grinned at him, he was lost.

Light filtered through the muted windows, turning Cooper's hair a golden red in the afternoon sun. He grinned, probably aware that Jason had entirely lost the thread of the conversation. Jason sat enthralled by those perfect dimples in Cooper's cheeks.

"You're a million miles away," Cooper said.

Jason could feel himself flush. He rubbed a hand over his face, hoping Cooper wouldn't notice. "Spent way too much time studying, man. These exams are killer."

"It's almost over," Cooper closed his own textbook. "You have to let yourself relax, dude. Staying up here all hours of the day can't be helping."

Jason shrugged. "It's one of the hazards of being a grad student."

He couldn't help the bit of laughter when Cooper blew an honest-to-goodness raspberry at him.

"You should come out to CatsEye with me and my girl this weekend," Cooper said after wiping the spit off his nose.

Jason stiffened. Cooper had a girlfriend. Jason knew that; he just always let himself forget. When Cooper sat across from him like this, it was like there was no one else in the entire world. Mike was right; all the good men were either taken or straight, sometimes both.

Of course, Mike, Mr. Committed Relationship himself, no longer had a reason to complain, living somewhere out on a ranch with his boyfriend. Lucky bastard, leaving Jason here to put the finishing touches on his PhD.

"Cooper, it's not a good idea," Jason told him. This wasn't the first time Cooper had invited him to the popular club. Jason didn't think he could drink and dance and be so close to Cooper's hot, sweaty body and not want more.

"Think about it, okay?" Cooper stuffed his pile into his backpack. Unlike Jason's meticulous filing system, Cooper just crammed his papers in wherever they could fit. "You need a break, man, before this breaks you."

"Cute," Jason said, tossing his pencil onto the table. He watched Cooper stride out of the room, long legs pumping. A guy that tall could lift Jason up against the wall, and Jason could wrap his legs around that slim waist.

He had several hours of studying ahead of him. Clearly, he required more coffee.

Jason spent almost as much time at Uncommon Grounds coffee shop as he did the library. Cheap coffee, free internet, what was there not to like? Before his daily fix of caffeine, he stumbled into the place, grunted out his order, and received some warm substance in return. He guessed they gave him his double espresso, but he couldn't tell until his brain had finished waking up. So he really shouldn't have been surprised when he turned and barreled right into someone at the end of the cashier line. That woke him up enough to apologize. "Oh, God, I am so sorry."

He looked down at the hot liquid pooling on the brightly patterned floor.

"Are you sorry on my behalf or the coffee's?" an amused voice asked.

Jason finally looked at the person he had trespassed against. Dark hair, smoky eyes, and a rack like two golden suns. Only after she cleared her throat did Jason pull his eyes away from those full breasts. Her grin could light up the entire coffee house.

"You owe me a double mocha latte." She reached out and pulled his espresso from his grip. "I'll take this for ransom over there." She slipped away, tucking herself in at one of the corner tables.

Jason stood there staring at his empty hand. What exactly just happened here?

Fifteen minutes and four bucks later, Jason had a steaming cup of too-sweet coffee in his hands to offer in return for his lukewarm espresso. He didn't really care, just gulped down the glorious caffeine.

"Addict much?" she flashed that grin again, a wide smile that lit up her entire face. She leaned back, one arm resting on the back of her chair, displaying the goods.

Jason forced his gaze up from pink, cotton-covered perfection. "Hey, I admit it." He tossed back his cup, then frowned down into it when he came up empty.

She reached out her right hand. "Lexi."

He took her hand, marveling at her strong grip. "Jason. I haven't seen you around here before."

"Never been. I always pass this place on my way to work, thought I'd give it a try."

"Didn't think you were a student." She didn't carry herself like any grad student he knew. Too confident, too darn sexy.

Could he get any more pathetic? Going from lusting after Cooper in the library to drooling over a random woman in a coffee shop? Talk about twice the opportunity for rejection.

"No, I'm a nurse, actually. I'm on the pediatric floor at St. Mary's."

“Do they make you wear the little white hats?” Jason grinned.

“Why, do you have a nurse kink?” she arched one eyebrow.

Jason felt himself flushing. He was so out of practice at flirting with women.

Lexi leaned over and placed one finger on his lips. “You’re cute. Bet you’re a grad student. English Lit?”

He opened his mouth in shock, and got a quick taste of salt and sweetness as her finger slipped past his tongue. Something mischievous took over and he licked her finger before he drew away. “You could say I’m good at my mother tongue.”

She laughed, and he laughed with her, caught up in the infectious sound. “I think I like you, Jason. Refills are on me this time.”

Jason never turned down free coffee, especially from such an attractive woman.

Two cups and an hour later, they were still sitting in the corner, laughing over something pointless. Flirting turned out to be just like riding a bike; Jason had hopped right back on and started peddling. Lexi had crossed her legs underneath the table, and teased the inseam of his jeans with her foot.

Jason swallowed. “As much as I’d like to continue, I have an appointment with my advisor...”

Lexi pulled a slim tube out of her purse, and uncapped it. She scrawled a number in scarlet across his forearm. “I have a feeling I’ll be seeing you soon, Jason.” She winked.

He watched her leave the café, finding the view from behind was just as nice as from the front. Nice, he liked his girls well balanced.

“I think you actually have to *read* the book to reap the knowledge.” Cooper tossed his backpack on the library table.

Jason kept his forehead squarely on his copy of *Self-Consuming Artifacts*. Maybe if he kept at it long enough the material would slowly seep into his brain. “Fucking Derrida,” he muttered.

He nearly leapt out of his seat when soft hands began to knead his shoulders. He got as far as sitting up, but Cooper kept up the gentle massage. “Cooper?”

“You’re so tense,” Cooper murmured, digging in to the tight muscles around Jason’s neck.

Jason groaned. Cooper’s hands were obscene. “God, you’re good at that.”

“That’s not the only thing I’m good at,” Cooper whispered, breath warm at Jason’s neck. He licked along the lobe of Jason’s ear.

Jason stiffened, undoing all of Cooper’s hard work. “Cooper, stop it.” Damn it, that was all he needed, Cooper screwing with him like this. He had just gotten his mind wrapped around the girl from the coffee shop, gotten his body to think in terms of curves instead of hard angles. And now this?

Cooper ignored him, soft lips making contact with Jason’s neck. He tilted his head away from Cooper, giving him better access. The gentle nibble turned into a full-on bite, Cooper sinking sharp teeth into Jason. When he began to suck, Jason bucked up, the sensation going right to his cock. God, he’d like to feel that suction somewhere else.

He reached up and clamped onto Cooper’s hands on his shoulders. “Dude, you have a girlfriend,” he managed to gasp out, holding on to a shred of dignity.

Cooper stopped sucking, giving Jason the chance to catch his breath. “If she was here, my girlfriend would be sitting in the corner directing....”

Jason pushed those strong hands off of him and managed to slide out of his chair. He moved so that the table was between him and Cooper, trying to gain control of his unruly body. Cooper looked bereft, staring at him with sad eyes, hair stuck up in all directions and face flushed a deep red. He bit his pink lips, and Jason wanted to crawl over the table and take that lower lip between his own teeth.

“I know you want me, Jason. I see you watching me when you think I’m studying.” Cooper started to walk around the table, in slow measured steps, like he was trying not to spook a wild animal.

Jason backed away, unable to take his eyes off of Cooper, who moved with predatory grace, eyes smoldering and heavy-lidded as he licked his lips. Jason’s back came up against something hard—a set of shelves—and he stopped cold.

“Am I wrong?” Cooper stopped just short of Jason. His arms darted out and grabbed the shelves behind Jason’s head, trapping Jason between them. “Tell me you don’t watch me. Tell me you don’t get hard every time I suck on a pencil.”

“Cooper,” Jason said, not recognizing his own voice. He never sounded so hoarse and breathless. “Yeah, Cooper, yeah....”

Then Cooper leaned down and kissed him, claiming Jason’s mouth, forcing his lips open and taking possession. Cooper sucked on Jason’s lower lip, then pressed his teeth down hard. Jason whimpered, hips arching for contact. Jason’s world narrowed to nothing but sensation, warmth at his mouth, heat pooling in his groin. All this, from nothing more than having his lip sucked.

“Make noise for me,” Cooper murmured. He dropped his hands to Jason’s waist, tucking them under Jason’s sweatshirt, his fingers sizzling against hypersensitive skin.

“Library!” Jason gasped as Cooper moved one hand to unsnap his jeans.

“Nobody comes up here.” Cooper smirked. He worked the zipper open, running his fingers up and down the hard line of Jason’s cock in his boxers. “But imagine if they did. Imagine if that librarian from the third floor wandered on up here.”

“The one with the mustache?”

Cooper chuckled. “Yeah, imagine her walking up here, seeing me backing you up against the books. Think she’d freak out? Maybe she’d shush us, then stand back and just watch. God knows you’re too darn pretty, all hard and flushed for me....”

He couldn’t believe he was standing there, about to get sucked off somewhere between Chem Abstracts and Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature.

Anybody could walk right in and see them. They’d see Jason flush against the stacks, his cock stiff and proud, hanging out of his boxers. They’d see Cooper drop to his knees, looking up at Jason under his long eyelashes, his cat-like eyes narrow and conniving. They’d watch as Cooper’s pink tongue darted out from his bow-shaped lips and tasted the head of Jason’s dick.

Cooper kept one hand on Jason’s waist, holding him still against the shelves, and with the other he gripped Jason’s cock. His entire pose—knees spread, head tilted, lips pouting as he continued to tease just the head—seemed designed to entice.

“You like to show off, don’t you?” Jason rasped.

“Oh, you have no idea,” Cooper snarked. Then he got down to business.

Jason tried to watch as long as he could. Cooper kept up the show, Jason’s cock disappearing between Cooper’s slick lips. He sucked hard, and used his tongue like a pro. Finally Jason clamped his eyes shut and slammed his head against the shelves behind him, knocking some of the heavy books back and onto the floor with loud thumps.

Jason rose up on his tiptoes, trying to get more of that delightful suction. It felt good, too good. He gasped and tried not to cry out. He was so close, almost there, if only....

Cooper lightly scraped his teeth against sensitive skin and Jason lost it, coming hard down the other man’s throat. He finally let go of the shelf behind him and sank to the floor, Cooper’s hands easing him down. Jason buried his face in Cooper’s neck, desperately trying to catch his breath.

“Yeah,” Cooper whispered, tilting Jason’s face up to kiss him. Jason tasted himself and groaned, his spent cock twitching a bit.

“I didn’t...you?” That was about as coherent as he could be at the moment, reaching for Cooper’s jeans. His fingers clutched wet fabric and Cooper winced.

“Yeah, I did.” Cooper pressed a kiss onto his forehead. “You’re so damn hot when you’re trying to keep quiet.”

“We wrecked the room,” Jason looked around, noticing his chair was turned over, and they were joined on the floor by several large red books. The entire room smelled strongly of old dust and come.

“Give ‘em something to wonder about.” Cooper pulled himself up and drew Jason with him. “God, I need a shower.”

“Don’t think you can get that in the library bathrooms,” Jason said, tucking himself back into his shorts and zipping up his jeans.

“I guess I’m done studying early,” Cooper grabbed his backpack. He unzipped one of the front pockets. “Listen, Jason....”

God, was this going to be one of those “nice fuck, but that’s all it was” talks? Jason really could have done without the guilt trip after the fact. He couldn’t regret the encounter, not even if it meant that would be all he shared with Cooper.

“Tomorrow night, come to CatsEye. We’ll be on the third floor.”

Jason snorted. “There is no third floor to CatsEye.” He hadn’t been to the club more than once, but he knew that much.

Cooper reached out, grasped Jason’s wrist and snapped a thick leather bracelet around it. Jason pulled his hand back and ran his finger over the stiff leather and the stylized tiger embroidered on the back. “What the hell...?”

“Show this to the bouncer behind the bar and they’ll let you up. Tomorrow, yeah? ‘Round ten?”

Cooper looked so hopeful. Jason could only nod. “Can’t wait.”

With one last kiss for the road, Cooper grabbed his pack and slipped out of the room. Jason looked around and figured he had some books to put away.

Thirty seconds in, Jason wanted to turn around and go home. Too many people filled the confined space of CatsEye. Too many bodies pressed against each other, heat and sweat rising in the dim light. He dodged a group of laughing girls, one of whom would have gotten him in the nose with her bottle of beer if he hadn’t ducked at the right moment.

Any other night he'd be at the bar stocking up on some liquid courage. His friends had tried dragging him out here a few times, but he never stayed more than an hour. Jason preferred to meet potential bed partners elsewhere, like the library.

Tonight he wanted to be sober for whatever this encounter with Cooper would be like. A mysterious third floor? A leather cuff as the entrance ticket? What exactly had Jason gotten himself caught up in?

This was a bad idea on so many different levels. Cooper didn't deny his girlfriend, didn't claim to be anything other than what he was. Jason liked Cooper, liked him too much. He couldn't risk his heart on another guy like Jack, who was only interested in his dick.

He wondered what Mike would do. Before he hooked up with Dan, he was all about taking stupid risks. Jason could almost hear his voice in his head, saying, "You never know if you don't try, man." He'd never thought of Mike as a role model before, but Mike was the one in a successful relationship, not Jason.

Jason finally made it over to the bar along the back of the club, resorting to shoving his way when his "excuse me"s were ignored. He raised his arm to get the bartender's attention, and to his surprise the man rushed right over to him.

"A guest pass, eh? Go on up!" He jerked his hand to a big man standing in front of a long red curtain behind the bar. The guy nodded and drew aside the heavy fabric, revealing a carved wooden door.

Jason made his way around the bar and pushed the door open, revealing a tall, dimly lit staircase. "Have fun, kid," the bouncer chuckled behind him, and the door closed with a heavy thud.

He trailed his fingers along the railing as he moved upwards, stepping more quickly the further he moved. Ten p.m. had come and gone; Cooper would be waiting wherever these steps led him.

At the top...at the top he forced himself to keep walking onto the mysterious third floor. This resembled the first floor like the Taj Mahal resembled a parking lot. Everything shone just a bit more: the polished hardwood bar, the plush armchairs and low tables. Low-hung chandeliers gave the club a warm glow, not seedy like the frantically pumping dance floor downstairs. Incense burned somewhere, filling the room with a smoky sandalwood scent.

Here the customers made no secret of their desire for sex. No two people were dressed alike; he caught sight of everything from leather to loincloths. Along the far wall a platform was set up, and when Jason got closer he could see two women performing, one covered head to toe in rich dark leather. She carefully wrapped heavy ropes around her nude partner, forming an intricate pattern around pale, unblemished skin.

The crowd was just as varied. Jason saw a man with nothing more than two leather straps around his bare chest. In his hands he held a chain link leash, which led a woman who trailed behind

him. She winked at Jason as they passed and was jerked forward abruptly by the chain around her throat.

He blushed and looked away, trying to search the crowd for Cooper. He saw a woman at a table, a girl tucked into her side like a pet. Under the table between the legs of the first woman a man knelt and, from the motion of his head, seemed busy.

Everyone seemed paired off, or at least busy with one or more partners. Jason was the only one by himself in the sex-charged atmosphere. He swallowed, feeling the first flush of arousal. He just wished he wasn't standing alone; it felt too much like watching porn in his apartment.

Later, he figured he was so used to looking up for Cooper, it never occurred to him to look down. Every tall man who walked by caught his eye, only to ultimately disappoint. It wasn't until he nearly tripped over him that he saw Cooper.

Wearing nothing more than a pair of skintight jeans and a leather collar around his neck, Cooper knelt at the side of one of those plush armchairs. His arms were crossed behind his back and his head tilted up to stare at the women seated there, the woman who held the leash that buckled to that leather collar. The woman who looked more familiar to Jason than she should.

Jason stumbled backwards, knocking into one of those low tables and sending it onto its side. Cooper looked up at him and his eyes went wide. "Jason."

He turned to run. This felt more like a setup, and he didn't want to get caught in another bad situation. God, just when he had washed the foul taste that was Jack out of his life. He found a bright exit sign and pushed the door open. The stairs led out into the street, and he had just opened the last door when he heard Cooper behind him.

"Jason, wait!"

He let the door fall closed and whirled around. Fists clenched at his side, Jason faced Cooper. "You weren't kidding when you said your girlfriend liked to watch, were you?"

"Jason...."

"The whole thing was a setup, wasn't it? She just happened to wander into my favorite coffee shop."

"I wasn't going to invite you if Lexi didn't like you." Cooper fingered the collar he still wore, and God help him, Jason wanted to put his lips there, suck on that soft skin till it was raw and red. "But I knew she would."

"Christ, Cooper," Jason snapped. "What the hell was that in the library?"

"Foreplay," Cooper grinned. He moved forward, got in Jason's space, pushed him against the brick wall of the exit. "Yeah, Lexi and I play, and I wanted to bring you in. If you had called the

number she gave you, I'd have answered and you'd have found out sooner."

"Number got smudged when I took my shirt off," Jason admitted, suddenly finding himself at eye level with Cooper's too-pink nipples.

Cooper laughed, low and deep, arousal coiled in his voice. He shivered slightly when Jason reached out and placed a hand on his chest, just above his left nipple, but not touching, not yet. "We won't do anything you don't like, Jason. Promise. No strings."

What if I want strings? Jason thought, wondering if he was destined for nothing more than casual sex. He gave in to the impulse and ran his thumb over Cooper's erect nipple. He grinned when Cooper closed his eyes.

"C'mon," Cooper whispered. "Lexi's getting us a private room. Unless you don't want the both of us?"

Jason pushed him away slightly. "I've never done anything like this."

"Don't knock it till you've tried it, Jason."

He wanted to ask questions, but he didn't. Jason just followed Cooper back up to the third floor, mind whirling.

Lexi was Cooper's mistress, right? Did she spank him? Tie him to the bed and fuck him with a strap-on? Did she parade a string of strangers in front of him, picking one to service her boy? Each thought went straight to his cock, stiffening him in his jeans before they even reached this private room.

He had to stop and adjust himself, and Cooper laughed behind him, a deep, rich laugh that made Jason want to join in.

The laughter helped when they got back up to the third floor. Cooper led him through the crowd, and Jason felt the eyes on him, probably wondering about the newbie who freaked out. Another bouncer nodded at Cooper and ushered them through a dimly lit hallway. Jason could hear breathy moans and sharp smacks of leather. He swallowed tightly, but didn't back down.

Cooper knocked on a door marked with a number, and the door opened at his touch. A heavy scent of vanilla tickled Jason's nose. Lexi looked up as they entered. She finished lighting a series of candles on the table alongside the king-sized bed in the center of the room. Jason wanted her now, even more than in the coffee shop, with a leather corset constraining those heavy breasts and the fishnets caressing those shapely legs. The short skirt and stilettos just added to the tease.

"Jason! Cooper managed to catch you."

Oh yeah, Cooper had caught him all right. "I, uh, yeah." His erection flagged slightly. He

scanned the room, searching for the whips and paddles, but finding only discreetly placed furniture, though he was pretty darn sure those were hooks in the ceiling. Otherwise, he could have been in any luxury hotel done up in crisp greens and dark wood. Instead of a TV, a wooden cabinet took up one corner. Jason bet they kept the sex toys in there, and the uncertainty of what it hid tied his stomach in knots.

“It’s okay,” Cooper’s hands were on his shoulder again, kneading the tense muscles. “Nothing you don’t want.”

“Cooper,” Lexi said, “Take your place, pup.”

“Yes, Lexi,” Cooper’s voice changed as he spoke. The way he said his girlfriend’s name, it might as well have been “mistress.” But he didn’t sound meek; he didn’t sound defeated. He moved forward and knelt at Lexi’s feet, and only then did Jason notice he was barefooted, the soles of those long feet dirty from the fire escape stairway. He felt a twinge of guilt.

Lexi pushed off the bed and walked to Jason. She caught her hand in his short hair and pulled him down for a kiss. When she pulled away, she ran her fingers over his swollen lips. “I wanted those lips from the moment I saw you.”

He bit down on them, embarrassed; he always thought his lips too plump, too girlish. She moaned and leaned into his neck, whispering into his ear. “We have rules, Jason. Cooper is my puppy, all he has to do is say the word ‘red’ and everything stops. If you can’t follow that, I’m going to ask you to leave right now.”

Jason brushed his fingers along her cheek, making eye contact. “I would never hurt him.”

She nodded. “Same goes for you; don’t be ashamed to call ‘red’ if you need to.”

“Okay.”

Lexi stepped back and looked over at Cooper. “You brought home a toy, pup?”

“Can we keep him?” Cooper said with a grin. Lexi swatted the back of his head gently, teasingly.

“Is he a toy for you or a toy for me, pup?”

Cooper crawled forward, bumping his nose on her knee. “Please?” he said, “May I have him?”

Lexi stroked his hair gently, like he was just a great overgrown puppy. Jason swallowed at the sight. “You’ll have to take care of him,” she said. “Why don’t you go over there and strip him for me, Cooper?”

Cooper continued to move on his hands and knees, and the expression on his face when he looked up at Jason matched the dark look of desire he had worn at the library. He wanted Jason and, God, Jason wanted him right back. He’d take this, take anything Cooper offered.

“Hey, puppy,” he said.

Cooper knelt up and reached for Jason’s fly. He unbuttoned and unzipped, pulling down just enough to expose Jason’s boxers, hard cock tenting the fabric. Then Cooper slid his hands down Jason’s legs, pulling at one of them until Jason lifted it. He had to catch himself on Cooper’s head for balance, but he didn’t seem to mind, just concentrated on undoing the laces on Jason’s boot and pulling the offending shoe off. He made a little growling noise as it was done, then pulled at the other.

Jason pushed his own jeans and boxers down, too impatient suddenly. If Cooper kept moving like that, he was going to come before things even got interesting.

Cooper stood suddenly and pulled at the buttons on Jason’s shirt. “Lemme see,” he whispered, “Didn’t get a chance before....” And then his lips were on Jason, biting hard at his neck, sucking another mark there to match the one left from the library. Jason swallowed hard, meeting Lexi’s eyes across the room.

She smiled and slowly began to unlace the front of her corset. His eyes widened at the double sensation, Cooper sucking at his nipple and Lexi baring her hefty chest.

“They’re real,” she mouthed to him, catching one in each hand and thumbing her own nipples.

Jason moaned and then yelped as Cooper bit down on one nipple. “Bad puppy,” he murmured.

Cooper reached up and tweaked Jason’s other nipple, pinching hard. “You like it?” he said, changing the inflection at the end to make it a question.

Jason bit his lip and nodded. Yeah, he liked it when Cooper bit him, when he worked his nipples. He liked the sharp tug, the sensation going right to his cock.

Then Lexi pressed against him, bare breasts brushing his skin and causing him to shiver. Jason lifted a hand to touch one when she snapped something over his left nipple. The sharp bite had Jason gasping, and he would have stumbled away, but Cooper held him tight.

Lexi pulled at the little metal clamp, intensifying the pricking sensation. Jason moaned, leaning into her. She put the matching clamp on the other side and Cooper leaned over and sucked it into his mouth.

Fuck, he thought, caught by both of them. He snaked a hand around Lexi, caressing the soft breast he found at hand, and he pushed his hips against Cooper, hoping for some friction against his weeping dick.

“We’re wasting a perfectly good bed,” Lexi stepped back, pulling him by one clamp. “Strip, puppy.”

Jason had to follow, feeling suddenly bereft without Cooper pressing against his skin. He had to watch as Cooper shimmied out of the too-tight jeans; he needed a glimpse of that long cock. It looked just as big as Jason had imagined, proportional to Cooper's tall frame. To his surprise, a black leather band encircled it.

"Cooper gets to come last, always," Lexi explained, sitting on the bed. Jason knelt on it next to her, still trapped by her fingers around the clamp. "He's a bit eager though, needs a little help."

"I remember," Jason said, remembering how Cooper had gone off in the library, needing nothing more than sucking Jason off.

"Hey!" Cooper said, climbing onto the bed. "Don't start without me."

"Never." Jason leaned over and took Cooper's mouth. Cooper opened to him, hands sliding up to caress Jason's skin and scratch at his back. Jason ran his own fingers along Cooper's tanned body, pressing against corded muscle tight under his hands.

"So pretty," Lexi murmured, "like two dolls."

Jason pulled away, flushing. "Not pretty," he murmured. Not when compared to Cooper and his perfectly-muscled body.

"Not pretty?" Cooper challenged, "No, you're beautiful, perfect pale skin...."

"Pasty," Jason shot back.

"Plump lips," Lexi said, climbing over and pressing against his back.

"Girly lips," Jason whispered, knowing he'd lost this battle. They wanted him, each for their own reasons. In their hands, Jason felt beautiful.

She pulled his hand and guided it under her skirt. He met hot swollen flesh. "Girly lips," she laughed.

Jason groaned, leaning against her. He had to close his eyes to get his bearings. "How are we going to do this?"

Lexi pulled away and Cooper had Jason pressed against the bed on his back. She unzipped her skirt and pulled it off, revealing nothing underneath but a garter belt holding up the fishnets.

She climbed up beside Cooper and kissed him. The two looked down at Jason, matching expressions of mischief in their eyes. Jason tucked his hands behind his head and grinned. Let them do their worst.

"Puppy is good with his mouth," Lexi said, pulling Cooper's arms behind him. She pulled the cuffs from somewhere, perhaps they'd been on the bed earlier, and attached them. "Show him,

pup,” she pushed Cooper down, so he was kneeling between Jason’s spread legs.

Jason closed his eyes and tilted his hips upward. Cooper started with short teasing licks, fucking the slit of Jason’s cock with his tongue. Lexi was right; he was damn good with his mouth, no hands in the way to distract him from pleasuring Jason’s entire dick.

The bed shifted and then Lexi knelt over his chest. “Okay?” she whispered.

Jason got his hands under her pert buttocks and pulled her onto his face. He was surrounded by her warmth and heat, tasting nothing but her sweetness. He’d show her Cooper wasn’t the only one with a talented mouth.

Lexi groaned and ground against his face, her clit rubbing against his nose, “Next time,” she gasped out, “I’m going to tie your arms to the headboard and ride your face while Cooper rides your cock....”

Fuck, yeah, that was hot. He wanted in Cooper, in his warm heat, fucking that tight ass while licking Lexi’s sweet spot. And he wanted to be pinned down, nothing more than a sex toy, worked to perfection by the two of them.

He managed to get one hand under her, slipping inside along with his tongue. Then he found her clit and surrounded it with his lips, sucking hard even as Cooper swallowed his cock. He knew exactly how that looked – Cooper’s perfect pink lips, his heavy-lidded eyes, and his face flushed with want and desire.

Lexi started to buck against him and he swallowed, working his mouth against her. He felt her clamp down on his fingers as she came, making such sweet noises, grunts and gasps and moans of pleasure.

As if on cue, Cooper sucked Jason’s entire dick into his mouth and worked it hard. Jason moaned, still trapped beneath Lexi’s nether lips as he came, shooting deep into Cooper’s mouth.

Lexi slipped off him and down the bed. She pulled Cooper up by the back of his collar and covered his lips with her own. They pulled apart slowly, Jason’s come between her lips.

“Fuck,” Jason whispered, “Cooper, let me...please?”

“Yeah,” Cooper crawled up the bed, arms still chained behind him. Jason caught him around the waist and pulled him down. He had to get his lips around that long cock, had to see if Cooper tasted as good as he looked.

He tasted better. Cooper’s dick was slick with his own precome, salty and bitter and absolutely perfect. Jason couldn’t get all of it in his mouth, but he circled his right hand around the base, stroking as he sucked. With his left hand he thumbed at the black cock ring, then snaked under Cooper’s balls and pushed against his hole.

“Please, please, please,” Cooper started chanting.

Jason sucked hard, and Lexi reached over and unsnapped the ring. Cooper pumped his hips forward, like he couldn’t help it. Jason had to push him down, pressing his tongue hard against the sensitive underside of Cooper’s cock. Cooper came, short bursts of sweet come hot in Jason’s mouth.

Jason pulled back and turned to Lexi. She grinned and came forward to lick his mouth.

“Yeah,” Cooper whispered, “So hot.”

Jason’s spent cock twitched. He fell back against the bed, burying his face under Cooper’s chin.

“Easy boys,” she whispered, undoing the cuffs and freeing Cooper to wind his arms around Jason.

“Yeah,” he murmured, as she cuddled up behind him. “Yeah.”

He should have just picked up the phone. Granted, he didn’t have a phone number to call, but still, anything would be better than just showing up at St. Mary’s hospital and finding out when Lexi started her shift. Just his luck she was working right then and there, the sweet receptionist with the freckles told him, pointing down the hall to a nurses’ station.

Jason needed time, after that night at CatsEye. He’d felt guilty at sneaking out, carefully extracting himself from Lexi’s arm and Cooper’s leg. They’d slept on as he dressed quickly and slipped out of the club.

He hadn’t noticed he still wore the nipple clamps until he got to his apartment and went to shower. The nubs were bright red and swollen, tingling when he removed the tiny metal jaws. He felt the soreness for days afterwards. Days in which he stayed far away from the library and the coffee shop.

That night at CatsEye had been the most intense sexual experience of his life. Jason walked around in a daze afterwards, rubbing at the black leather band he still wore on his wrist. He expected to feel used, being one of a string of boy toys Cooper and Lexi had brought into their relationship.

But he didn’t feel used. Owned, yes. Cooper had called him “mine” several times during the night. Jason wanted to belong to Cooper, wanted to bare his throat and offer it up to be claimed. No man had ever made want to submit like that before.

Then there was Lexi. He wasn’t so sure about Lexi. Not that he had a lot of experience with women. He always figured women wanted the white picket fence, the two point five kids and a shaggy dog. He doubted that dream included two husbands.

He needed to talk to her.

Lexi turned in the hospital corridor and noticed him, a clipboard in one hand. Her forehead creased. "What are you doing here?"

"Can we talk?"

"I get lunch in ten minutes. Meet you down in the cafeteria?"

"Sure."

Jason got a table and two cups of coffee. He stared at his own cup, swirling the tiny red straw around and around, chasing the stray bubbles in the dark liquid.

"Can we not have a conversation unless it's aided by caffeine?" Lexi asked, before dropping into the plastic seat across from him. Her long hair was caught up in a ponytail, which gave her face a rather severe look. Behind the scrubs and nametag, she looked very much the medical professional. Jason refrained from staring at her chest. Barely.

"I don't do anything without coffee," Jason said before he could think about it, then flushed a deep red.

Her lips curved into a half smile. "I'll be sure to remember that."

He grinned back. Jason dropped the straw on the table and sat back, kicking out his legs. "Look, the other night...."

"You freaked."

"Just a little."

"It's okay, Jason. Cooper told you no strings...."

Frustrated, Jason kicked the table. "But I like strings."

Lexi's eyebrows shot up.

"And I like Cooper, a lot. And I think I could like you too." He stared across the table at her, hoping his eyes said what he couldn't say. "But I don't get the whole...how you could make Cooper do all that."

She snorted into her coffee cup. "I don't make Cooper do anything. You don't get it, Jason. Cooper chose me. He wants this."

"You don't?"

“I didn’t say that. The point is that I don’t make him do anything he doesn’t want to do.”

Jason cupped his hands around his coffee. “I didn’t think you did.”

“Then what are you worried about, Jason? Cooper’s chosen you.”

“But what about you?” Jason reached out and touched her hand, fingers tracing the pattern of the veins over the soft skin. “You and me? Do you want the same things from me?”

Lexi looked down at his hand. “I only want what you’re willing to give me, Jason. I don’t think our desires are so different. I trust Cooper’s judgment. He sees something special in you, and I think I’m starting to.”

Her hand was so warm under his touch. He watched the flush rising in her neck, her chest rise and lower slightly faster as she bit her lip. He did that to her, got her all caught up with desire.

“So, no white hat?” he asked, quirked one eyebrow.

“The scrubs aren’t kinky enough?” she winked. “I happen to know the janitor’s closet on this floor is empty this time of day....”

“Are you propositioning me in a hospital?” Jason asked, trying to sound shocked, but even he could hear the laughter in his voice. “Why, Nurse Lexi, you are one naughty woman.”

“You ain’t seen nothing yet, boy.”

The door clicked shut, Lexi threw the lock, and then they all but attacked each other. Lexi pushed him against the door, seizing his mouth and grinding against him. Jason got his hands around her waist and under those loose-fitting scrubs. She had a lacy bra underneath, and he shivered at the thought of something like that being hidden.

There she was, prim and proper Nurse Lexi with her lacy bra. He wondered if there was a lace thong to match. He pushed the bra up over her breasts, baring them under her shirt, but still confining her just a bit. Now he finally got to touch, to caress those soft weights in his hand.

She moaned as he flicked her nipples with his thumbs. He pinched and rolled them between his fingers. She squirmed and tried to grind her hips into his. “Lips,” she gasped out.

He tugged the shirt off and leaned down to suckle one nub. She liked it when he scraped his teeth across her flesh, when he kneaded her breasts and played with them, pressing them together. Every time she moaned he hardened even more. He did this to her, made her lose control.

Lexi unsnapped his fly and pulled out his dick. Jason hissed at the manhandling. She didn’t touch him like Cooper, with his large but gentle hands. She touched him like he had something she wanted.

“You like my tits, huh?” she murmured, and dropped to her knees. She pulled off the bra impatiently and then took her own breasts in her hands. Lexi looked up at him, her smoldering eyes nothing like Cooper’s heavy-lidded, submissive look. She might be down on her knees, but Jason knew exactly who was in charge. “Fuck ‘em.” She pressed the globes together, leaving him the perfect spot to slide his cock.

“Fuck, yeah,” he whispered, guiding himself between her soft flesh. She pressed together tighter, surrounding him completely with her full, heavy boobs.

Jason gripped her shoulders, staring down as he started to grind his hips, sliding his dick up and down. His pre-come made patterns on her whiskey-colored skin, her sweat made his way slicker. Lexi pinched her own nipples, groaning as he started to move faster.

Before he could stop himself, he felt his orgasm take over, painting her luscious curves with milky white fluid.

He pulled her up and toward him, mouthing along her body, licking her clean. “Oh,” she hissed as his lips nuzzled her chest. Yeah, he thought, slipping his hand beneath her scrubs and finding her clit. She’d already soaked that lacy thong.

He pushed two fingers in and kept his thumb on the sweet spot. Jason found one tight nipple and sucked hard, not letting up no matter how hard she moaned. He pinched the other nub with his free hand, fingernails scraping against the sensitive flesh.

Lexi thrust her hips against his hand, controlling the rhythm, pumping against him while trying to get away from the constant stimulation of her chest. He held on, knowing this would be all the sweeter for the pain.

“Oh, please,” she gasped, and then couldn’t form words any longer, choking out whimpers and cries as her flesh clamped down on Jason’s fingers. He brought her down gently, riding out the aftershocks and soothing her sore nipple with soft kisses.

When she recovered enough to meet his eyes, she grinned. “Oh, I’m definitely keeping you.”

Jason threw back his head and laughed. “Be sure to tell the other nurses you had one hell of a lunch.”

Jason turned the page and carefully jotted down some notes in his binder, the subject mesmerizing him. He leaned forward in his chair, so intent on the illustration in front of him that he didn’t hear the footsteps and didn’t notice Cooper until the backpack slammed onto the library table with its usual grace.

“I’m glad you’re here,” Cooper said softly.

Because Jason had avoided the library since CatsEye, had avoided Cooper since they had slept together. But now Jason knew what he wanted, and this time he was going to be the one to reach out and grab it. He didn't need Cooper pushing him any longer.

Jason stood, the wooden library chair scraping against the floor with a harsh shriek. He winced. That wasn't the kind of pain he was looking to repeat.

"I kinda live here," he told Cooper, reaching up and tangling his hand in Cooper's wavy hair, pulling the taller man down for a kiss.

Just like the first time, it sent shocks of desire all down his body. Cooper felt so good around him, his lips parting and taking Jason's tongue. Cooper tasted sweet, a little pepperminty, like the candy he liked to suck on after lunch. Jason had been driven to distraction more times by Cooper loudly sucking on one of those tiny mints.

Cooper pulled away and licked over Jason's lips, like an overgrown puppy. "Don't bite them," Jason pushed him away gently.

"Aw, they're so bitable," Cooper pouted, then bit down just under Jason's ear, over the fading bruise left over from the past weekend.

Jason dug his fingers into Cooper's arm. "Wait, don't want to do this in the library again."

"You're right. Those floors are so hard." Cooper pulled away. He looked down at the table and his eyes widened. "What are you reading?"

"Oh, that," Jason flushed.

"I thought it was another one of your heavy lit books," Cooper flipped the cover over to reveal *The World of Sexual Dominance and Submission*. "I didn't know they had stuff like this in the library."

"Yeah, well, you didn't ask."

Cooper barked out a laugh. "Don't tell me you asked the librarian with the moustache...."

"No, I asked the short one. They keep it behind the desk with the books on nude photography. They get stolen a lot, apparently."

"That is so like you," Cooper said, still grinning. "Doing research."

"Apparently I'm pretty good at it."

"Getting ideas?"

“A few,” Jason absently rubbed the leather band on his wrist. He tended to play with it a lot, comforted by its weight on his body.

Cooper noticed and grabbed Jason’s hand, holding his arm out. “You’re still wearing that?”

“You put it on me,” Jason said softly. He hoped that said it all. He didn’t get it at first, but he figured it out quickly. He wanted to belong to Cooper, like Cooper belonged to Lexi. Jason was choosing Cooper.

Cooper ran his fingers along the edges of it, on skin that was hypersensitive from being constantly rubbed against the leather. “This one is the CatsEye logo. I’ll get you a better one, matching ones for both wrists.”

“With your name on them?” Jason raised an eyebrow.

“Jason,” Cooper dropped his arm. “You ran. You left us. Now you’re suddenly fine with this?”

“I went to see Lexi,” Jason admitted, though Cooper probably knew. “I never felt like that, like I belonged somewhere, to you both. I guess I got scared.”

Cooper laughed and dropped onto the table, kicking his feet out like a little kid. “You’re like a cat, you know?”

“Excuse me? Are you calling me a pussy?” Jason shot back.

He got his leg kicked for his trouble.

“No, asshole. You’re like a stray that comes around to drink the milk that’s left out, but won’t let himself get too comfortable. Not until the tuna’s on the plate anyway.”

“That makes absolutely no sense,” Jason protested. But even as he spoke, he knew it for truth. He never liked getting close to anyone. He might complain and bitch about there not being any good men around, but when presented with one, he ran. “You’re the one with cat eyes, anyway.”

Cooper hooked one long leg around Jason’s waist and drew him close. “Don’t want you running on me again, kitty.”

Jason rolled his eyes at the nickname. He slid his arms around Cooper and leaned in; he needed to put some marks of his own around Cooper’s pretty neck. Guy needed to take it if he could dish it out. “Not going anywhere, promise.”

“Good kitty,” Cooper said, just as Jason opened his mouth for a nibble.

Cooper's yelp was heard several floors away.

“Kiss him.”

Jason wanted to obey Lexi’s soft command, he really did, but Cooper lurked just out of reach, just watching Jason, back arched and head extended, straining toward him. He wanted Cooper to reach back.

Cooper had kept his promise, replacing Jason’s leather cuff with two new leather bands, decorated on one side with links of metal rods stacked against each other in a unique pattern. The back clasps made it possible to bind Jason’s wrists together with nothing more than a simple lock.

So they had bound him, nude, on the plush carpeted floor of the apartment Cooper and Lexi shared. They had taken Jason into their lives and into their bedroom. Unlike the hotel-like room at CatsEye, this room was lived in and loved. There might be hooks in the headboard and a boxful of toys at the foot of the bed, but there was also a basket of laundry in the corner and a pile of books on the end table.

Cooper’s gentle hands had locked Jason’s arms around his back and pushed him to his knees. Lexi had wrapped the ring around his cock. Together they had spread his legs and locked them to a long pole, keeping them spread and keeping Jason’s cock free from illicit friction.

“Be good and watch, kitten,” Cooper had winked.

Jason hated the nickname, only marginally better than kitty. But Cooper had given him the name. “Yes, Cooper,” he said. He trusted them; even bound like this, the two would stop everything if he just called “red.”

But then he had to watch Cooper fuck Lexi over the side of their king-sized bed.

He strained at his bonds, leather scraping at his skin, cock hard and weeping against his belly. It was almost too much to bear, watching Cooper spread Lexi out on the bed and slipping between her thighs. They both knew it, too, putting on a show, grunting and grinding against each other. Jason wanted Cooper between his thighs, thrusting that long cock inside him, filling him.

He watched Cooper move, watched him roll his hips at the perfect angle. He listened to Lexi cry out, those perfect whimpering cries that made him leak pre-come all over himself. He could smell them over the vanilla-scented candles Lexi had lit earlier, slowly being consumed by the heat of their bodies generating pure musk.

And then Cooper pressed gentle kisses all around her face, pulling away from his satisfied mistress. He pulled the condom off his still hard prick and turned toward Jason, that predatory smirk still on his face. Lexi sat up and decreed, “Kiss him.”

Finally, finally Cooper made it across the room. He dropped to all fours just in front of Jason and crawled the final few feet and captured his lips. Jason stopped straining and unclenched his fists.

Finally, Cooper's tongue slipped against his own, the taste of Lexi and sweetness overwhelming his mouth.

"Touch him," Lexi said. She sat up against the headboard, finger of one hand slowly trailing between her legs. "Mark him; show him he's yours, pup."

"Please," Jason begged, fighting against the cuffs. He wanted to touch Cooper, too, wanted to slide his fingers over that sweat-slick skin, lick down that powerful chest and latch onto one pink nipple.

First Cooper cupped Jason's face between his hands, stroking his cheeks. Then he tilted Jason's head to the side and clamped on to his favorite spot under Jason's ear, teeth sharp against the sensitive skin.

"Please," Jason said again. He needed more, wanted to feel Cooper all over.

Fingernails scraped down his back, causing him to arch up into that bite. Cooper kept him caught between his hands and his mouth, licking down Jason's chest and sucking first one nipple and then the other, until they were both red and tight. Cooper grasped Jason's butt cheeks, separating them and kneading the soft flesh.

"I can't," Jason moaned. He ached everywhere, his skin hypersensitive.

"Shh," Cooper leaned down and licked just the tip of his cock, savoring the drop of fluid pooled in the slit. Jason's cock twitched in response. Then Cooper slipped a finger at the entrance of Jason's hole, circling it carefully.

Jason threw his head back. The stimulation was almost too much. He met Lexi's eyes across the room, watching as her fingers disappeared inside her slit. She smiled and nodded. "Open him up, Cooper. Let's fuck him."

"God," Jason moaned.

"Be good, kit," Cooper drew away for a moment. He came back with a large bottle of lube and settled behind Jason. "Lean forward a bit."

Next time, Jason thought, he would prep himself in advance, so they wouldn't need to bother with this. He wanted Cooper now, and he didn't want to wait to be lubed and stretched. Maybe he'd pick out one of the plugs Cooper had showed him earlier and work it in slowly, wear it all day long in anticipation of being Cooper's boy later.

Cooper unstrapped the bindings around Jason's legs, rubbing his ankles to ease the feeling of blood rushing back. He pushed down on Jason's lower back, pushing him forward. He balanced carefully, body strung tight as Cooper squirted the lube directly inside Jason's hole. Cooper followed with one thick finger.

“I can take it,” Jason closed his eyes and just concentrated on feeling. Everything seemed so vivid. Cooper’s finger felt so large. His arms strained against the bindings, the muscles burning. His nipples ached and yearned to be touched again.

A finger at his chin forced him to look up despite the awkward angle. Lexi stroked his chin with her thumb. She looked amazing, skin flushed and glistening with sweat. Her nipples tightened against her plush breasts and he wanted to bury his face between them. Instead, he was level with her clit, so he pushed forward and licked experimentally.

“Oh, you naughty boy,” she laughed. She caught her hands in his hair and drew him forward, and Cooper continued to spear him, slipping more fingers inside and twisting them just right.

She always tasted so sweet, like she was made for him to lick and pleasure. As much as he wanted Cooper inside him, he wanted this, too.

“C’m on, I want to ride him,” Cooper said.

Lexi pulled away, leaving Jason bereft, a trail of her honey covering his lips. He licked them slowly, watching her shiver at the sight. “Get on the bed, cowboy,” Lexi said. “I’ll bring the kitten.”

Cooper moved and Jason felt open and empty. He watched the other man drop onto the bed. Cooper slid on a condom and lay back, hands propped behind his head.

“Stay still one second.” Lexi undid the cock ring, clamping down on the base of his cock, dampening his arousal just slightly, long enough for her to slide another condom on him. Where she had hid it, he had no idea. “Now go to him, kitten.”

He didn’t mind the nickname so much from her. It felt like it belonged, like he belonged to Lexi too, despite the bite marks and bruises all along his torso that staked Cooper’s claim. Her ownership might not be physical, but it ran just as deep.

Jason stumbled to his feet, Lexi’s hand on his arm kept him from falling. Cooper watched, his eyes soft. Once he got to the bed it was easier, easy to get back on his knees and straddle Cooper. “Other way, kit,” Cooper said, turning Jason so he faced away from him.

“Ease down,” Cooper held Jason’s ass open. Jason swallowed and eased down on that cock. It felt like he slid forever, Cooper filling him deeper than he’d ever been filled before.

Cooper growled beneath him.

“Easy,” Lexi stroked Jason’s hair as he adjusted to the girth inside him. He concentrated on her touch. “All right?”

“Yeah,” he gasped. She pulled at one of his legs, straightening it out. It changed the angle and sent Cooper impossibly deeper inside him.

Then Lexi climbed over him, spread her lips and sank down on his dick.

Finally, oh God, yeah. Jason bucked up into her, surrounded by perfect tight heat. He slid down onto Cooper and groaned. Cooper gripped his waist, just above Lexi's legs, keeping them both balanced as Jason rocked between them.

Caught between the two, after much too much stimulation, Jason couldn't last. He thrust up hard one last time, then back down until Cooper had him speared to the hilt. Jason gave in, throwing his head back and keening as his orgasm rushed through him.

"Yeah, let it out, kit," Cooper moaned. "Yeah, yeah, yeah..." His fingers scratched at Jason's skin, holding on with an almost bruising grip as he came.

Lexi slid off them both, falling to their right, breathing heavily. Cooper rolled so Jason was on his side and unclipped the cuffs, running his hands up and down his arms as the feeling came rushing back. He peppered Jason's back with kisses and nibbles.

Jason relaxed into the touches, fighting sleep. He closed his eyes as Lexi caressed his face. "Mmm."

"Sleep, Jason, we'll take care of you."

"Gonna keep me?" he mumbled, all open and raw after coming. Cooper's hands tightened around his arm.

"Yeah, kitty," Cooper said. "Gonna keep you."

Jason curled against them both, folding his arms around his body, comforted by the leather bands around his wrists. This might not be his white picket fence, or, hell, his committed relationship and a ranch, but Jason had found his own way. He belonged here, nestled securely between Cooper and Lexi.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

BY DIANNE FOX

“Going to fly away?” Anil trilled, grinning.

Ross knew the look of that grin. He’d seen it far too many times already, almost daily since he’d come to the city six years ago. It was sharp and cruel, and he hated it. As with most times he saw that smile, Anil was backed up by a crowd of friends. All of them smelled alike, dusty and familiar. Birds of a feather.

They crowded around him, an impenetrable wall of hatred. People walked by, strangers, but it didn’t matter. He didn’t matter. No one would meet his eyes; no one would flinch at his cries. They didn’t care about one freak bird. They just played blind and deaf, like always. In some ways, it was a blessing. At least he didn’t have to worry about anyone else joining in.

He didn’t have to worry about getting away, either. There was no way out. Even if there had been a gap between Anil’s friends, Ross knew better than to run. Trying to get away would only make it worse. He’d learned that lesson a long time ago. He had to stand his ground and take it. It would be over faster that way, hurt less. Knowing the truth of it didn’t make it easier. Every instinct said to run. To *fly*.

“Oh, I forgot. You *can’t* fly, isn’t that right, little freak?”

Ross cringed. Being unable to shift, unable to become human or bird, marked him as lesser, even worse than if he were just a human. Hiding his deformity would have saved him the public humiliation, but it was difficult to disguise his massive brown wings or the downy feathers trailing down the back of his neck. He’d been able to find work, but the price was that he had to deal with Anil.

Some days, he wasn’t sure it was worth it.

Ross nodded, closing his eyes so he wouldn’t have to see the looks on the faces of Anil and his friends. Practice didn’t make this any easier, either. He couldn’t shift, so he couldn’t fly. His wings weren’t strong enough to carry a human body. It wouldn’t have been so bad, maybe, if he was halfway between man and wolf, but birds were meant to fly. He could feel it in his bones every day, that need to push off and feel nothing but air around him. Instead, he was deformed, trapped in the middle and trapped on the land.

“Say it.” Anil shoved Ross backward until his wings smacked hard against the wall behind him. He whimpered. “*Say it.*”

“I can’t fly,” Ross whispered, slumping to the ground. His wings scraped against the wall and feathers drifted down, fluttering to the dirty pavement around him. The ground was wet from the midday rain; he could feel it seeping through his clothes and into his skin. It chilled him, but not as much as the birds’ laughter. The jumble of their high-pitched twitters was loud even over the sounds of cars passing on the street. It twisted up in his stomach until he was choking, gagging on his own shame.

A quiet growl silenced the laughter. Anil’s flock wasn’t afraid of anything, but when Ross looked up, the birds were all gone, shifted and taken to flight. In their place stood a single man, tall, and with a feline scent about him. His skin was the sort of tan that came not from the sun but from good breeding, his hair was a tumbled mane of golden curls, and his eyes were a warm, honey brown. Leonine, all of it.

It was bad enough being hunted and tormented by his own species. He hadn’t ever had to worry about being attacked by anyone but Anil’s flock, not until tonight. Ross shrank back against the wall. He was nothing more than easy prey for a cat.

“Tau.” The man’s voice was low and warm, like a growl, but the word didn’t mean anything to Ross.

“I’m sorry, I...”

“My name,” the man purred, squatting down in front of Ross, so they were at eye level. “My name is Tau.” Ross wasn’t sure why the man would offer his name. Perhaps he was the type who liked his victims to know who had bested them.

“I...I’m...”

“Ross,” Tau said smoothly. “I know. I’ve been looking for you.” He lifted one of Ross’ feathers from the ground and smoothed it with his fingers. Watching the delicate touches made Ross shiver.

“What do you want?” He wasn’t important, wasn’t somebody anyone would want to look for.

His question made Tau smile widely enough that his sharp teeth gleamed in the dim light from the streetlights. “You.”

Ross looked up at the sky, but Anil and his buddies were long gone. It wasn’t as though they would’ve saved him anyway. Species loyalty would’ve only worked in his favor if he’d actually been a shifter. As it was, he supposed he was probably lucky this was the first time anyone other than the birds had cornered him.

“What do you want from me?” he asked, pushing limp strands of muddy brown hair out of his face. “I don’t have anything.” He was just barely getting by.

“I don’t want anything from you, Ross,” Tau said, sounding almost gentle. He stood, offering Ross a hand up.

Ross slipped his hand into Tau’s on instinct; he only realized what he’d done when he was being drawn up to his feet. He jerked his hand away, stumbling back against the wall before he caught his balance. The impact sent more damaged feathers fluttering to the ground around him. “You...don’t?”

Tau shook his head. “I don’t want anything from you. I want *you*.”

“Me.” Ross blinked and looked down at his feet. “You want...*me*? Why? I’m not...I’m not anything special.”

“No?” Tau smiled, his teeth showing again. “Are you sure about that?” Ross didn’t know what to say to that. Tau didn’t seem to need him to say anything, though. “Think about it,” he purred, slipping something into the front pocket of Ross’ pants. “Give me a call when you’ve made up your mind.”

Ross just gaped at him, still shaken from his encounter with Anil and the others, and now confused by Tau’s.... Was it an offer? A demand? Whatever it was, it was nothing but confusing to Ross.

Tau looked to the sky and asked, “Will you be safe to get home tonight?”

Ross followed Tau’s gaze; he could just make out the shapes of the birds against the starlit sky. Would Anil come back to torment him more? He didn’t know. Anil had never been interrupted before, never stopped until he was finished.

“I’ll be fine,” he said. It didn’t matter if Anil found him again. It wasn’t Tau’s responsibility to keep him safe.

“Oh, *Ross*. Again?” That, too, had become a familiar refrain. Where Anil’s voice was sharp like a knife’s edge, though, Lindy’s was smooth like silk.

Ross nodded again, but this time, instead of being pushed further, he was pulled into a warm hug. Lindy always gave the best hugs. Ross sank into it, tucking his wings down and kicking the door closed behind him.

Lindy let him hold on for a long moment. When she finally drew away, it was only to brush Ross’ hair out of his face. Finally, he looked up. She was so beautiful, with her pale skin and pink eyes and sleek white hair slicked back from her face. When he met her eyes, she smiled

gently. “Tea?”

Ross nodded gratefully. “Please.” He even worked up a small smile for her. “Tea sounds wonderful.”

She gave him a soft kiss and went to brew the tea. It was something of a ritual on nights like this. The hug, the smile, the offer of tea. Ross needed all of it to make the night feel good again. He kicked off his shoes by the door, and then went to slump down into the corner of the couch, his back to the arm and his legs stretched across the seat.

Lindy came back in a few minutes later, carrying two large, bowl-shaped mugs filled to the brim with tea and milk and sugar.

“Thank you,” Ross said, when she handed one over and settled herself on his lap. When they were settled, cuddled close, he finally started to feel better. Logically, he knew that Lindy wasn’t any warmer than he was, but it felt good, having her body resting against his own.

Lindy’s murmured acknowledgement of his thanks was the last thing they said for a long while. Finally, though, as Lindy stretched over Ross to put her empty mug down on the table behind him, she said, “You need somebody to protect you.”

Ross didn’t say anything at first. He focused on putting his own mug down without breaking it. When he looked up, Lindy was watching him expectantly.

Up until three years ago, Lindy had lived here alone. Ross had lived across the hall. When their rat of a landlord jacked up the rent, though, they’d agreed that it would be more sensible to move in together. Share the rent, share the cleaning, share the bed. It was an arrangement that worked well for them. Very well, in Ross’ opinion.

He shook his head. “I don’t need anyone else.” Snakes flocked, just like birds—nested, they called it—but he and Lindy, they were a pair. “You take care of me. We do okay.”

Lindy smiled that gentle smile again, shaking her head. “I take care of you,” she agreed softly, “but I can’t *protect* you. You need someone who can do that, who can keep them from doing this to you, Ross.”

Lindy was always worried about Ross being protected. She worked at the police headquarters and he worked at City Hall, just a block away. She worked days, though, and he worked second shift, so by the time he was off work, she’d been home for hours already. She couldn’t change her hours and neither could he. She’d talked about coming back downtown to walk home with him, but Ross was afraid that Anil and his friends would just take their frustrations out on her, too.

“We do okay,” he said again, thinking of the card in his pocket, the cat he’d met in the alley on his way home from work. Tau. “I don’t need anyone else.”

To prove his point, Ross leaned up, catching Lindy's mouth in a kiss. Her mouth opened against his and he licked his way inside, tasting the honey she favored in her tea. The little hissing noises she made when she was pleased, like now, were enough to make his feathers ruffle up with want.

Ross pulled back from the kisses to see Lindy's face. As he watched, her pale skin gave way to even paler scales. He smiled and stroked her cheek, his fingertips sliding over smooth scales instead of skin. Her eyes were still pink and her hair still sleek and white; it was just her skin that had changed.

"You're gorgeous like this," he murmured. She was a beautiful woman and a beautiful snake, but he'd always thought she was most striking when she'd shifted halfway between, like she was now.

Lindy ducked her head a little as she smiled, leaning in to flick her long, narrow tongue against his lips. He wrapped his hands around her waist and tugged her up against him, kissing her firmly.

"Gorgeous," he repeated, kissing from her mouth down to her jaw and nuzzling up into her hairline. She tilted her head and he took the hint, licking and sucking lightly at the soft scales just beneath where her ear would've been in full human form. In either form, the spot was sensitive, and it made her shiver, pressing closer to his mouth.

He kept his mouth on it, his hands moving to push her shirt up at her waist. She arched, writhing like the snake she was, when his hands slipped up under her shirt to slide over her back. She felt good, sleek and smooth all over, and it was even better when she shifted away and pulled her shirt off over her head so that he could touch more.

While she was kneeling above him, Ross leaned up to catch one of her nipples between his lips. She hadn't shifted so far that they had disappeared, and he was glad of it. He thought her breasts were as beautiful as the rest of her. He cupped one in the palm of his hand, rolling his thumb over the nipple and pinching lightly. She shivered and tangled her fingers into his hair, holding his mouth against her breast.

He held her nipple between his teeth, pinching lightly, just to hear her hiss and feel her shiver again. She arched and ground her body down against his, making him moan and bite down harder. It was a vicious cycle, but a pleasurable one.

"Bed," Lindy whispered harshly, rolling her hips again.

He let go of her breast with his hand, let go of her nipple with his teeth. Beating his wings gently, he pushed his body to sit upright. He wrapped his arms around Lindy, one around her waist and the other under her ass, and then used the beating of his wings again to help him stand.

"Now," she said, and wrapped her legs around his waist.

Ross carried her into the bedroom and tumbled them both into bed. They both struggled out of

their pants. Ross slipped down to the floor, kneeling between her legs. He licked up inside her until she was writhing against him, tangling her fingers in his hair again and begging for more. He gave her more, sliding two fingers into her and tugging gently on her clit with his teeth. Lindy arched up, crying out and pushing her body down against his hand and his mouth.

“Fuck me.” Her voice was soft and unsteady, but he knew better than to think she wasn’t sure of what she wanted. He pushed up over her and in, bracing his hands on either side of her shoulders. He rolled his hips and Lindy arched up, winding her legs around his waist to pull up against him.

It felt good, so good. Her body was hot and tight around him, sleek and soft under him. The noises she made, little hisses of pleasure, felt like they had a direct line to his cock, making him buck and writhe against her. The harder he moved, the more noise she made, which just pushed him to thrust even harder and faster, until they were crashing against each other and he couldn’t tell which of them was making more noise.

Afterward, lazy and sated, they lay spooned together on the bed until Lindy finally groaned and rolled away to take a shower. When she came back out a few minutes later, Ross was still sprawled out on the bed. “Feel better?” he asked, stretching slowly.

“Mmm.” Lindy smiled and started picking up all their dirty clothes. “What’s this?”

Ross tensed when he realized what she was holding. She’d emptied the pockets of his pants and found the card Tau had left. “There was this man, a cat, I think. He scared off Anil and the others, gave me that. It’s no big deal.”

“He scared off the birds?” Lindy looked down at the card again, then back up at Ross. “What’d he want?”

Ross rolled over, belly down on the bed. His wings were tucked down along his back, covering most of his body. He propped himself up on his elbows and picked at the skin around one thumbnail with the other. “Me.”

“He wanted you.” The bed dipped as Lindy sat down next to him. “He scared Anil off, protecting you from them, and offered to keep you?”

Frowning, Ross watched his cuticle split open and tear the skin just past it. Before it started to bleed, Lindy’s hand got in the way, curling over both of his hands.

“Ross.”

“Yeah. He wanted me, wanted to keep me.” He looked up at her, still frowning. “Does it matter what *I* want?”

Lindy sighed and cupped Ross’ cheek with her other hand. “Of course it matters, Ross. I just.... I want you to be safe. That’s all.”

Anil didn't come after Ross on his way home the next day, or the day after that. On the third day, though, Ross was only halfway home when he heard the unmistakable sound of feathers fluttering behind him, and he knew. Anil and his friends were back for more.

Without waiting to see what they would do, and against his better judgment, Ross started to run. The alley was dark, but Ross knew every step of his path from work to home. The beating of their wings stirred up the dirt on the ground, and all the awful smells of rotting garbage with it. One of the birds dove at him; the sharp edge of a beak caught him on the back of his neck. He couldn't see to know who it was, but the caw that came after was so challenging that it couldn't have been anyone but Anil himself.

The shock of cold air told him he was bleeding, but he couldn't stop or even slow enough to put a hand to the wound. Keeping his wings tucked down against his back, Ross jumped over a trashcan that had been lying on its side on the ground for the past three months. He had to get away.

He dove into the narrow space between two dumpsters, pressing back against the wall. He could feel something wet under one hand, something sticky under the other, but he didn't move. Maybe he could hide here until they went away. The opening was too narrow for anyone in full bird form to fit through; their outstretched wings wouldn't clear the dumpsters.

The hollow, metallic sound of the birds hitting the dumpsters was followed by silence. That was almost worse. Ross couldn't tell if they were leaving, or just lying in wait. He held his breath, trying to listen for even the smallest sound that would tell him if he was safe. His chest grew tight with the need to breathe, but he finally heard the faint tearing sound of someone shifting.

"You think you can hide in there?"

It was Anil's voice, Anil's footsteps moving closer. Ross pushed himself farther back against the wall behind him. Why couldn't Anil just leave him alone? Wasn't he bored with all this by now?

"That cat isn't here to save you, this time." Apparently not. Anil's voice was closer now, and what little light there had been was now blocked by the solidity of his body.

"How do you know he's not around here somewhere?" Ross challenged, trying to swallow down his fear.

Anil laughed, but it wasn't a happy sound. "He hasn't been anywhere near you for days, little freak. Looks like you just weren't good enough to hold his interest."

The words stung, even though Ross knew he was the one who was supposed to make contact with Tau. He hadn't called, but if Tau had really wanted him, wouldn't he have come looking again? "But I'm good enough to hold *your* interest?" he shot back, knowing that he was just

provoking Anil now, making things worse for himself.

Sure enough, Anil screamed his anger and dove at Ross. Ross threw his hands up to guard his face, but it just meant the first blows fell on his hands and arms. He couldn't stop the cries of pain that slipped free when one of Anil's fists hit just right to smash his fingers into his cheekbone and drive the flesh of his cheek against his teeth. It wasn't until he closed his mouth to swallow his next cry that he tasted the blood.

Anil didn't stop there. His fist caught Ross' jaw, snapping his head back against the wall. When Ross raised his hands to ward off another blow, Anil grabbed Ross' fingers with one hand, his arm with the other, and twisted hard in opposite directions. Something cracked and then, suddenly, *everything* burned. Ross screamed, but Anil still hadn't had enough.

It didn't stop. It wasn't ever going to stop. After awhile, Anil didn't even have to hit him for the pain to spark through Ross' body, Ross just had to try to breathe and it all started again. His breaths came shallower and more labored, and finally Ross found his relief in the quiet gray of unconsciousness.

When Ross opened his eyes again, the person in front of him wasn't Anil. It was Tau. "What...?" he asked, or tried to. His voice came out as a rasp; he'd screamed his throat raw.

"Don't talk, Ross. We're going to get you some help." That was Lindy's voice. Ross tried to focus, but all he could see was a dark shape blocking the light over Tau's shoulder.

"I'm going to move you," Tau warned, his voice a soft growl, like he was angry and trying to hide it. The sound made Ross flinch back, but Tau's touch was gentle, not harsh, and it worked to help Ross relax again. "It's going to be okay."

Ross tried to help, but all he managed was to wrap one arm around Tau's neck as Tau lifted him up. The movement was careful, but even so, every inch of skin and muscle and bone that Anil had touched suddenly burned to life. Ross cried out and jerked away, which sent another round of pain shooting through his body, chasing close after the first. He tensed, trying to hold still to stop the pain, but that, too, made things worse.

Tau didn't stop moving him, though. He pulled Ross out of the cramped space between the two dumpsters. When there was enough room, he shifted Ross in his arms, so that the position put less pressure on Ross' arms, which had taken the brunt of Anil's anger.

Lindy was right there beside him once he was settled. "Shh," she said, stroking his hair back from his forehead with the tips of her fingers. Where she touched felt like the only parts of his body that didn't hurt.

"Let's get you out of here. I have some friends who can help you."

“More lions? Your pride?” Ross was injured; a pride of lions would just see him as fresh meat. He still didn’t know why Tau didn’t see him that way.

Tau smiled, showing his teeth. “No. I don’t have a pride.”

Ross didn’t have much time to mull that over. Once Lindy stepped back out of the way, Tau started walking. “I can walk,” Ross protested, rasping out the words. He could hear Lindy’s soft snort of protest.

“So can I,” Tau said, and kept walking. He had a slow, rolling gait that hardly jarred Ross’ body at all. They walked for a long time, around corners and down sidewalks, until Tau finally stopped at a narrow townhouse with a wide, wooden door. Lindy knocked and a boy answered the door. Before either of them could say anything, Tau spoke up. “Greetings, Gunnar. I need to see Apokni Nita.”

“Amoshi Tau...” The boy—Gunnar—flicked his eyes from Tau’s face down to Ross, and then back up again.

“Now, Gunnar.” There was an edge to Tau’s voice that hadn’t been there before. Gunnar noticed it and nodded quickly, then rushed off to find whoever Tau was looking for. He left the door open, so Tau carried Ross inside and Lindy followed, closing the door behind them.

“Where are we?” Tau had said these people weren’t his pride and, watching Gunnar, he knew they weren’t lions. They moved like bears.

“This is my family. My father came here a long time ago, when I was just a cub. They took us in, gave us a home. They’ll help you, too.” Before Ross could ask anything else, Gunnar came back.

“Apokni will see you, Amoshi Tau,” the boy said quickly, stepping aside to make room for Tau and Ross. “She’s in her office. She said for you to go on down.”

“Thank you,” Tau said, already moving toward the doorway Gunnar had come through. Gunnar pointed toward a stairwell, but Tau seemed to know where he was going. Ross tensed a little as they entered a small, dark, unfamiliar corridor, but he could hear the soft swish of Lindy’s footsteps behind them and he relaxed again.

There were three doors at the bottom of the stairs. The two on the sides were closed and dark underneath, but the one straight ahead was open just a crack and Ross could see light inside. Before Tau made it to the door, it was pushed open from inside.

The woman standing there was older—in her forties or fifties, Ross guessed—with black hair streaked with silver-gray and skin darker than Tau’s. She had a kind smile and warm brown eyes. “It’s good to see you, Tau,” she said, stepping back into the room so they could come inside. “You haven’t come home in far too long. Are you going to introduce me to your friends?”

“This is Lindy,” Tau said, nodding toward her, “and this is Ross.” He dipped his head to nose

gently at Ross' cheek.

"Oh, this is the boy you told me about?" the woman asked, stepping closer. Ross couldn't imagine why Tau would've told this woman about him. Or when. They'd only met a couple days ago. "You can relax, dear. I'm a doctor. I won't hurt you." She reached out and gently touched the injured hand that was tucked tight against his chest. "Tau, why don't you set him down so I can see about fixing him up?"

Tau grumbled a little, but he took a few steps forward and gently settled Ross on his feet. Ross swayed a little, and Tau kept his hands on Ross' arms until he caught his balance by leaning back against the large, ornate wooden desk behind him. "Thank you," Ross rasped, glancing up.

Tau's warm, honey-brown eyes stared back at him. He brushed his fingertips over Ross' cheek. "Don't thank me," he murmured, shaking his head a little. "I just made things worse, didn't I?"

He had, but Ross didn't want to say it. Whatever was going on with Tau, he obviously hadn't meant for Ross to get hurt like this. Ross looked down at the floor and Tau's hand fell away. They both knew the answer, whether Ross said it aloud or not.

After another moment, Nita interrupted the silence. "Okay, Ross. Tau is going to take Lindy here upstairs and show her around the den. Don't you worry, though. I'm going to get you all fixed up."

When they were alone, Ross asked, "Why are you helping me? I'm not even a real bird, much less a bear like you."

Nita smiled, shaking her head as though Ross had said something silly. "Tau may be a lion, but he's still part of my den, and he's claimed you as one of his."

"Your den really took in a *lion*?" Ross knew he sounded doubtful, but he couldn't help it. Cross-species friendships were uncommon enough, but bringing someone of another species into your flock was unheard of, in his experience. He'd heard that bears were more accepting of other species, but he'd never seen it for himself, and he'd never thought it extended this far. Most species were insular, kept to their own kind.

"We're a bit more liberal about such things than most families are," she allowed, slowly reaching out to smooth Ross' ruffled and broken feathers. "Can I help you, Ross?"

Ross met her eyes. The warmth in them reminded him of the way Tau looked at him. He looked down at his hands. He was itching to pick at his thumbnails, but when he started to uncurl his fingers, the urge was overrun by sharp pain. He gasped and Nita's hands cupped his.

"Let me help, dear."

This time, Ross nodded. Lindy was right, he did need help.

When Ross woke up, he was in hardly any pain at all. The last thing he remembered was Nita giving him a shot of something to make him feel better. He wasn't in the bear den anymore, though. He was in bed. At home.

He shifted around on his belly, reveling in the lack of pain and making pleased little noises. Nita's drugs had worked wonders.

"Good morning, sleepyhead," came Lindy's voice from somewhere behind him. Ross rolled over and sat up to see.

"Hey." He rubbed at his eyes with the heels of his hands. "Mmm, how long have I been out? I don't even remember coming home."

"You wouldn't," Lindy answered, sounding amused. Ross tugged at the blanket to cover himself up some more; he was a little cold. "You were asleep the whole time. Two days. Tau's doctor friend gave you something to knock you out so you'd heal faster."

Tau's doctor friend. "Why was Tau with you?" At the time, Ross hadn't thought about it. Now, though, it didn't make sense.

"I called him." Lindy shrugged easily, as though she called strangers to come help them every day.

"You called him?"

"He wanted to help you," Lindy explained. "I gave him the chance, since you obviously weren't going to."

Ross couldn't really dispute that—he *hadn't* intended to call Tau—so he let it go and moved on to another question. "How did I get home, then?" Lindy was strong, but there was no way she could've carried him all the way back to the apartment.

"I carried you." Tau was standing behind Lindy, looking into the room over her shoulder.

Ross gaped. "You're...still here?" He'd expected Tau to be long gone. Ross wasn't his responsibility.

Tau nodded, stepping around a smiling Lindy to come into the room and sit down on the bed beside Ross. "Lindy was kind enough to let me stay, so I could see how you were feeling when you woke up."

"You stayed for *two days*?" Ross couldn't believe it. "Why? Lindy or I could've just called you to let you know I was okay."

“I didn’t want a phone call,” Tau explained calmly, meeting Ross’ eyes. “I wanted to see for myself. I wanted to *know* you were safe.”

“Why do you care?” Ross didn’t mean to be rude, though he knew it was coming out that way. He just couldn’t understand why a stranger would be so interested in his well-being. “You hardly know me. You only met me a few days ago.”

“*You* only met *me* a few days ago,” Tau said. “I saw you for the first time almost a month ago. And I know you’re worth saving. Worth keeping.”

“You’ve been watching me?” That was just weird.

“I’ve been learning about you. Watching, scenting, getting to know you. Deciding if you were someone I wanted to know.” Tau touched Ross’ leg through the blanket. “You are.”

Ross wasn’t sure what to say to that. He glanced up at Lindy; she nodded and smiled, giving her approval. After a moment, Ross admitted, “You’re someone I want to know, too.”

Tau’s smile was sweeter than Ross would’ve expected from a lion. He leaned in, rubbing his cheek against Ross’. When Ross didn’t pull away, Tau turned his head, angling in for a kiss. Ross didn’t pull away from that, either.

It was a slow, almost delicate kiss. It felt good to ignore all his worries, just for a moment, and let himself enjoy it. Tau’s lips were so soft and warm. Ross had to draw back, though, and look for Lindy. He had to know this was okay.

Lindy smiled at him, already walking toward the bed. She crawled up on the bed behind Tau and nuzzled at the back of his neck. Tau’s eyes widened and then he smiled a little, obviously enjoying the attention.

“Pretty, isn’t he?”

Ross thought Lindy was talking about Tau, and he was about to answer, when Tau said, “He’s beautiful.”

Ross didn’t know what to say to that, so he leaned up, catching Tau’s mouth with his own and preventing either of them from saying anything more. Lindy made a pleased sound and Tau echoed her when Ross licked at his lips. He teased his way inside, his tongue sliding against Tau’s. When Tau sucked gently at Ross’ tongue, Ross was the one making pleased sounds, moaning quietly.

The sounds seemed to energize Tau. He pushed up over Ross, pressing him down onto his back on the bed, and bit at his lower lip. That just made Ross moan again. He loved the sharp edge of Lindy’s teeth on his skin, and Tau’s teeth felt just as good. Ross threaded his fingers into Tau’s hair and whined, asking for more. He bumped into another set of fingers, Lindy’s, and felt her tug Tau back from him. He whined again, but she didn’t stop, and soon their kiss was broken.

“Up,” she said. “Get up.” When Tau sat up, Ross could see that Lindy was already naked behind him. She reached around Tau’s body to start unbuttoning Ross’ nightshirt. “I’m feeling a little lonely here,” she murmured, when she’d gotten the shirt undone. She grinned, running her hands down her body. Ross’ eyes followed her hands. Tau noticed and turned around to see, too.

“Yeah,” he purred, showing his sharp teeth in a grin of his own. Tau pulled his shirt off over his head and tossed it on the floor, then shifted to get at his pants. Ross shrugged out of his nightshirt, pushed off his shorts, and then he just laid back and watched. Lindy was gorgeous, and Tau looked just as good.

Tau had to stand up to get his pants off, which made the view even better. His body was gold all over, sleek and muscular. There was a thin trail of tawny fur that led from his navel down between his legs. Ross wondered what it would be like to follow the trail with his tongue. Before he could get up and find out for himself, Lindy crawled up over his body, licking at skin and feathers alike.

When she got up to his mouth, Ross rolled them both over, biting at her lips the way Tau had bitten at his. She hissed in pleasure and pushed up to kiss him, hard. The kisses were so good that he almost forgot Tau was there, until the pressure of Tau’s hard cock against the curve of his ass made forgetting Tau’s presence impossible. Ross groaned into the kisses and pushed back against Tau, inviting more.

Tau’s big hands wrapped around Ross’ hips. “Are you going to fuck her?” he asked, his voice nothing more than a low growl.

Lindy answered before Ross could, arching up under him. “Want to help us?” she hissed, the soft thread of need in her voice that always hit Ross right in the gut. “Put him in me.”

“Yeah?”

“Fuck, yeah,” Ross whispered, arching back again and spreading his legs a little more so Tau could touch him. When Tau’s big, warm hand wrapped around the base of Ross’ cock, he couldn’t help but push back into it. Tau’s grip tightened, and Ross keened, dropping his head down onto Lindy’s shoulder. “Please. Don’t tease.”

Tau didn’t tease. As soon as Lindy wrapped one leg up around Ross’ hip, Tau used his grip on Ross’ cock to guide him home. Lindy pulled Ross down into another kiss, arching up against him and fucking herself on his cock. She was tight as always, hot and wet around him, and he rocked his hips to get in deeper. When he pulled back, he felt Tau still pressed against him, and he moaned.

“In the drawer,” he said, when he could get the words out.

Tau took the hint, pulling out a small pot of lube. Ross had used it on Lindy; Lindy had used it on Ross. Now, Tau was using it on Ross, too. Tau’s fingers were slick, pressing into him, and

Ross pushed back against them, and then forward into Lindy. Lindy tipped her hips up to take him deeper, leaving him moaning, rocking between the two sensations.

“Fuck him,” Lindy murmured, nibbling away from Ross’ mouth and down over his jaw and neck. With all of the scrapes and pinches making him arch his neck to feel more, it took Ross a moment to realize what she was saying, and then he pushed back against Tau’s fingers, showing his agreement.

Tau must’ve agreed, too, because he pulled his fingers out and, just a moment later, started pushing his cock in, in their place. He was thick, but he pushed in slow enough that the burn just made Ross want it more.

“C’mon,” he muttered, rolling his hips as he thrust in and out of Lindy’s body, trying to hurry Tau up. It didn’t work, but Tau’s fingernails dug into the flesh of Ross’ hips to keep him still, and that was almost as good. “Yeah.”

Lindy hissed against the side of his neck, and then bit down with her long, sharp fangs. She bit hard enough that he couldn’t stop himself from jerking back from the pain. That just made it worse, but that was better, too. Tau used the opportunity to push the rest of the way in, mixing the pain and pleasure even more. It was so good.

Finally, they were all moving together. Tau thrust into Ross, pushing him into Lindy, and then she writhed back against him, sending them all back the other way. Over and over, they moved like that. Ross kept his wings curled down his sides, out of the way. He was trapped between them, lost in the pleasure, until Tau’s fingers tangled in his hair and pulled him back, flush against Tau’s chest.

Ross gasped, his hips still moving between Tau’s and Lindy’s. He gasped again when Tau nuzzled into the side of his neck, his lips brushing over the spot where Lindy had bitten him. He licked and sucked gently, like he was tasting Lindy on Ross’ skin. When his mouth moved an inch or so higher, though, his sharp teeth dug in, too. Ross cried out, shivering hard. It was difficult, when the sensations were so intense, to keep from letting the pleasure overwhelm him. He managed to hold back, though. He didn’t come, not yet.

Tau must’ve felt his desperation; he stopped biting and licked at the skin instead. The relief gave Ross enough presence of mind that he could remember what Lindy liked, how to please her. He slipped one hand between them, rubbing her clit with his thumb, and when she started to writhe, he pinched hard. She shouted, bucking against him, her body clenched tight around his cock as she came.

He dragged in slow breaths through his teeth, trying to hold on. It didn’t last. Tau gripped Ross’ hips tighter, fucked him harder and faster. Every thrust pushed more noises out of Ross, until he was almost screaming with it. He fell forward, braced on his hands over Lindy, coming hard.

By the time Ross could think again, all three of them were in a tangled heap. He mumbled a little—no real words, just questioning noises—but Tau’s big hand rubbed soothingly over his

back and he relaxed again. A moment later, he felt a soft, warm cloth sliding over his skin as Tau cleaned them up. It felt...nice. Comfortable and comforting.

Lindy shifted closer in front of him, fitting her body against him from chest to toes. That was comfortable, too. Warm and familiar. Tau's body wasn't nearly so familiar, but when it pressed against his back, fitting snugly even against his wings, it was oddly comfortable. Ross was asleep in minutes.

It only took another day before Ross could go back to work. Lindy had called his boss to let him know what happened, but there was no one to take over for him, so there was a lot of filing to catch up on when he got back. He worked through lunch, trying to get on top of it, and his hunger felt like it was eating a hole through his belly by the time his shift was over.

He didn't bother waving goodbye to his coworkers on his way out, and they returned the favor. His boss had already left for the day, and Mr. Carlyle was the only person who bothered talking to Ross. Ross reasoned that it was probably only because Mr. Carlyle knew Ross wasn't going to be moving on to bigger and better things, so he didn't have to worry about ever finding a replacement. Being a records specialist for the city wasn't a glamorous job by any means, but no one cared that the guy doing the filing was a deformed freak.

Except for being so hungry, it felt like the end to a perfectly normal day. The feeling continued right up until Ross saw Tau waiting for him in the lobby. Tau must've caught his scent, because he looked up and smiled just as Ross walked in. Ross' step stuttered slightly and then he smiled back.

"Hey, beautiful." Tau pushed off the wall, heading over to walk with Ross. "Dinner? Lindy's meeting us at that deli down the block."

"I love that place." Ross didn't get to go there much. Not with Anil always around.

"Lindy told me." Tau slid an arm around Ross' shoulders, between his back and the arch of his wings. He nuzzled at Ross' cheek, purring quietly. "I thought it might be fun to go out."

Ross looked up at Tau, surprised. Fun? "Yeah," he decided. "Yeah, it would be."

After dinner, they walked back to Ross and Lindy's apartment together, but Tau stopped at the door. Lindy went on through. Ross could hear the burr of coffee beans being ground.

"Come in for coffee?" he invited, holding the door open so Tau could get through.

Tau looked surprised, but he smiled and came inside. "Thanks."

"It'll be ready in just a few minutes," Lindy said, walking in from the kitchen. "Are you guys

going to stand there in the doorway while we wait, or do you think maybe we could all sit down on the couch?"

Ross turned around to find Lindy grinning at him, laughter in her eyes. Tau's laughter was audible, and he said, "Yeah, couch would be good."

It was a little uncomfortable at first, the three of them trying to fit together in the small space the couch allowed. Ross shifted up against the armrest, though, and Tau settled against him, and then everything just fell into place.

Tau's smile was irresistible, sweet and pleased. Ross smiled back at him, and then leaned in to brush a kiss over the corner of his mouth. That was all it was supposed to be—just a quick brush of his lips against Tau's—but then Tau turned his head at just the right time, and Ross found himself licking into Tau's mouth and listening to him purr.

At some point, the kisses moved from Tau's mouth to his neck; Tau tasted so good, like salt and smoke and heat. Ross found himself licking and kissing, biting at Tau's skin, wanting to taste more. The noises Tau made were soft and surprised, but there was a thread of need Ross could always hear in Lindy's tone, and it was clear and open and honest in Tau's voice, too. He forgot all about the coffee, totally focused on what he was doing now.

He pushed at Tau's shirt until the lion arched up and dragged it off his own body. As the shirt fell to the floor, Tau leaned forward again, asking for more kisses. Ross gave them to him; he wanted the same thing. The kisses weren't delicate, they weren't careful. They were hot and hard and messy, and somewhere in the middle of them, Tau's big hand pressed between Ross' legs, cupping his hardening cock. Ross moaned and arched up into the touch. The sound must have been some kind of signal for Tau, because the next thing Ross knew, his pants were being pulled open and Tau was kneeling on the floor between his feet.

Ross lifted his hips so his pants could slide past them. He looked around, but Lindy was nowhere to be seen. The coffee, maybe. He didn't really have time to think about it; his pants were in a puddle on the floor and Tau was rubbing his cheek along Ross' inner thigh. "Yeah?" he asked, spreading his legs a little more and petting one hand over Tau's silky hair.

Tau's teeth were sharp enough to draw blood when he nipped at Ross' skin. "Yeah," he growled. "Yeah."

Ross' hand fisted in Tau's hair and he jerked up into the pain. "Yeah." He moaned when Tau's tongue flicked over the head of his cock, warm and wet. Ross dared to look down, to see how those pink-gold lips looked, wrapped around his dick. Tau was just as gorgeous on his knees as he was standing up straight and tall.

Movement in the corner of his vision caught Ross' attention; Lindy was back. She smiled and knelt down behind Tau, drawing her hands down his sides. He arched into her touch like a cat being petted. The vibrations from his purrs sent ripples of pleasure through Ross, so that he was arching, too. Ross wasn't sure how it happened, but the next time he looked, Tau was naked, his

dark gold skin gleaming with a thin sheen of sweat, and Lindy was flicking her long tongue over the length of his spine.

Somehow, her tongue matched the pace of Tau's mouth, so that each time she licked out, Tau was pushing down over Ross' dick. Ross couldn't tear his eyes away from the sight—they were both so beautiful—so he didn't miss it when Lindy's fingers trailed down the damp path her tongue had left on Tau's skin, and then dipped between the cheeks of his ass. He didn't miss Tau's reaction either: the silky writhing of his body and the low growls of pleasure.

When Lindy pulled her fingers out, Tau gave a high, needy whine and lifted his head to look back at her. Ross couldn't find it in himself to complain, not when she soothed Tau with the hottest kiss he'd ever watched. It was like she was trying to eat the taste of Ross' cock out of Tau's mouth, and for all Tau's pleading noises, he didn't just roll over and let it happen. He bit and sucked at her kisses, leaving her lips bleeding when she pulled away.

Licking the traces of blood from her lips, Lindy flashed Tau a slow, sensual smile, then turned her attention to something in her hands. Ross couldn't see it through the solid bulk of Tau's body, but when Tau moaned, he quickly figured out what it was. She'd used the double-ended dildo on him often enough, and he knew how good she was with it.

He threaded his fingers into honey-gold hair again and pulled Tau's mouth down to his dick. "C'mon," he murmured, arching so the head of his cock slid over Tau's lips. "Suck me. I want to watch her fuck you while you suck me off."

It took every bit of concentration Ross could muster to keep from bucking up into Tau's mouth when Tau finally opened up and took him in again. The big lion must've caught the shiver of his hips, though, because he reached out and pulled Ross up into him. Soon, the three of them were moving in sync, Lindy and Ross both pushing into Tau, and Tau moaning around Ross' cock with every one of their thrusts.

There was a trickle of heat up Ross' spine and with every thrust, with every suck, it grew more and more intense, until his feathers were fluttering and he could hardly breathe around all the pleasure building up inside him. His entire world compressed down to the sensations of Tau's mouth around his cock, and orgasm raced through him, up his spine and over his skin. He cried out, high and open, his hips jerking to shove his cock faster and deeper into Tau's waiting mouth.

By the time he came down from the pleasure-high and could move again, Tau had already drawn his mouth away. Ross caught his breath, just watching for a little while. They were beautiful, his two lovers. The realization that they really were *his*, that he could've possibly gotten so lucky, was almost as overwhelming as his orgasm had been. He smiled at Lindy over Tau's head and then wriggled down off the couch.

He had to shift and fold his wings down tight, but Ross managed to tuck himself down on the floor under Tau's belly. Tau growled, low and broken, as Lindy thrust into him. Ross knew what that felt like, knew how good it was to be fucked by Lindy. The dildo wasn't flesh, but that never mattered for more than the first thrust or two, until the twist of her hips drove all thoughts of

materials—or anything else—out of his mind. Tau obviously felt the same way.

Lindy hissed, her sleek, pale body curling over Tau's back as she came. As she knelt up, she shifted to get the dildo out of her body, and then she used one hand to grip Tau's hip and the other to grip the dildo, fucking him harder and faster than she had before. Tau growled again, his hips shifting over Ross in his effort to move with Lindy's thrusts.

Ross curled one hand around the base of Tau's cock and angled it down toward his mouth. He only managed one lick over the head before Tau was coming in thick, warm spatters all over his face. He jerked back, gasping in surprise, and another spatter of come landed on his tongue. Ross moaned at the taste, salt-bitter and perfect. He tipped his head up, licking the head of Tau's cock clean to get the last of the flavor, making Tau shiver with every lick. It felt good to know that he had that kind of power.

When Lindy pulled the dildo out of his ass, Tau groaned and slumped as if his strings had been cut. Ross wriggled out from beneath him and sat up against the front of the couch, stretching his wings out over the seats a little so he could curl one around Lindy and Tau. Lindy tucked herself up against Ross' side, her body silky with heat and scales. Tau shifted closer, until he was curled between Ross' outstretched legs. He snuffled a little, like he was scenting Ross' skin.

"Mine," he purred, licking Ross' neck and jaw, and up over his cheeks, cleaning away the traces of his own come.

"Ours," Lindy hissed, shifting against Ross' side. He pulled his wing tighter around her, comforting.

"Ours," Tau agreed, his voice a low, soothing purr. His wet, raspy tongue worked over Ross' face, over his lips and cheeks and forehead. When he was finished, Tau pawed at Ross' chest with one big hand, nuzzling up under Ross' chin. Ross wrapped his other wing around himself and Tau, holding Tau as close as he held Lindy.

It felt good, warm and familiar. Familial, like birds of a feather.

TILT-A-WHIRL KISSES

BY VIC WINTER

The first boy she'd ever kissed had been Billy Solomon out behind the Tilt-A-Whirl at the summer fair.

She'd been fourteen and innocent and Billy had been six months older than her, and about to leave Blossom Hill to hit the big city and become a rock star. She could remember thinking he was so cool and so brave and, of course, so mature.

The kiss had been wet and Billy's tongue had been wiggly and he'd tasted like cherry syrup and blue cotton candy. It took her two years before she let another boy kiss her because, honestly, it was kind of gross.

Callie set the jonquils in the vase, their bright faces making for a cheery arrangement. She filled in the bouquet in with daisies and green foliage before packaging it up for Jeffrey to deliver to Mrs. Moncton in the hospital. There were, in fact, a half dozen arrangements sitting on the counter, waiting for her delivery man. A glance at the clock-radio in the back confirmed that he was late. It was almost five -- time to stop reminiscing and close the shop.

Jeffrey came flying in as she collected the keys from her desk and she had to bite her lip to keep from smiling as he began his usual patter of apologies and excuses. "I'm sorry, honey, but it wasn't my fault this time. And don't you laugh at me, chickie-boo, it truly wasn't today. There was such a snarl of traffic on Main Street. The hotel's got a mob outside of it, everyone just hoping for a glance of that sexy bad boy Buzz Sol."

Callie couldn't help it, her ears perked up at the mention of Buzz Sol. She stroked the order tickets in her pocket as she tried for innocent. "Oh?"

Rheumy blue eyes twinkled. "Yeah. And I know you know who he is. Used to live around here before he was rich and famous."

"I know who he is, Jeffrey. I was just surprised there was that big a deal being made out of him being back." Except that she wasn't. Not really. Billy Solomon might have packed up his things and left Blossom Hill and never looked back, but the town certainly hadn't forgotten that the bad boy rock star's roots were right here. "And now I've got to finish up so I can go home."

“This not everything?” Jeffrey asked, piling the bouquets on his trolley.

“Don’t worry, I’ll get the last deliveries.” Three bouquets for one Billy Solomon aka Buzz Sol at the Blossom Hill Hotel.

“Okay, honey. I’ll see you tomorrow, same bat time, same bat channel.”

“No, tomorrow you’ll be on time. Four-thirty, not five past five.” She wagged her finger at him, like she did every afternoon.

“Picky, picky picky.” He gave her a wink and ambled out, the tinkle of the bell covering her laughter.

Callie pushed her way through the crowds in front of Blossom Hill’s only hotel; everything else was either a bed and breakfast or a motel. Johnny Sincopi moved a few folks near the door out of the way and allowed her in through the revolving doors.

“Thanks, Johnny.” She unobtrusively slid a dollar bill into his hand, though really, for making sure she got through the crowd without getting squished, she probably should have slipped him a five at the very least. There were more people gathered in front of the hotel than there was population in Blossom Hill. She thought a few of them might be paparazzi even.

“You’re welcome, Mrs. Driver.”

She gave him a wave and made her way to the front desk where Virginia Watson held court. The old battleaxe looked more than a little harried, fielding one phone call after another. She shot Callie an apologetic look as yet another call came in on the heels of the first two, her blue-rinse hair piled up high on her head, glasses perched on the end of her nose.

“I can take these up,” Callie suggested as Virginia growled and hung up the phone. “They’re for Buzz Sol.”

“Buzz Sol. Buzz Sol. Buzz Sol. I’ve heard nothing but that name since I came on shift!” The phone began ringing again and Virginia rolled her eyes. “You’d think no one famous had ever shown up in town before.”

Callie diplomatically refrained from pointing out that any time someone famous was in town, the same thing happened, although this was the first time anyone quite as famous as Buzz had shown up. Instead she made commiserating noises and offered once again to take the flowers up.

“Oh, that would be great, Callie-dear. It’s the penthouse suite. Don’t tell anyone.” Like there was any other place they’d have put Buzz.

“Don’t worry, I won’t.” She shifted her hold on the three massive bouquets in her arms, and

headed for the elevators.

Pressing the up button, she settled in for the wait. Blossom Hill's only hotel was old, the marble floors and walls had held up beautifully over the years, but the elevators were the slowest known to man. She spent her time waiting watching the crowds outside the door. It was mostly kids -- teenagers -- and it made her remember her own teen years and how much she'd been nuts for George Michael.

The elevator arrived, ready to whisk her up to the penthouse suite and Billy Solomon. She stepped in, pressed the button, and leaned against the side of the elevator. She should have grabbed a luggage carousel -- the bouquets were threatening to pull her arms off now that she'd been holding them for awhile. Or she should have made them less enormous. Of course enormous was what had been paid for, so...

Oh, she was nervous if she was worrying about the size of her... blooms. She was laughing at herself by the time the elevator made it to the "penthouse". It was the top of the hotel, but at only nine stories, penthouse sounded rather grand for what it really was.

She knocked on the door with her heel, peeking over the top her bouquets, only to have her mouth drop open when Joshua Driver opened the door. "Josh?" Oh, he looked good, today. He'd had a hair cut, the unruly mop staying nicely in place for a change, and he was wearing his best suit: dark charcoal with a light gray tie. She could just see he jacket hanging over the back of the brown leather couch, and the shirt stretched over his broad shoulders.

Her husband chuckled, blue eyes twinkling, and opened the door wide. "Hey, Callie. What are you doing here?"

"Well, I'd have thought that was obvious." She nodded at her bouquets, trying not to blush because Josh would know she could have had Jeffrey deliver them and had chosen to come herself instead. "What's less obvious is what you're doing here."

"I'm on assignment." Of course. Josh was the local paper's only full-time reporter. And her husband. And he knew Billy Solomon was the first boy she'd kissed. She'd told him the story one night in bed when Buzz Sol had been on one of the late night talk shows. She wasn't quite sure what to make of his being here. Especially when she wasn't exactly sure why she'd come herself.

Sure Billy'd been the first boy she'd kissed, but the experience had convinced her not to try again for a couple of years. She could still taste the sickly sweet blue sugar... She hadn't really examined it too closely.

She and Josh stared at each other for a moment and then Billy, or Buzz -- she'd have to find out which he preferred -- cleared his throat.

"Who's at the door, man?"

Josh opened it wide and made a sweeping come in gesture. "It's the florist. Looks like she's got quite the delivery. From your adoring fans, no doubt."

Going in, Callie took it all in. She'd never been in the penthouse suite before and it was rather... well, pretentious, really. Everything was overblown and ornate, done on a grand scale. She thought it looked gaudy instead of classy. Only nine stories high so perhaps the hotel was compensating.

Sitting like the king of the world in a huge chair with a high back, and gilded in gold, sat Buzz Sol, complete with eyeliner and lip color, wild hair and leather clothes. He lounged in the chair like he owned not just it and the room, but everything else he could think of as well.

"Just throw those anywhere." Buzz made a tossing motion with his hand and Callie had to grit her teeth.

People had paid a lot of money for these bouquets, and she'd put a lot of time into the arrangements. "The hotel has vases. Shall I see if I can find them?"

Buzz shrugged. "Sure, babe. Whatever."

She heard Josh chuckle behind her and it didn't do anything to alleviate her sudden temper. "I'm not your *babe*. And don't you want to even see who the flowers are from?"

"Either obsessed fans or my manager and fuck knows I don't want to encourage either of them." Buzz winked at her and nodded his head to the right. "There's a kitchen dealie that way. If there's vases, I bet that's where you'll find them."

"I'll go look," Josh offered and Callie raised an eyebrow. Something was up. "Three?" he asked, wearing an innocent look on his face that Callie totally didn't believe.

"Sure. Though I can fit them into one or two if I have to."

She watched him go before turning back to Buzz. And catching him checking out Josh's ass. Not just looking, but checking it out. Buzz Sol aka Billy Solomon was frankly, and appreciatively, checking out her husband's ass.

Buzz's eyes met hers, but instead of blushing or looking in the least bit repentant, he licked his lips and gave her a wink. Callie managed to hide her shock behind her flowers, but she was caught now in the wicked look in Buzz's eyes. It was more mature now, and Buzz pulled it off better, but Billy had worn that same look when he'd taken her behind the Tilt-A-Whirl and kissed her.

The silence stretched between them and she searched for a topic of conversation. "So, you're giving Josh an interview?"

"You could say that."

Oh, she could, could she? “That’s nice of you -- I didn’t think you gave local papers interviews.” Buzz Sol barely gave anyone interviews at all and it was always a big splash when he did.

Buzz shrugged one slender shoulder. “I like being unpredictable. And this is, after all, my hometown, Callie Hillerton.”

“You *do* remember me!” Even if she was Callie Driver now.

“You think I’d forget our kiss?”

“Well, it’s not like it was a particularly good kiss.” Buzz hooted and Callie felt herself blush a little. “I mean, we were both so young and your mouth was blue...”

“I think you should give me another try. You’ll find I’m a much better kisser now.”

“I’m afraid I’m married, Billy.” She held out her left hand as well as she could, showing off the beautiful rings Josh had made for her. “I’m married to Josh, actually.” There, she’d told him.

“I know.” Buzz grinned, eyes flicking over to where Josh was coming out of the kitchen with a single vase half filled with water in his hand. Buzz’s eyes met hers again, a challenge in them.

Josh waved the big mouthed vase in a vague gesture. “This was all I could find.”

“It’ll do.” How she managed not to squeak she didn’t know -- Buzz had her off-kilter. If there had been a Tilt-A-Whirl nearby, she just might have let him drag her behind it again.

She put the flowers down on the coffee table and took the vase from Josh, making short work of shoving the three large bouquets into the single vessel. She didn’t even bother trying to sort them out into something artistic; she wasn’t sure Buzz would have appreciated it and frankly, her mind just wasn’t on it.

When she was done, she turned to find both Buzz and Josh watching her, Buzz still looking wicked, Josh merely looking hot. She crossed her arms over her breasts and pursed her lips. “All right. One of you is going to tell me what’s going on here.”

Buzz laughed and didn’t say a word, but that was all right, because Callie had been married to Josh for five years – she knew how to make *him* talk. Her husband swallowed.

She shot him her best ‘don’t you mess with me, buster’ look. “Well?”

Josh squirmed in his chair. Buzz laughed harder, his bad boy sprawl sexy. It made her think things a happily married woman probably shouldn’t be thinking. But neither of them told her what she wanted to know.

Callie finally rolled her eyes and brushed green bits from the bouquets off her blouse. Men.

“Well, if you’re both going to just sit there, I guess I should go. I’ve made my delivery, after all.”

Buzz pouted at her. “I thought you were going to give me another chance.”

“Another chance?”

“At a kiss. My mouth isn’t blue this time.” He opened his mouth and stuck out his tongue, wagging it at her.

Her own mouth dropped open. Josh was sitting *right* there. What on earth made Buzz think she was going to kiss him in front of her husband? And why was she so tempted to go ahead and do it anyway? “I *told* you I was married.”

“You did.”

“To Josh.”

“Yep.”

“Josh Driver.”

Buzz nodded.

“Who’s sitting right next to you.”

Buzz finally turned from her to Josh. “You think she hit her head or something, man? Or is she always Queen of the Obvious?”

Josh shook his head. “You just have her all flustered. You *were* the first boy she kissed, after all.”

“Josh!” She was going to torture him when she got him home. Tie him to the bed and pluck his eyebrows out one hair at a time or something. She’d figure it out.

“Yes, dear?”

“Shut up.”

Her husband grinned that boyish, up to no good but a lot of fun, grin at her. “Okay. But you really should, you know.”

“I should what?” Damn it, Buzz did have her flustered. She hated feeling out of control.

“Give Buzz a chance to leave a different impression on you. I bet he’s a much better kisser now than he used to be.”

She put her hands on her hips and narrowed her eyes. “Joshua Driver have you been drinking? I am *not* going to kiss Buzz Sol or Billy Solomon or anyone but you!”

Both Josh and Buzz sighed, but it was her husband who spoke. “That’s too bad, you’d look hot together.”

Callie felt like she’d stepped through the looking glass; Alice had nothing on her.

And then she knew she had when Josh leaned forward and said, very earnestly. “Billy Solomon was the first boy I ever kissed, too, only it wasn’t terrible and I very much want to do it again now.” He paused softly. “Unless my wife objects.”

Her mouth went dry at the thought of Josh and Billy kissing behind the Tilt-A-Whirl, the music swirling dizzily around them, the smell of popcorn and cotton candy mixing with diesel fumes and the underlying earthy sweetness of hay and manure. Billy would have been more aggressive with Josh because he was a boy and maybe Josh’s back would have been pressed up against the big cage that contained the engine...

“Do you?”

“Do I... Do I what?”

“Object.” Josh’s blue eyes held hers until she blinked and really looked into them and realized this wasn’t a dream or a hallucination and Josh really did want to kiss Buzz Sol.

No. That wasn’t it. Josh didn’t want to kiss Buzz Sol; he wanted to kiss Buzz Sol while she watched.

Heat bloomed in her belly and rushed downward, making her tingle, making her damp. “I. No.” No, she didn’t object at all.

Buzz slapped his hands together, looking positively predatory. “Well, all right then.” The man licked his lips, patting his lap with both hands. “Come on, Joshy. Let’s see what you’ve got.”

Josh stood and, as she watched, straddled Buzz’s legs, knees up on the chair by Buzz’s thighs. He put his hands on Buzz’s shoulders and leaned in. Buzz met him halfway, immediately taking ownership of the kiss.

Callie heard herself gasp as Buzz’s tongue pushed into Josh’s mouth, one hand sliding into Josh’s hair and tilting his head a little, holding it there. Buzz’s other hand wrapped around Josh’s hip and tugged him in a little closer, their hips rocking once, pushing up together.

God, they were hot together.

Buzz was all bad boy rocker, but smaller than Josh, slender where Josh was broad and muscled. There was little doubt who was in control, though, Buzz owning the kiss, his hands on Josh

holding Josh exactly where Buzz wanted him.

Then Buzz's dark eyes turned in her direction, pinned her to the spot as the kiss went on and on.

She tried to look away. She tried to turn, but she was rooted to the spot, her breasts heaving as she took a deep breath, her nipples rubbing against the material of her bra. God, they were hard, her cunt wet. Just from watching Buzz kiss her husband.

The kiss broke and Josh turned to her, eyes dark. He looked drugged. Turned on. Ready for more.

"He's much, much better now."

"Huh?" She had no idea what Josh was talking about.

"Billy. He's gotten better. At kissing."

"Oh." She kept staring.

Josh tilted his head. "Come find out, Callie. I know you want to."

She was going to deny it, but there wasn't a point. He knew her, just like she knew him. Or at least she'd thought she did. She'd never known about this side of him.

He stood up and held out a hand to her. Callie took a step forward. And then another. She took a deep breath and kept going. Glancing at Buzz found him staring up at her, the look in his eyes similar to Josh's.

Buzz licked his lips.

God, it was hot in here. Someone should let Virginia know the air conditioning up here wasn't working. Or maybe it was just that it couldn't keep up with the heat being generated by Josh and Billy. Who weren't even touching right now, and still making her feel dizzy -- light headed and breathless.

Josh grabbed her hand and kept her moving, tugging her closer until she could feel the heat pouring off him as well. He tilted her head and she focussed on his lips, some of the dark purple - - not black like she'd thought it was -- lipstick from Buzz's lips colored them. Flicking out her tongue, she took a taste almost laughing at the hint of grapes. Buzz Sol wore grape-flavored lipstick. Josh should put that in his article.

Then Josh's lips were on hers and he was kissing her, opening her mouth. She pushed for control of the kiss, tongue slipping into his mouth to taste him, nutty and sweet at the same time. There was a hint in that taste of someone not Josh, not her. It had to be Buzz. Moaning at the thought, she pressed closer, Josh's cock hard against her belly.

She stepped away with a groan, looking up into Josh's eyes. "Are you sure, babe?"

He nodded and turned her to face Buzz, helped her straddle the leather-clad legs so she was sitting across them like Josh had. She didn't realize he'd come down with her until she felt his hips snug up against hers, his cock pressing along her ass. "I'm sure," he whispered into her ear, breath moist and hot where it flowed over her skin.

Moaning softly, she leaned back against him, head tilted to give him access to her throat. Josh nipped and bit at her neck, tongue hot as it traced the veins just beneath the surface of her skin. She could feel Buzz's eyes on her and she met his gaze. The heat there made her feel sexy and wanton.

Josh's arm slid around her, hand hot on her belly. Then he was bending her forward and she opened her mouth just as her and Buzz's lips met.

Just as he had with Josh, Buzz took control of their kiss and it was nothing like the sickly sweet blue tinged kiss behind the Tilt-A-Whirl. No, this kiss was all grown up. This kiss made more moisture flood between her legs. Her panties were soaked.

Buzz tasted like the grape of his lipstick and the smoke of his cigarettes. He tasted like whiskey and lollipops, and he tasted like Josh.

She broke from the kiss with a gasp, looking into Buzz's dark brown eyes. He gave her a knowing, cocky smile, just like the one all those years ago. Only this time he deserved that look - he had her all hot and bothered this time. He had her wanting more.

If Josh hadn't been snuggled up behind her, she would have backed off. She would have gotten up and left before this could get out of hand. Because it so could get out of hand -- she could feel that, from the way her toes were still curled from that kiss, to the way she was panting for every breath like there wasn't enough oxygen in the room.

"I..." She didn't know what to say.

Josh pushed her forward, hips pressing against hers, moving her until she was rubbing against Buzz, his cock hard beneath the black leather he was encased in. Josh's free hand moved to cup her breast, holding the weight of it, massaging gently. Then he flicked at her nipple with his thumb, finding it unerringly beneath her bra, and she jerked, moaned. Her hips rolled and she rubbed first against Buzz's erection and then back against Josh's.

Oh, God, they were both so hot and she was burning up in between them.

As she watched, Buzz reached for her other breast, fingers sliding across the swell of it and then down to pinch her swollen nipple through her blouse and bra. It had her jerking again. It had her leaning forward and begging another kiss.

He gave it to her, his tongue slipping into her mouth, his hips taking up the rhythm, Josh's

matching them from behind.

A low, needy moan left her throat as Buzz ended the kiss.

Leaning in, he began to kiss and lick her neck as Josh continued his assault on the other side. It was hot and sexy and distracting and before she knew it, they broke away from her skin to pull her blouse up over her head.

Their hands descended on her skin, fingertips brushing her ribs just beneath the curve of her breast, her navel, the skin just above her waistband.

Then Josh undid her bra, her breasts spilling out of it. Josh held them in his hands, offering them to Buzz. With a groan, Buzz wrapped his lips around her right nipple, sucking strongly. It went straight to her cunt, each pull making her wetter, making her want.

Buzz's fingers began to tug at the fasteners on her pants and she stopped him. "No fair. You're both still fully dressed." She managed to get the words out, but they were low and husky and they gave away how very turned on she was.

"We should do something about that, then." Buzz held her gaze as he reached for his waistband and tugged his shirt up over his head. Buzz was pale and slender, with little pink nipples and a thin trail of dark hair on his stomach leading into his waistband.

"Glory trail," whispered Josh, proving he was paying attention, too.

Reaching out, Josh traced the trail, fingers continuing once they hit the leather, stroking over Buzz's cock and making him buck and moan.

Callie leaned back, the silk of Josh's tie a cool line down her back. "You, too, Josh."

Buzz reached past her, fingers warm against her back as he undid the buttons of Josh's shirt. A moment later Josh pushed up against her again, hot skin broken by that long, cool line of silk tie.

She squirmed, pressed between them, their skin like hot silk against her. Her nipples rubbed against Buzz's chest, the rubbing a tease. Then Buzz and Josh each took a breast, their fingers finding her nipples. Josh's touches were gentler, Buzz's rougher as they pinched and twisted.

When their fingers met on the zipper of her jeans it was like they'd planned it, a coordinated attack on her senses. That didn't stop her from helping them, though, shifting and lifting up, making it easier for Buzz to push them off her hips and for Josh to tug them down and off.

Josh pushed her up against Buzz again, shifted her so she rubbed against the crotch of Buzz's pants, the heat of his cock warming the leather. It was kinky as hell and twice as sexy. Landing on her hips, Josh's hands guided her, kept her moving so that her clit rubbed up and down, the leather catching her just right. Then all of a sudden Josh's prick was right there, pushing against her folds as her husband tilted her forward.

Josh!” His name echoed through the room as he slid inside her, her clit still dragging over Buzz’s crotch.

“God, you’re wet, Callie.” Josh mouthed her shoulder, her neck, his teeth threatening her skin.

One of Buzz’s fingers slid down her body at Josh’s words, pushing into her along with Josh’s cock. They fucked her like that, mouths on her neck, both of them inside her, rubbing and stroking and thrusting.

She held onto Buzz’s shoulders, the sound of Josh’s hips hitting her ass almost drowning out her breathless panting and soft gasps.

“Come on,” muttered Buzz. “Let me see what you look like when you come.”

Josh thrust a few more times, Buzz slipping a second finger inside her and her whole body went tight, squeezing cock and fingers tight. The pleasure went through her in waves, each one a little weaker than the last until she collapsed against Buzz, her body lax, her neck tingling.

Josh was still hard inside her as Buzz’s fingers slid out, the rock star whispering in her ear. “I want to fuck Josh while you watch.”

She shuddered at the words, squeezing Josh tight. “Yes.”

“What are you two up to?” Josh asked and she laughed. He had a right to be suspicious.

“Did you every wish Billy Solomon did more than kiss you?”

His blush was answer enough.

She let them move her to the couch where she sprawled decadently, the leather cold, but soon warming with her skin, reminding her of what she’d just been doing, how the leather Buzz wore had been hot from his cock. It had her moaning.

Without fanfare Buzz undressed Josh and leaned him over the chair. She guessed they were both too hot to take it slowly. There was something sexy in seeing her husband bent over like that and suddenly she wanted a strap-on, she wanted to do to him what Buzz was doing. For now she contented herself with watching, but that didn’t mean she couldn’t imagine being there with them, filling Josh as Josh filled Buzz.

Her moan had them both looking her way, so she got to see Josh’s eyes as Buzz’s fingers pushed into him, getting him wet and stretched, getting him ready for Buzz’s cock.

It was Josh’s moan that filled the room when Buzz switched fingers for cock, sliding on a condom and then pushing slowly into Josh’s body.

They were stunning together, pushing and pulling, Josh moving into each thrust. She could see Josh's cock, hard and leaking as it slapped up against his belly. Groaning, she crawled over to the chair and leaned over the arm, taking Josh's cock into her mouth. The length and breadth of it were familiar in her mouth, but the urgent way it shoved between her lips as Buzz fucked Josh wasn't.

She sucked and tongued the hot flesh, enjoying the urgent way it pushed in and out of her mouth. It was like both Josh and Buzz were fucking her mouth at the same time.

Josh suddenly cried out, his cock throbbing on her tongue. She closed her lips tighter around Josh's prick, drinking him down when he came in several long pulses, Buzz still moving inside him.

A moment later Buzz's cry rang out and everything stilled.

Then they all collapsed onto the large chair, curled together in a pile of limbs. Her lips found Josh's, and then Buzz's, the three of them kissing lazily.

The first three-way kiss she ever had was with Billy Solomon and Joshua Driver. She wasn't going to wait two years to make them do it again.

The bell over the door tinkled cheerily, Jeffrey hurrying in and beginning his usual apology and litany of excuses for being late, like always. As he started on his patter, Callie waved it off.

"You're here now."

Jeffrey snorted. "I am. Usually doesn't make a difference, though, to the fact that it's after five and the lecture I get. Someone must have gotten laid." His wink was exaggerated, his eyes twinkling merrily at her.

She knew he was joking, but she couldn't help the blush that rose up over her skin, or the way her fingers moved to her neck, to the dark mark left there on the right side by her husband.

"Oh ho! You *did*! Looks like the hubby got a little wild, too." His words had her blush deepening.

"You just take your deliveries and go, old man."

"You should do it more often, honey. It's a very good look on you."

She shook her head as he laughed and tipped his hat at her. Then he grabbed the pallet of flowers and tugged it out the door, the tinkling fading slowly.

She locked the door behind him, her fingers sliding over to the other side of her neck, feeling the

heat of the mark left by Buzz.

In the back room she stood in front of the little mirror and spread open her collar, the two marks dark and shocking against her skin, one on either side of her neck. Jeffrey was right. It *was* a good look on her.

MARKED

BY BA TORTUGA

"Gimme a beer, man." Troy had a fucking headache that wouldn't quit, his shirt tight across his shoulders, itching his skin.

Something was fucking up. He didn't know what and he didn't know for sure if he gave a shit, but his motherfucking spidey-senses were tingling. If he ever got his hands on Jo again, he was going to rip her pretty little head off her body and shit down her neck.

"Here you go." The bartender gave him a draft, doing a sleight of hand thing with the twenty that would have been impressive if his eye wasn't faster than the guy's hand.

Someone sat next to him, a deep sigh dragging out of a wide chest. "Whiskey."

He drank deep, the beer not truly quenching his thirst.

"That helping any?" The guy next to him seemed determined to chat, damn it.

"Not a bit. Yours?" He turned to meet the guy's eyes, swelling up a little, just in case this way trouble looking for a place to happen.

"Nope. It's not doing what I need, for sure." The guy had bright green eyes, and blond hair sticking out from under a gimme cap.

Troy grinned, shrugged. "Sometimes the answers ain't in a bottle, huh?"

"No, sometimes you have to use a shovel." That sounded almost contemplative. Not Zen, but not angry. Just flat. Of course, that tickled his ass and he got to laughing, head thrown back and everything.

The guy laughed with him, toasting him with the little shot of whiskey before tossing it back. Damn, but they were a pair. 'Course, maybe it wasn't so funny, by the way the guy was staring at him, now.

"I got something on my chin, man?"

"No. On your neck." The guy was kind of glaring now. Really.

"It's just ink. A gift from an old girlfriend." Bitch.

"Uh-huh. Red hair? Bright Irish eyes?"

Troy's eyes went wide. "Uh-huh."

"Yeah." The guy pulled down the collar of his black jacket, showing off a lipstick tattoo on his neck. "I might know her."

"Jesus fuck." His hand went up to his throat, fingers tracing the little bite mark scars she'd left him with.

"Jesus has nothing to do with Jo, man. Trust me." Those well-shaped lips twisted, leaving Troy no doubt that they were talking about the same girl.

"Yeah, I hear you. She's pure evil. Pure evil and addictive as crack."

"Yeah." The guy sighed again, holding out a hand. "Law."

"Troy. You got some shit luck, man." He took that hand, shook. Both of them grinned at each other like idiots.

"So did you. It was worth it, though, huh?"

"Maybe. Some days. I guess."

"Yeah." They sat there for a bit, both of them shaking their heads, kinda jonesing on their shared misery.

"You want another?" He nodded toward the shot glass.

"You know, I think I do." Law shoved the glass toward the bartender. "Another for both of us, man."

Troy nodded, eyes caught by Law's ink. She'd turned his happy ass inside out.

"So. When did she dump you, man? Tell me it wasn't in the last, oh, six months."

"Shit. Was January six months ago?"

"Four." Law grimaced, shaking his head, the flash of bright white teeth almost blinding. "Goddamn."

"Well, then." Fuck, he felt like more of an idiot now than he had then, and he'd felt pretty

fucking idiotic.

"Uh-huh. Fuck a doodle." Well, at least he wasn't alone in his misery.

"No shit." He downed another one, wishing it would go to his head.

"You know, this isn't doing it for me. We need something. Maybe something with red sauce." Law gave him a sideways look, the meaning crystal clear.

"Yeah. Yeah, I could use some protein, man." His cock jerked, his fangs poking at his teeth.

"Well, come on, then. I haven't had someone to, uh, go out to eat with in a bit." Winking, Law tossed a twenty at the bartender and slid off his stool.

Dude. Look at that ass.

Man, he so needed to get laid.

Troy followed, doing his best not to snarl at anyone getting in his way. Now that eating was an option, he was all about the hunt.

They moved silently out into the night, spreading apart about six feet, doing the classic dragnet sort of thing. It was weird, but he felt oddly connected to the man, in tune. There was a pretty little boy -- beer dangling from two fingers, hair perfectly coiffed, jeans artfully ripped. His nostrils flared, the healthy smell almost like barbeque. Law gave him a sideways glance and a nod. That would do nicely as a starter.

He sauntered over, hips leading, letting himself want, knowing the kid's body would respond. It worked like a charm, the kid's eyes widening, the stare hot as fire. Nice. Law closed in behind, silent as smoke.

"Mmm. Hey, pretty boy..." He stepped close, humming softly. Here, kitty kitty.

"Hey." The kid moved right into his space, nostrils flaring.

He nodded, hand on the lean waist. "Gonna make you fly, now. C'mere..."

"I like to fly." It was perfect, the way the kid leaned against him, offering up a long, pale neck.

They stepped into the shadows, Troy taking the kid's lips, letting Law have the first nibble. The kid moaned into his mouth, body bucking, and he knew Law had taken the bite. Hell, he remembered how that felt, the slow glide of fangs into flesh, the incredible tingle that spread through his whole body. He focused on making it good, making the kiss wild and hot and shit, getting the kid's blood flowing. Law pressed against the guy from behind, pushing them together, and it was hot as all hell, the strength he could feel there, the barely leashed... something. Rage? Need?

Whatever it was, it worked for him, worked for his cock, which was trying to drill a hole through the kid to Law.

Smooth as whipped butter, Law pulled away and turned the kid, lips sealing over the hot little mouth so Troy could have his turn. The scent of need was so damned strong. He nuzzled the kid's neck, the stubble from the five o'clock shadow tickling his lips before his teeth found the right place to strike, to sink in and feed him. The kid panted, hands clutching at both of them, his heart just racing. Troy could hear Law, murmuring something against the kid's mouth, too low to actually make out words.

He sucked easily, not taking too much, not more than a couple of steaks could help, but enough that he felt like he was flying. Both him and Law knew when it was time to move on, but they left the kid with a smile on his face and a wet spot in his jeans. A little arrhythmia for a few minutes was probably worth that.

"Oh, man. Needed that." They stumbled down the street a little, both of them bowlegged from the hard-ons. That wasn't the only thing they needed.

"Uh-huh. We could find someone else..." But Law's fingers had clamped around his wrist so the guy could drag him into an alley. His back hit a crumbling brick wall, and Law hit his front, humping against him.

His nails clawed down the length of Law's back, scraping hard. "This'll work, honey. Just fine." He was hard as set-up cement.

"Yeah. Yeah, it will." Law kissed him, then, lips mashing against his hard enough that he bled a little.

Fuck, yeah. He got one hand cupped around Law's ass, nails digging in, driving them together. They rocked, his back slapping the wall, Law's hand coming down between them to give them some more friction. Christ. He bit Law's bottom lip, moaning at the flavor of copper and heat.

It didn't take long. No, sir. Not when Law's mouth slid down to cover the tattoo on his neck. He shot hard, entire body rocking with it, wanting. A sharp moan was all the warning he got before Law's fangs scraped his skin. Then Law was bucking against him, humping hard, the scent of them mixing together.

"Oh. Oh, sweet fuck. Needed that."

"Damn. Yeah. That was..." Law raised his head, meeting Troy's eyes, dead on. "Fucking hot, man."

"Yeah. Yeah, no shit." He tugged out a handkerchief to clean up, grinning as he saw Law do the same.

"So..." Law glanced at him sideways. "You, uh, want to hang out, maybe? Talk about our particular problem a little?"

Oh. Oh, hell yeah. "I got an apartment, not far from here. Plenty of room to plan."

"Yeah? Because I think we need to do something about this..." Law's fingers stroked over the tattoo, over the fresh scrape.

"No shit. Somebody's got something to answer for."

To pay for.

"Then we got us a plan." That smile was just as surprising, just as warm as in the bar.

"I do love a good plan." They headed off, together, both whistling "Who's Sorry Now".

Her favorite fucking song.

"Honestly, Jo, darling. Can't we do *something* besides garden parties?"

Jo rolled her eyes and blew smoke out of her nose. Samantha and her little coterie of fluttery girls were becoming altogether too demanding. She really needed to find another little boy. Ninety years and these debutantes and matrons were still only good for appetizers.

"Arrange something. I don't have the time." She was surrounded by idiots.

Samantha started pouting, her little lips trembling, even as she brought the mint julep up to her lips. Every week she was expected to entertain these girls, somehow, for the pleasure of what? Their company? Their blood? Their...

She stood, rolling her shoulders. "I believe, ladies, I'm going to take my leave."

"What? Jo? You're not going to stay?"

"No." And she wasn't sharing her gift, either. Not with these twits who thought of her as a supernatural Botox.

"But... But, Jo. We need you." Oh, heavens. Look at that fluttery little spider-eye trick.

"Nonsense." And also, completely inconsequential. She didn't want them anymore.

"Jo..." She could still hear them calling to her when she walked out the door, but she closed it out, determined to find something more... entertaining.

Possibly something taller enough to dance with.

She slid down the street, enjoying the looks she got as she moved. There was something about a red-head in black leather that made men curious. Sometimes, it got her the wrong sort of attention, but it wasn't as if she couldn't handle herself. Still, the extra couple of shadows that detached themselves from the alley she had just passed put her on guard.

Her nostrils flared and she slowed, listening for the steps. She could stand to fight as well as fuck.

The two shadows never moved any closer. They stopped when she did. Waiting.

Interesting.

She slipped into a club, charming the doorman without a thought. Here little shadows. Come catch me in here.

She could sense them coming, moving closer now that there was a veneer of safety. They split up, one circling around to try to catch her from behind. She slipped onto the dance floor, bodies bumping and rubbing against her. The scent of sweat and the feel of all of those hearts pumping in time made her dizzy, had her dancing along before she even realized it. When a hard male body pressed against her from behind, she leaned in, letting herself enjoy it.

One hand landed on her hip, fingers digging in, almost too hard.

"Gentle. I might break."

"Oh, honey. I know you don't break." Oh. Oh, she knew that voice.

She went stiff, spinning to look into bright blue eyes. "Law darling. How nice to see you."

"Is it nice to see me, too?"

Well, fuck her raw.

"Troy. Of course it is."

"You sure about that?" Law grinned, showing sharp, sharp teeth for a split second. "You actually look a little flustered."

"Nonsense." She didn't do flustered.

She didn't.

Assholes.

Of course, what as a girl to do when faced with two exes, who shouldn't know one another at all? Dance, she supposed. Of course, it didn't *have* to be with them. She turned, looked for something young and nubile to seduce. It would have worked better if Dumb and Dumber hadn't puffed up, snarled until she had no choice but to push against Law, rub.

Law swayed with her, pulling her close, hands tightening until they would bruise her, if she was human. She dared to lean up, nuzzle that pretty little tattoo. Her lips. Hers. Troy pushed up behind her, lips meeting hers on Law's neck. It was like being pressed between two sheets of heated steel. She moaned, her nipples going hard as Troy's cock nudged her ass. Oh, they were fine. They had been fine separately, too. Somehow together they were more than the sum of their parts, though. Or maybe she was just horny. It had been known to happen.

She turned her head, nipping at Troy's neck now, teasing him.

"Mmm." The low growl came from Law, who seemed a heck of a lot more confident than he had been six months ago. He sounded like a hunting beast.

It was surprising and sensual. Hunger had refined them both, beautifully.

That was why she always let them go. They remained far too dependent on her if she kept them. Letting them go made them find their own way, made them so hungry that they learned how to become predators. It was almost regrettable.

Law laughed a little, a tiny sound against her skin as he moved, pressing against her so tight that no air could squeeze between them. The temptation to bite down against the skin under her teeth was irresistible, but as her fangs scraped Troy's throat, the bastard pulled away.

"Uh-uh. Not yet."

"We're dancing, remember?" Law swayed, one hand on her hip, one reaching past to touch Troy.

She pouted a little, but let them have their way.

Spoiled brats.

They were lovely, though, working her around so they could touch, but also have easy access to her. Well, and not let her get away. The lights went down, the music turning more sultry, raw. Law and Troy started grinding against her, hips moving in perfect concert. Giving her ideas. Her head fell back, eyes caught by the swirling lights.

Lips moved over her throat, her collarbone, teeth scraping a tiny bit. She wasn't sure where Troy ended and Law started. They moved too well together. A concerted attack.

"We're... we're dancing, remember?" Was that her voice? So husky and raw?

"Uh-huh." Troy licked just behind her ear, the scrape of his tongue rough as a cat's. "Dancing."

Law nodded, moaning, cock like steel against her hip. "Dancing."

"This isn't dancing." It was *so* much better.

"No?" They swung her around until she was almost dizzy with it, too fast for most of the other dancers to see. She ended up clinging, her breath lost, the room tilting around her.

"See? Dancing." Law was laughing, but it was sexy, not offensive. It held that sort of deep, male satisfaction that boded well for the night. She slid her hands up Law's body, fingers flicking over his nipples, nails scratching.

His nipples hardened under her touch, but it was Troy who moaned for her, chin on her shoulder while he watched. "Do it again."

"Bossy." She rumbled softly, but flicked those tiny bits of skin again.

Law shuddered. "Good. Oh, honey. Good."

"You are luscious." She pinched this time, tugging the little nubs a bit.

"You want a taste, Jo? Want a little bite?" Law was teasing her, pushing into her touch and then pulling away.

"Careful, child, or I will take more than you wish to give."

Troy growled against her ear. "Not children, Jo-Jo. Not anymore."

That low groan made her shiver, the fangs against her ear made her snarl. "Temper, temper."

Troy's fingers dug into her hip, dragging her against his cock.

"We just want a little of our own back, Jo. You played us." The flash of temper seemed to abate as quickly as it came, Law smiling at her, daring her.

"You knew what I was offering."

Troy snarled. "Bullshit."

"It isn't. You knew what I was."

"Part of it. The whole leaving and having how many others at the same time? We didn't know about that." Law's voice had a vicious edge, and she started to wonder if she ought to worry.

"Didn't you? I never promised you anything but pleasure." She tried to pull away; they were too determined, much too strong to play with.

Troy's fingers wrapped around her wrist. "No. You're not spinning away so easily this time."

Law moved close again, his body almost unbearably hot against hers. Someone had been hunting. "One night, Jo. Then you can go, if you still want to."

"One night? That's all? What's the catch?" She didn't trust them, either one.

"There isn't one." They both rubbed on her, the scent almost overwhelming her. "We just want one more night."

"Where?" They were babies, no threat at all. None. And she wanted, so very badly, to play with someone special.

Someones special.

"We have a place," Troy said, putting an arm around her waist and pulling at her.

"Come on." Law took the other side, flanking her so she couldn't duck away.

"I should have seduced shorter men."

"You picked us for a reason, Jo-Jo." Law pressed against her, his ribs against her breast.

"Did I?" She couldn't believe that.

Troy nodded, moving her hips against his cock. "You did."

"Look how well we get along." That chuckle stirred her hair, Law's hands all over her, then Troy.

"Such pretty boys. Have you fucked him yet, Troy?"

"Yeah. Yeah, he's tight. Good. Wild."

Yes. Law could let go completely. Enjoy himself. She knew that. A soft little sound escaped her, the idea of Troy and Law's bodies slamming together getting her wet.

"Troy is amazing, Jo. You know that." Law turned suddenly, kissing her hard, his cock prodding her belly.

She stretched up, toes leaving the ground as Law stood tall, stealing her breath. They both blinked at her when the kiss ended, and suddenly they were moving fast, all but carrying her. The air actually whistled in her ears. Fuck, they'd learned a little something together. Jo was impressed, relaxing as they manhandled her.

She was a little disoriented when they stopped, but as soon as they dragged her inside a building

things came into focus again. Soft candlelight. Pillows. A seduction scene in an old warehouse. Lovely. "You've been busy."

Troy chuckled, nuzzled her nape. "We've been planning."

"We have," Law agreed, smiling as he turned in front of her, hands landing on her hips. "Do you like it?"

"I do." It was oddly sweet. They had to be up to something.

It wasn't tacky, either, which was a nice change from the garden party girls. Lord. Of course, they didn't give her much time to look around. They moved in fast. Troy's mouth crashed down on hers, this kiss harsh and hungry, hands hard on her arms. Law pressed against them, and the kiss went three ways suddenly, Law's tongue pushing in between them to taste them both. It more than tripled the pleasure. She raked her nails along their sides, relishing the way they both gasped, sighed into her lips.

They started on her clothes like they were twins with one mind. Pulling at the leather without ripping it, they got her peeled like a banana. They were in denim, which was infinitely easier, or it would be if her damned hands would work. They kept distracting, spinning around her, keeping her off balance.

Law was rubbing against her, Troy kissing Law, and their hands slid all over her. Breasts to pelvis, they stroked her, teased her. She got into the action, finally -- tweaking Law's nipples, squeezing Troy's balls gently.

"Sweet. Oh, sweet, Jo-Jo." Law had always liked to talk more than Troy. It was almost fascinating, seeing them in the same scene. She kissed Law's throat, teeth just grazing the skin. She loved the way the salt and copper flavors mingled with desire. He leaned his head back for her, letting her have access to his skin. Letting Troy have it, too. Troy licked around her fangs, tasting, completely unafraid, which should have made her growly, but she was too hot.

Law moaned. "Oh, God, pretty. So pretty. I want..."

"Mmm. You always were so hungry, dear Law. What do you want?"

"Anything." For just a moment, Law was the puppyish boy she'd found all those months ago. Then he attacked, kissing her hard, driving her against Troy.

It was Troy that got them moving to the bed, got them kneeling together. Law tugged her close, licking at her neck, one hand reaching for Troy. They really did work well together. It was easy, to tear open one shirt, then another, fingers searching for skin.

They pressed her down, one behind her, cradling her, the other kneeling in front. Law kissed her everywhere, starting at her cheeks, moving down over her mouth, her throat. Troy tugged her hair loose, pulling her head back to bare her throat to Law. She growled low, pulling at Troy's

touch. He held her, though, and Law let his fangs touch her, making goosebumps rise on her skin. She would never allow this if it was just one of them.

Law's hands wrapped around her wrists, bringing her hands to his chest, tugging her to her knees again. "Come on, Jo-Jo. Have a touch while I have a taste."

"It's okay, Jo-honey. You offered us tonight. Let us in." Troy's voice was soft, fingers cupping her breasts, fingers almost gentle.

They pushed her, driving her mad with soft touches, hard nips. No single caress was like another. She caught herself swaying with it, moaning low and needing. They pressed in, hot and good, making her gasp, and everywhere she moved she found warm skin and hard muscle.

Jo followed Law down, straddling him, hips shifting as she rubbed against that full cock.

"Oh." Law licked his lips, his hands sliding up over her thighs, her hips. "Want you. Want you both."

"Then take what you need, man." Troy growled, teeth bared, sharp on her shoulder.

"Want you to do me while I do her." Law's eyes gleamed like a hunting animal's.

"Hell, yes."

"Then let me get on the bottom, boys. I want to be able to see."

Like some kind of crazy Chinese puzzle, they all shifted and turned until Jo was on her back, her legs spread wide. Law settled between her thighs, legs pushing hers even wider, and Jo stared up.

"Hello, child. It's been too long."

"Yeah, Jo-Jo. Yeah. Been so damned long." He pushed at her, the heat amazing, the light in his eyes almost hypnotic.

"Yes." She tilted up, taking him in easily, eagerly.

She could see Troy over Law's shoulder, could tell when those long fingers shoved inside Law's body. She hummed, her hand sliding down Law's side, around that hip. She wanted to feel, wanted to know what Troy's fingers were doing. They were stretching Law wide, pushing in and out. Every move seemed to shake Law, and he finally groaned and pushed deep inside her, surprising her. Making her gasp.

Her shoulders left the mattress, hands curling around Law's ass to tug him closer, deeper.

"Oh, God. Yeah. Please." Law started moving, short little bursts that rocked her.

"Harder." She snarled, teeth flashing as she fought the urge to bite, to snap.

"Yes." Troy whispered it, growling, snarling, slamming into Law like there was no tomorrow. It helped, gave her more of Law.

The world jerked, once Jo found their rhythm, found what would have been their heartbeats. Sweet. Such sweet, hot boys. They'd changed, gained just enough of an edge together to make her shiver. Troy's eyes met hers, the passion and desire there stunning him. Law moaned, rocking and pushing, his skin like fire, his fangs bared. They were so pretty together. They felt so good. She reached down, rubbing her clit, stroking herself in time with Law's thrusts.

"Uhn. Oh, Jo-Jo." Moving faster and faster, Law slammed into her, his skin slapping hers. She could hear each thrust of Troy's thudding against Law.

"Yes. Yes, boys. My boys." Her boys. Hers.

"Yours." They both agreed at the same time, and Law came for her, shooting deep into her, hard and fast.

Her own orgasm was triggered by Troy's howl, the sound vibrating all around her.

They collapsed on her, rolling to either side, kissing her cheeks and chest. Their hands moved on her, tracing patterns on her skin. She arched, pushing into the touches, their hands better, more vital than sex. Law's teeth grazed her shoulder, sending a bolt of pure electricity through her. It ratcheted up a thousand times when Troy bit deep into the side of Law's neck.

"Troy." He pressed a wrist to her lips, bruising her, the thin skin splitting for her.

Law's teeth pierced her skin, and suddenly it was a complete circle. All of the bad vampire novels talked about it, but nothing could come close to describing it.

She groaned, pulling hard, the rhythm of them overwhelming, flooding her mind.

Law sucked at her, every pull making her jerk, even as Troy spilled into her mouth. They were hers. All hers. So much better than a garden party.

It wasn't hunger that woke her. It was heat. Heat and hands and cocks and teeth drove her awake, pushing her higher and higher, until she could not hide in sleep another second.

"Boys."

"Mmm. Jo-Jo." Law slipped and slid against her, like a seal or a fish, or maybe something sexier but still wet.

"Dawn's coming..." She moaned, arched against him.

"It is." Troy licked along her throat, down her breast. "S'close."

"I should..." Her words trailed off as Troy's teeth teased her nipple, electricity sliding down her spine.

"Shh. You're safe here, honey." Law bit at her, gnawing at her skin.

She reached out, hands finding nothing but fine, warm skin. They were loving on her, both of them moving, undulating. They loved on each other, too, kissing for her, putting on a show. She turned her face to Law, stretching to press their lips together, take a kiss. His hand slid up to cradle her cheek, his thumb rubbing along her cheekbone. Law took her mouth, hungry and hard, tongue pushing between her lips. She moaned as Law kissed her and Troy slid down her body, mouth and hands sliding between her and Troy. Law moaned, too, pushing against them both when Troy moved from Law's cock to her pussy, back and forth, over and over. Licking and sucking and driving them wild.

Her toes curled, lightning flaring inside her. "Boys! Boys..."

"Jo..." Low sounded just as hot, just as intense as she did. Troy was setting them on fire.

She reached down, tweaking her own nipple before reaching for Law's, pinching hard.

"Oh." The sounds came out long, drawn out, and sensual as hell, Law arching against her. Against Troy. The dawn didn't matter anymore. The world didn't matter. The past didn't matter. Only right now.

Law kissed her again, reaching down to stroke Troy's hair. They all moaned, the lightning flashing through them with every touch. The need inside her grew, made her muscles tighter and tighter. Law touched her, his fingers sliding against Troy's lips, against her wet flesh, making her shudder. making her moan. Her orgasm hit her like a wave, shudders and need rocking her. Law was right behind her, shaking like a leaf, his cries filling the room with sound.

She could feel Troy, hand working, jacking himself off, pushing hard against their legs. Pushing at both of them, Law moved, pulling Troy up and bending to take that hard cock in his mouth. Lips stretched, Law sucked hard, eyes closed, pure pleasure on his face.

Jo arched up, took Troy's lips in a hard, toothy kiss. Troy came for them, shouting into her mouth, his body jerking gracelessly against hers. She could swear she felt, as well as heard, Law chuckle.

They slumped together on the bed, legs and arms tangling as they shifted. The sun was out, beating at the warehouse walls. It made them all restless, which had her smiling. They'd grown up enough to know, to have the instinct. Neither of them had before she left them.

As if he'd heard her thoughts, Troy growled softly, hand hard against her hip. "Not leaving again."

Law slid up to nuzzle her neck. "No more leaving. Ours."

"Yours? Are you quite sure, child? That you two can keep me?" She lifted her chin, allowing them in.

"I think we know how to now, yeah." Law bit her. Hard. Testing her resolve.

She pushed into Troy, gasping. Whether it was a 'do it again' gasp or a 'stop' one, she wasn't sure. Troy chuckled, hands sliding up and down her back, smoothing her skin, soothing her. There was no soothing the pull and drag of Law's sucking, though. Her motions began to slow, hips moving in time with the suction at her throat.

"That's it, Jo. That's so pretty." Troy was like the devil, whispering in her ear. Law was more like an angel, drawing out the heat in her blood.

"Gonna keep you, lady. Gonna keep you busy enough that you forget how to walk away." That voice filled her mind, Troy pushing, trying to get inside her head.

Oh. Oh, he hadn't known how to do that before. She could feel Law pushing at her, too.

"You... you've grown." So strong, so focused... Jo moaned, her entire body flushed with an undeniable pleasure.

"We've been working together," Law murmured as he pulled back from the twin punctures on her throat. "Working to be enough for you."

She reached out with trembling fingers, tracing Law's lips. "How did you find each other?"

Law kissed her fingers, laughing softly, while Troy snorted and pulled back to show her a tattoo on his neck. "By accident."

"Mmm." Her fingers traced the ink. "Fate."

"Must have been." They said it together, both of them rising up to kiss her, their mouths meeting hers and each other's.

She was fucked.

Deeply.

Utterly.

Fantastically.

Law scented the air, wrinkling his nose at the undercurrent of sweat and garbage. Sometimes it was nasty to have a super sniffer, especially when he wasn't quite in hunter mode yet. Good thing he could smell Troy and Jo-Jo more, Troy's spicy musk mixing with Jo's deep midnight scent.

How fucking cool was it that Jo was still with them, three months after the one night that they'd asked for.

"So. Club, restaurant row, or park?"

"Club. I don't like winos." Picky, spoiled little girl.

Troy snorted. "No, just kids on ecstasy."

She swatted Troy hard enough that the slap echoed.

Law shook his head. "Now, now, children."

"I'm going to feed him Quaaludes for a month." Jo bared her teeth, hands landing on her hips. That pushed her breasts up, the tiny, dark red corset making her irresistible.

They both drifted close to her, their hands sliding around her waist, meeting at the small of Jo's back. Law nuzzled at her hairline. "He might be fun that way."

"Neither of you want me dopey. You like when I'm on fire." Troy's mouth was husky and Law knew Jo's hand was on Troy's cock, just like one was on his.

"We want you any way we can get you, baby." He kissed Troy, humping into Jo's hand a little.

Jo hummed, the sound sharp enough to make his hunger flare. "Let's go dance, children."

"Dancing. I like that." Troy grinned wildly at them, pulling them along, making a beeline for the club.

Jo's laughter pushed them, chased them.

Law laughed like a fool, dancing already, pushing and pulling. They were all ready to hunt, ready to have fun.

The bodyguard didn't even see them go in, Jo whispering into his ear as they slid by, hot little tongue almost steaming against his ear.

Law shuddered, and Troy rubbed up against his ass. "She's pretty when she works it, huh?"

"She's fucking amazing, lover. Hot enough to need both of us to keep her out of trouble."

"No shit. We'd best do that now, baby." Jo would latch on to someone if they didn't remind her who loved her best.

Troy slid over, reached to touch the ink on her neck. Four puncture wounds, two pairs of lips.
"Come on, Jo-Jo. You're ours now."

Theirs.

They'd marked her now, as surely as she'd marked them. Which Law was grateful for, because he would never have found Troy otherwise.

God knew, it was going to take both of them to keep her.

QUITTIN' TIME

BY BA COLLINS

“What’s this?” I looked down at the envelope. “It’s not payday.” My stomach sank in horror. I hadn’t screwed anything up this week that I knew of.

“Open it up, Gail, and find out.” Frank grinned at me. I knew he wouldn’t say another word, the asshole. Would he grin like that if it was a pink slip? Maybe. I knew he had a nasty sense of humor.

I’d been hired at the machine shop to do grunt work, just to show they would hire women. I hadn’t cared; I needed a job to get through another semester of college. One day Frank had seen me watching one of the new guys fucking up a lathe set-up and asked if I could do better. I did, and Joey went to the chop saw. He had only been daring me, hoping I’d fuck up. When I didn’t, he stopped needling me. Then I told him I’d grown up working in my dad’s machine shop. That had opened his eyes. Maybe he hadn’t seen my application.

“Well, the way this week’s been going....” I put a needle file into the envelope and ripped it open. The shop was quiet. Quitting time, and no third shift to follow us on a Friday. Not a lot of people around. I’d been really focused on getting to the end of the tap set up on my latest job and hadn’t actually noticed the time bell.

Just Frank and me here...and Ewen in the far corner, just pushing up his welding helmet and noticing it was quitting time. I pulled the envelope contents out; it looked like a paycheck. But it was about double one of my regular part time checks. “Holy shit, what is this?” I looked up at him. He’s about six four. I’m not short, five four is a reasonable height, but I look him in the name badge on his uniform shirt.

“Quarterly bonus.” Frank indicated a similar envelope in his own vest pocket. “We did good this quarter.” His face was still crinkled in a grin. He was old enough to have lines etched into his face. It was good to see him relax his usual glare into a smile.

“But I’m part time...I didn’t think I qualified.” I thought about what I could do with some actual cash. Unplanned for, unbudgeted money. Maybe a hair cut? I could get my boring dirty blond hair permed, perhaps. Hm. New clothes. Definitely new clothes.

“I think the old man hopes you’ll program for us morons someday.” Frank put his finger

alongside his nose for a second.

I supposed he knew I was studying computers, but not for doing manufacturing stuff. Well, if they wanted to think that, I wouldn't say differently. Nothing wrong with a fall-back job.

"Okay..." I know my voice wasn't so sure.

Frank winked and turned around. "Got one for soldier boy, too." He went off to intercept Ewen. I watched him walk away, muscled back under the shop shirt with a leather vest over it. He kept his head shaved. Today it was shiny and fresh, but when he hasn't kept up on it, you could see he would be balding. He must be over forty. Other than that, it would be hard to tell. He was built. I could imagine a six-pack under the shirt front too.

"Hold up." Frank didn't quite touch him as Ewen turned away.

Ewen hated the 'soldier boy' nickname. He didn't say much in general. I'd heard he had just come back from Iraq. He had a nasty limp sometimes. He was cute, though. Dark curly brown hair, matching chocolate brown eyes. I'd caught him looking at me a few times with interest. Damn. At least one of those times I'd been staring too and turned away fast.

He was good looking; I like beards on guys. His was short, trimmed to fit under his welding helmet. "What?" he snapped.

"Bonus check." Frank didn't mess with him. Oh sure. I get terrified out of my mind and he gets just the facts. What a prick.

That stopped his glare. "Bonus? Oh, no shit." He tucked it in his pocket. He even smiled at Frank. He didn't look at the check. Some people never open up their paychecks in front of everybody.

"Didn't mean anything by that, ya know." Frank shrugged at him.

Ewen took a deep breath, and let it out, visibly relaxing. "It's better than 'Gimp,' I guess." The assholes called him that too. I'd heard that had led to a fight outside the shop one evening.

"I can learn by other guys' mistakes." Frank clapped him on the shoulder. "You two want to go for a beer?"

I'd been thinking fondly of sleep. Taking college courses during the day and working second shift at a machine shop had sounded like a great idea until about two months into the semester. I'd gotten about three hours of sleep a night for the last three days. That all vanished when they both turned to look at me, Frank with an evil glint in his eye, and Ewen with a hopeful look.

"Okay." I gulped. I've been wishing Ewen would look at me for weeks...and afraid Frank would. Both of them? It's not like I'm some hot chick. As the guys say, I have a nice 'rack,' enough that I keep my tits squashed down in a sport bra at work, but my ass is pretty wide.

"Don't force yourself." Frank grinned.

I blushed. "I haven't gotten much sleep lately."

"Damn, I shoulda gone to college." Frank pulled his vest off and stripped his shop shirt off. Sadly, he had a t-shirt on under it, so I only got to find out that he'd been to Sturgis Bike Week last year. I still had to wonder about the six-pack's existence.

"You'd have stayed up all night writing code?" I asked as innocently as I could. I usually spent my breaks checking email and doing homework. I'd gotten a reputation for being stuck-up, taking my breaks in my car. It beat getting hit on by the jerks. Ewen and Frank never came over. I wouldn't have told them off, but maybe they didn't know that. I'd lost a good fifteen minutes last night watching Frank tell the guys some long involved story about adventures at Sturgis last year. When he smiled, everybody had to pay attention, even though he wasn't what you'd call cute in a guy.

Ewen chuckled. "That's what I figured she meant." God, he had a cute smile when he relaxed. He'd stripped his welding jacket off at his station and was pulling on a leather jacket.

"Sorry. Gutter mind." Frank didn't sound a bit sorry. "Here I was imagining frat parties gave you those cute little smudges under your eyes."

"Argh." I'd noticed them too. "Frat parties? I don't think so."

"Nah, you look too smart for that." Ewen smiled. "Saw you writing on that laptop the other night. You know your tongue sticks out when you're concentrating?"

I felt my cheeks get warm and went to the ladies' room to change, hearing chuckles behind me. At least he seemed to think my geekiness was cute. Back into jeans, dorky t-shirt with physics diagrams and a jeans jacket. Had I known I'd be invited out for drinks, I could have done better. But with them? Frank was a biker; what would I wear to a date with him? I didn't know anything about Ewen. Argh.

Frank was waiting by the door, wearing his leather jacket. The denim vest over it looked cool, but I didn't know why he hid the black leather under ratty old faded denim. He looked the scary outlaw biker right now. So why were my tits so tight looking at him? *Because I'm a moron.*

"Hurry it up, we ain't got all night before the fucking bars close."

"Where's Ewen?"

"He's outside already." Frank eyed me for a moment. "Who you want to ride with?"

I hadn't even thought that far. They both rode motorcycles to work. I drove a compact shitbox. "Um..."

He tugged at my ponytail. "I ain't being seen around that foreign piece of shit."

“Hey!” I couldn’t quite free myself. He moved me by the hair so I was a lot closer, looking up at him, his hand buried tight in my hair. I gasped in surprise. He’d made a few comments, but I didn’t think he meant anything serious by them.

“That’s cute.” He pulled me against his chest. His jacket zipper pressed into my breasts, right through my t-shirt, his arm held me wrapped tight around my back. “Well?”

I couldn’t think what he’d been talking about. I was having trouble thinking past being pressed into his body. “Well, what?” I breathed. I’d been scared he’d flirt with me before. The reality was overwhelming. *I ought to just go away, he’s got to be forty, way too old for me. But he’s hot, damn it.* He bent closer; for a moment I thought he was going to kiss me. I gasped. I couldn’t deny to myself that I was getting damp between the legs at the force of his arm around me, grinding me into his chest.

He laughed and let go, pushing me out the door.

Ewen had a new Harley, and leather jacket with big Harley emblem on it. No helmet, but I didn’t expect that. Helmets are optional in New Hampshire. He had already started his bike.

“So who are you riding with?” Frank reminded me.

Ewen made a face. “You take her, man. Not sure I can steady two people at stops right now.” He looked away.

“That’s too bad.” I felt bad for him; guys hate admitting weakness. “I wanted a ride on that pretty new bike.”

“Don’t want to be seen with an scary old one percenter?” Frank reached into his saddlebags and handed me a shorty helmet.

I glared at him. “My mom would faint either way.” I wasn’t sure what a one percenter was, but he had a patch that said so on his vest, so it must be a biker thing. My mom would shit if she saw me getting on a bike with him. Or probably even Ewen. Bikers are scary.

Frank settled me on the passenger seat and then climbed on. He turned the key and the big motor came to life under us, vibrating against my legs and up into my butt cheeks. “Hang on.” He advised and revved out of the parking lot. Ewen followed.

“Where are we going?” I yelled in his ear belatedly. I’d lost track when he sat down in front of me, back and ass just about digging into me.

“Roadside Bar.” He squeezed my knee.

Oh, God. The trashiest bar in the area. Well, that might be where he was comfortable. And hey, I was with two guys. I’d be okay. Except from them. I should have insisted on driving. I’d need

them to agree to get home. *Shit, I'm stupid.* This could get bad.

The bar was as I'd remembered, a line of bikes and hot rods out in front and in the small parking lot. It was a nice night. I think more people were outside than inside. *I'm pretty tired, I'd better have just one.* Nobody bothered me, but I could see a lot of looks my way. Walking out of here alone unmolested might be tough.

Frank bought a round of beer when we managed to get in, and found us a spot at the bar. Ewen got on one side of me and Frank the other, as if they were protecting me from the crowd. Maybe they were.

"You cool, Gail?" Frank asked.

"Yes." I fibbed, eyeing the guys around us. Leather jackets and tough guys and the occasional biker gang colors as far as the eye could see. This was definitely going for 'stupidest idea ever.'

"Pretty tough bar for a college chick." Ewen said in my ear. I could feel his breath on my face. He was leaning close; I could feel warmth at my back. Oh my God, they're both flirting now. What the hell do I do with this?

"You'd never know it from the way she handles the shop idiots." Frank frowned in confusion.

"At work they're sober, and I did grow up in Dad's shop. I dunno how to deal with guys like that in a bar," I admitted.

"I wondered where you learned machining. You don't act like a vo-tech chickie." Ewen hadn't moved. I felt something brush my cheek. Beard hair. Oh my. I didn't dare turn; he'd be close enough to kiss. I'd thought about that every time I'd watched him thinking at work, tapping his lips with a soapstone welding scribe. Kissable, almost pouty lips for a guy.

"After school since I was about twelve and every summer in college."

"Sorry, thought this bar would be good." Frank had a couple of pink spots on his cheek. No kidding. He was embarrassed.

"It's okay; I feel safe with the two of you." I wondered if I did, really.

Frank made a face, and Ewen leaned back a bit.

Was that wrong to say? Oh. 'Safe guys' are the ones you can trust not to hit on you. Oops. They both wanted to hit on me?

While we were all being uncomfortably quiet, a big guy tapped Frank on the shoulder. Frank turned and talked. The bar was noisy enough that I couldn't hear what was said. The guy laughed and went off, shaking his head.

“So what was that guy asking?” I asked Frank when he turned back.

“Whose date you are.” He took a sip of beer, watching me.

I looked between them.

Ewen blushed. That was cute. I realized he practically had his arm around me.

“Is this a date?” I asked. I was really wondering what Frank had answered.

“I wouldn’t mind.” Ewen put an arm around my waist. He felt strong and warm. I looked down. His hand looked huge on me.

“I asked the both of you here.” Frank draped his arm over my shoulder and onto Ewen’s. That got him closer to me again. I was pressed between their bodies.

It hit me what he’d said. What? Was he bi? That would explain some of the jokes in the shop. I waited for Ewen to explode.

“So you did.” Ewen’s lips tightened together. “I ain’t all that interested in guys.” But he didn’t pull away or get mad.

“Says you.” Frank squeezed his shoulder. “I saw you watching me change last week. Ya had to sit down for a bit.”

Ewen sighed. “I was afraid you’d noticed. One of the assholes told me you were gay, and I was wondering.”

I wondered if I’d been bait. If they went off together, I was going to feel like shit. I tried to pull away.

“That a problem, Gail?” Frank loosened his grip. “I’m bi, not gay.”

I shook my head, “Not unless I get left behind.” Where did that come from? Since when would I date two guys? Did I even want to watch two guys fuck? Was I just an excuse?

Ewen’s eyes widened. “I don’t fucking think so.” He leaned over and kissed me without any preamble at all. His lips were warm, hard on mine. If I opened my mouth, he’d have his tongue in my mouth. I couldn’t quite relax that much. Frank didn’t let go; if anything, he got closer, grinding his hip into me, holding me in place so Ewen could keep kissing. That should have scared me. Instead I nearly melted in their arms, right in the middle of the crowded bar.

“Hot little babe like her doesn’t get left in the dust.” Frank shook his head.

Ewen released me from his lips, leaned back with promises in his eyes. I wanted to find out what he wanted very, very badly.

“Hot...little...?” I echoed in shock, finally hearing what Frank had said. I’m not hot. I’m kind of chunky, really, big tits, wide ass and short. The only reason I’m in shape is that I walk around campus a lot, since parking is such a bitch. I’d walk to work too, if it weren’t five miles from campus.

“Don’t argue.” Ewen’s voice had gotten deeper.

“Okay.” I agreed faintly. “You two are nuts.”

“Not all guys want starved fifteen year olds with no tits.” Frank leaned into me, his eyes fierce.

I didn’t try to escape; I was already pressed into Ewen. I did make a little noise; I couldn’t tell if it was fear or excitement myself. Maybe both. I wanted to say I wasn’t sure about this idea, but words weren’t coming out. *You don’t go off with a strange guy for sex on the first date, damn it!* Let alone two.

Just because I worked with both of them didn’t make it better. It’s not like the guys at the machine shop were angels. Last week a police car had come and arrested one of the guys. Frank was foreman because he was scary, not just because he was a good machinist. He could keep people from getting into fights. I’d never seen him have to do more than give someone a shove, but I’d heard about him picking guys up and heaving them around.

“Big eyes, babe. Is it good or bad?” Frank relaxed a little. His greenish blue eyes went gentle. He didn’t move, but I felt that I could slither out from between them if I wanted to.

“I’m not sure.” I managed to gasp. I shouldn’t find two guys mashing me exciting, their damn belt buckles had probably left bruises, but I was soaking into my jeans hard enough to feel it, and my tits hurt from being crinkled so tight. My body didn’t seem to care that they were flirting with each other, too. Or maybe that was even better. I’d looked at gay porn a few times; seeing two guys grope is all good if they’re cute.

Ewen sighed. “I don’t usually jump a chick on the first date.” He clumsily patted my shoulder. I could feel the sag without even looking.

Frank gave a little grin and shrugged. “I do, but only if she wants it.” They both stepped back a hair.

I nearly staggered, I’d been leaning on them harder than I realized. I didn’t step away from the bar. Damn, that would have been fun.

“If you two faggots don’t want her, I’d be happy to take over.” Another guy spoke up. He must have been watching the whole thing. He was another big guy, a hardcore biker like Frank. Is there a bike club called the ‘Mooks’? The guy reached for my arm.

I tried to duck, but even before I’d ducked, Frank was in his face. All I could see was his back,

faded denim vest over his leather jacket. "She's much too good for you, asshole."

Oh, God, this is going to turn into a brawl. I wanted to crawl into the floorboards, but as always, they refused to open up conveniently.

"Let her say so, fucker." The other guy snorted.

Frank stepped aside a little. "Gail?"

I wanted to kill him. How the hell should I answer that? "Thanks, but they asked first."

He looked startled. "Ya okay with that shit?" For a moment, I could see actual concern. In his own rough way, he was worried for me. What does a scary biker see in Frank to worry him?

Am I okay with it? I'd just been asking myself that, obviously enough that Frank had backed off and this guy had butted in. "Okay enough. Thanks for asking, though."

He held a hand out. "I'm TJ."

Frank's face wasn't giving any hints. Son of a bitch.

"Gail." I let TJ shake my hand.

He let go. "Change your mind, babe, come find me. I wouldn't make you share with nobody."

I blushed hard. "Thanks."

He turned and went off into the crowd.

Ewen sighed. "I was sure that was gonna get ugly."

"Nah, TJ and I go way back. He thinks I'm a fucking perv," Frank answered.

"Are you?" I wondered what I was getting into.

"Only if ya want it." He squeezed my shoulder gently. "I guess this was a little much already?"

"I didn't say no," I replied. I didn't like the sag of his shoulders. I didn't want to go away with nothing tonight. "Let's...give it a try?" I hoped my voice wasn't squeaking. *I don't believe I just agreed to a threesome!*

"Finish that beer up, I got a round to buy." Ewen tipped his mug into his mouth, looking happy.

"I'd better not...I'm running short on sleep this week." I looked at my forgotten beer mug.

"We'll make sure you get some tonight...sometime." Frank smiled. He ran a hand over my

shoulder and up to my throat, warm fingers leaving a line across my skin I could feel even as he brushed my lips with a finger.

“Lips like silk.” Ewen’s eyes went a little vague watching us.

“You got that right.” Frank ran the back of his hand across my face. “Baby soft skin.”

Where did all this come from? Right from a scary confrontation to flirting again. “Nerd tan,” I broke in.

Frank blinked hard. “What?”

“Nerds stay inside all summer.” I tried not to laugh at his confusion.

“That’s one way not to have tan lines.” Ewen was trying to stare through my t-shirt.

“Her beer’s empty.” Ewen waved for another round.

“But I didn’t....” I looked back. My mug was empty. Hm. Who drank it? I didn’t.

“That’s the last round, folks.” The bartender set our beers down.

“Damn,” Ewen muttered.

“I got beer back at my place.” Frank slapped him on the back.

Ewen chugged half his beer. “Okay.”

Frank lived in a little trailer set back in the woods not all that far from work. “Ain’t fancy, but the bed’s comfy.” he said as he turned off the bike.

I was terrified. What was I doing here? This was nuts. I didn’t move when he got off the bike.

“C’m on.” He held a hand out.

I froze.

“Hey, it’s okay.” He got closer. “Don’t be scared. No is still no, babe. Change your mind and I’ll grumble and take ya back to your car.”

“Really?” I whispered.

“I swear. I got lots of turn-ons. Date rape ain’t one.” He picked up one of my hands and kissed it. His eyes were serious for once.

“That’s good to hear,” Ewen said.

“Oh, no, not you, asshole. You’re mine. No backing out now.” Frank turned and grinned.

Ewen backed up a step. “Ah....”

“Jesus, you’re easy!” Frank cracked up.

“Prick!” Ewen blushed hard enough to see it in the yard light.

“Gail?” Frank repeated.

I took his hand. He pulled me closer. No more fooling around. Hard up against his chest for a thorough kiss. Lips hard against mine, still tasting of beer. Tongue in my mouth, exploring like his hands on my back and down my ass. I was up on my toes to kiss him.

I felt an extra hand on my side. Ewen was closer now. His arms went around Frank and me. Frank grinned inside our kiss, and his arm went around Ewen. I felt lips on my neck, softly exploring and nibbling. I’d had sex in college, but nothing this adventurous. Having two guys at once was new enough that I was halfway scared, but it felt so good my knees were feeling a little rubbery.

Frank let my lips go. He watched Ewen continue to kiss my throat with an intent expression. Not quite a smile. “Let’s take the party inside,” he suggested.

“Hm?” Ewen opened his eyes. “Yeah, I guess. Been awhile.”

I kissed Ewen's cheek. His beard was long enough to be soft against my chin. Frank’s five o’clock shadow had been like sandpaper. “I can’t imagine why.”

He made a face, looked away. “I was in fucking rehab for a year.”

“What, no cute nurses?” Frank steered us inside.

Frank’s trailer was little. One-room kitchen and living room, and a decent-sized bathroom and a single bedroom. Painfully neat.

“Just one.” Ewen blushed again. “A guy.”

“And you were frustrated enough not to care?” Frank stripped his jacket off, then his shirt. He did have a six-pack, tight muscles disappearing into his jeans. He must work out to be that built at his age. I tried not to stare below the belt buckle.

“We got caught in the fucking act.” Ewen was still angry with that. “I got discharged. He lost his fucking job.”

I hugged him. “Well, there’s no stupid rules in civilian life.”

“Oh I dunno. Ain’t all that bright to fuck your foreman.” Ewen sighed.

I hadn’t thought of that. But this wasn’t a career job for me, just work to keep food on the table while I was in college. It was his career.

“I could tell you I won’t take it to work, but you won’t fucking believe me until I prove it.” Frank turned around with a beer in his hand from the fridge. He made a face, pursing his lips and raising his eyebrows at us.

“I decided I didn’t really give a shit when you invited Gail along.” Ewen smiled at me, taking a beer from Frank. Hm. He’d taken his shirt off too. He had more chest hair than Frank and whiter skin. His muscles didn’t bulge, but you could see them all. I wondered if he’d always been thin, or if that was since he’d been hurt in Iraq.

“I’m not cute enough to lose your job over.” I took off my jacket. Nobody should be, really, but maybe it wasn’t me. Maybe he was hotter for Frank.

Ewen raised an eyebrow and smiled with one side of his mouth. “Says you. Besides, I just gotta keep him happy and it’s all good.” He nodded toward Frank.

Frank extended a muscular arm and grabbed me, snorting, and flopped us down on his couch. “No, but you keep thinking that way,” he said to Ewen.

I ended up sprawled across his lap. He pulled my back against his chest. “Yeep!”

“She’s wearing too many clothes.” Frank ran his hands under my t-shirt.

“Yeah.” Ewen pulled one of my legs up and started unlacing my boots.

I lost track when Frank’s big, hard hands pushed my bra up and cupped my breasts hard. I did feel my jeans getting unzipped and pulled down, but I could only focus on the tingling and pull of his fingers pinching my nipples and tickling them. Fingers in my pussy were nearly a complete surprise. Frank didn’t let go when I moaned and thrashed.

“Hot...I want to taste that.” Ewen crouched down and kissed my mound, then worked his way down to the wet flesh of my labia and slowly, inch by inch to suck and lick my clit. His arms wrapped around my hips, hands holding my waist.

I struggled against his arms at the pleasure. Frank held me tight. “Where ya going?” he growled into my ear.

“N-nowhere!” I got a hand loose and buried it in Ewen’s hair. “Oh God.” I managed a look and saw that Ewen had lost his clothes. All I could see was naked back and ass. He wasn’t quite

kneeling.

Ewen let go and stood painfully. "Can't do floor anymore," he groaned.

"Bed's big enough." Frank let me go enough to pull my t-shirt off and unhook my sport bra.

Ewen's eyes got bigger when he saw my tits without the bra. "Oh...why the fuck do you keep them squashed down like that?" He leaned and suckled on one, holding my shoulders.

"So no one loses fingers in the cut off saws," I gasped, letting him pull me to my feet.

"That's a fucking fact." Frank dropped his jeans. I wondered how he'd kept all that in there -- he was a big boy. Big smile when he saw me looking. Ewen looked and turned bright pink. His dick was up too and it wasn't anything to be ashamed of. Bigger than any of my boyfriends'.

"Cute blush." Frank ran his hand down Ewen's neck and pecs, over his belly and grabbed his dick, hard.

Ewen shuddered and a few drops of precome spurted from the tip of his dick. "I'm gonna lose it," he whispered.

Frank produced a condom from somewhere and rolled it on Ewen's dick. "I ain't big on kneeling either." He pushed Ewen into the bedroom. The bed took up nearly the entire room.

"Orgy much?" I giggled. Hopefully they wouldn't forget me.

"I like to sprawl out, and, yeah, once in a while." Frank pushed Ewen on his back and crawled over him. He took Ewen in his mouth without any hurry.

They looked like great gay porn. Dark-haired Ewen sprawled on his back, grimacing in pleasure as the tough, bald guy lay on his thighs and teased his dick. I wasn't sure if I should join them. This was the moment I was scared about, finding out whether I was just an excuse to get them in bed. That would be lame. Watching them was great, but I wanted to touch them too. Wanted to feel Ewen's shivers as Frank sucked his dick. I could see the motions, but it would feel so much better if I was touching them.

"Gail?" Ewen opened his eyes and patted the bed. "I wasn't done. Sit on me, baby."

I crawled onto the bed. Frank looked at me with a grin, right around Ewen's dick. He had his arms wrapped around Ewen's hips. Ewen had been digging his hands into the bedding. He reached for me as I knelt next to them. "Face him, just lift your left leg over me, yeah, that's it."

I followed his hands guiding me to crouch over him. He grabbed my hips and crushed me down onto his face, digging his tongue into me deeply. I writhed over him as much as I could with his arms gripping my thighs. The tingling and heat of pleasure made it hard to think or open my eyes.

When I did, Frank was glancing up at me. I put my own hands on my breasts and pinched my nipples. His hands tightened where he was holding Ewen's waist. He couldn't talk; he had Ewen in his mouth, right up to the pubes at each stroke. His eyes admired me moving over Ewen's face as he did, though. His hips moved, too; he was rubbing his dick into Ewen's legs as he took his dick in his mouth.

I felt pleasure tightening my hips, clenching me down on his tongue. I moaned and bucked against him, unable to stop myself. Ewen laughed into me as I struggled. Then I felt him moan too. Frank was moving faster on him, swallowing him to the base and nearly releasing him in turns. *I don't think I could manage that.* That was my last thought before pleasure exploded from my core, closing my eyes and arching my back at the sensations overwhelming me.

Ewen's hips moved under Frank frantically, pumping harder and harder. He shouted into me as he came.

Next thing I knew, Frank was lifting me off Ewen. "Don't smother the poor bastard, babe."

"I'd die happy." Ewen mumbled, wiping his beard, wet with my come.

Frank lay me down. "Looked awesome from here." He was still ready, hard as a rock. "And I want some of that," he growled, holding me down.

"Oh, God." I was still vibrating from my orgasm. Fingers in my soaking pussy made me moan helplessly into his lips as he kissed me.

"That ain't a no." He reached over my head to a shelf and got a condom out of its package. He sat up for a moment to put it on.

"I didn't get to see you change. I've been thinking about it for weeks!" I rubbed myself, hoping he wasn't going to hurt, but not really caring.

"Thought so." Frank spread my legs wider, thrusting fingers into me. I was tight from orgasm; it almost hurt, but it made me moan in pleasure as well. "Your pussy is tight." He wasn't as thrilled about that. He put another finger in.

I couldn't help a wince at that. "D-don't worry about it."

"Damn, no. When I fuck you I don't want to see that frown." He rolled back and rubbed my clit with his other hand. "Relax."

"That's not...relaxing!" I giggled. His fingers stopped hurting, though. I looked up at him, half sitting, watching me as he fucked me with his fingers.

"I'm not hung like a damn horse." Ewen rolled to face us. "Give me a couple and I'll trail blaze for you."

“I’m not a damn path!” I snorted.

“Pleasure trail.” Ewen kissed my shoulder. I shivered. Frank was still rubbing me, keeping me lying limply back in the pillows. “God, you taste good.” He continued over my shoulder and onto my breasts.

I didn’t want to move, with them on both sides of me touching everything. I was so close to orgasm that I began to go again, pleasure swirling over me. I kept my eyes opened to watch them, Frank with a serious face and Ewen so absorbed in his oral survey of my skin. Frank leaned over, stuck his tongue in Ewen’s ear gently, and then chewed on his earlobe.

“Shit....” Ewen tensed at the attention and turned away from me. That left him face to face with Frank. They looked intently at each other for a moment. Ewen leaned closer and kissed Frank. Frank turned it into a deep, open-mouthed kiss in seconds, never stopping with his hand in my pussy.

“That’s hot.” I whispered, putting my hands on their shoulders. Frank hadn’t stopped touching me.

“Hot enough?” Frank looked over to me.

I smiled. I wasn’t sure, but I pulled him closer anyway. He pushed my legs further apart and leaned into me.

“Oh yeah....” Ewen turned his head to watch Frank reach down to guide himself into me.

I felt him at the lips of my vulva. He felt immense; how the hell would it fit inside me?

“Relax....” Frank kissed me and pushed a little harder. His prick went into me, just barely. That was okay. I kissed him back, wriggled to try to help him along. “Hold still!” He shivered. “I want to jam into you, babe; don’t fucking encourage me.”

His face was harsh, intent. I froze. He thrust into me slowly. I felt everything stretching, and then it began to hurt. I tried not to make a face; it’d feel good in a moment.

“Jesus, you’re so tight,” he gasped. His eyes opened. “I’m hurting you.” He pulled out of me very carefully.

“No, no....” I gasped; his face was twisting like he was blaming himself.

“Bull.” He slumped his shoulders.

“Back off, let me try.” Ewen rubbed his shoulders. “Gail?”

I looked to see that he was up again, rubbing himself looking at me. “Please....”

Frank sat back. His face was blank, his shoulders still slumping.

“It’ll work out.” Ewen kissed him and shifted to lean over me.

“Did I ask you for reassurance?” Frank growled.

Ewen smirked at him. “No. Deal.”

“Look, you!” Frank grabbed him, and they wrestled a little. I squeaked and rolled away before they squashed me. Frank was strong, but Ewen seemed to know more wrestling.

“Hey.” I giggled. “Forgetting something?”

Ewen blushed. His dick was up, rock hard.

Frank stopped trying to choke him. “Not for a second, babe.” He gave Ewen a push toward me.

Ewen put another condom on, watching me every second. He crawled carefully over me, kissing his way up. His kisses left trails of fire that made me gasp.

Frank smiled and shifted to get behind Ewen. “Didn’t take long, did it?”

“Been a while.” Ewen closed his eyes for a moment as Frank grabbed him by a shoulder and did something behind his back. Ewen ran his hands up my thighs. “You been torturing me for weeks, Gail. God, I’ve wanted to ask you out.”

“Why didn’t you?” I didn’t realize looking at guys tortured them. *Hmm.*

He shrugged. “You never talked to me.”

“You’d never know it, but I’m kind of shy, and you’re cute and grumpy.” I ran my face over his beard.

He frowned.

“She ain’t wrong. You do act like, ‘don’t fucking get near me,’” Frank murmured from behind Ewen.

“Tired of pity,” Ewen growled. “But right now, it doesn’t matter.” He bent and kissed me hard. I felt his dick push between the lips of my pussy, rubbing against my swollen labia and over my clit.

“Fuck me!” I spread my legs wider.

He slid into me slowly, watching my face.

I shivered and moaned, he was spreading me wide, but it felt so good I didn't care. He finally thrust home and leaned closer. "So hot, damn you are tight!"

I pushed onto him harder, "Open me up, then!"

He shivered. Frank had just leaned away and put some lube on his fingers. Frank's hand went behind him. Ewen froze, thrust deeply in me, biting his lips. He stared hard at me.

I could just see Frank over his shoulder. His face had gone intent, serious. "No hurry, man, keep her happy."

"Not sure I can do both!" Ewen whispered. His face twisted in pain.

"Relax, think about me." I moved on him. He thrust gently in and out, distracted. I grabbed his chin beard. "Focus on me!"

"Okay, ow, you bitch!" He thrust harder, almost too hard.

I moaned in pleasure. It almost hurt but, oh God, he was hitting places inside me that no one had. He got my legs up and pushed back on each side, leaning on them to keep them wide. He smiled as I groaned louder. It might be hurting; he was pounding me deep inside, but I couldn't tell at the moment. I might be regretting this later.

He groaned himself. Frank's hands were on his shoulders, and he was pressing closer and closer, slowly pushing himself into Ewen's ass, stretching him carefully out. I could feel him pushing right through Ewen's body. Ewen pressed his face onto my shoulder, burying another groan into me.

"You have a sweet ass." Frank began to move in Ewen.

Ewen didn't answer. He thrust into me harder and harder, hands on my thighs hard enough to be painful.

I could feel them both; Frank's hands were around both of us, his expression fierce and intent as he got his way with us, finally. "Shit, I thought I'd be where you are, man." He moaned. "But this—is—awesome!" he shouted, and rammed hard into Ewen's ass.

Ewen screamed, pumping into me hard enough that I knew he was coming. That push sent me over the edge too, pushed hard against the bed, unable to move under their combined force. I screamed with him, my insides burning in pleasure, my legs pinned and nearly painful from being forced so wide. His thrusts sent me higher and higher. I couldn't keep my eyes open to see what was happening anymore.

As Ewen slowed, I could feel Frank through him again, pushing him down against me as he thrust into him. Hard big hands grabbed my shoulders and it was almost as if Frank was fucking

me himself, right through Ewen. My orgasm hadn't really finished. Spasms were going through me again, from Frank grinding Ewen into my cunt hard as he rode.

Ewen moaned helplessly as he was fucked into me. His dick hadn't gone soft, and I felt something, maybe he was going again, lying nearly limp over me. One last hard slam and Frank shouted wordlessly, a roar too loud for the room, shaking and shuddering as he shot his come into Ewen's pounded ass.

"Guess I can't complain about not getting any anymore," Ewen mumbled, sprawled over me.

My pussy was still throbbing. "You'd better not."

"Or I'll fuck you raw." Frank sprawled on his back beside us, his eyes closed, looking bonelessly relaxed.

"You got my ass cherry, dickhead. What more do you want?" Ewen turned his head. I combed his wild hair with my fingers as he talked. His shoulders were tight again. I rubbed them. Was he sorry he'd tried this?

"He wants to be where you were." I whispered.

"Maybe in a while. I'm wiped." Ewen sighed. "My fucking knee ain't happy either."

"No hurry." Frank ran an idle hand over both of us, almost possessively. "Never thought I'd get either of you, let alone together."

"I'm gonna wake up tomorrow morning and this will have been a hell of a dream." Ewen mumbled, "Though...fuck...the way my knee feels, maybe not."

Frank rolled Ewen onto his back and began to knead the scarred leg above and below the joint. "This might help."

"Ah!" Ewen winced. "Yeah, Jesus, I'd have dated you before this if I'd known you'd do that!" he mumbled.

"If I'd known you weren't getting PT, asshole, I'd have offered sooner," Frank growled.

"You're cuter than the physical therapists I had." Ewen smiled.

I felt a little left out again. I must have frowned.

Frank turned his head to look at me. One dark eyebrow lifted. "You just wait, Gail, I ain't forgot you."

"Sorry...." Ewen reached out to squeeze my arm. "Didn't mean to ignore ya."

“You’re hurting. Don’t worry about it.” I rolled closer to him.

He kissed my forehead. “Don’t want to screw up the first date so quick.”

“You weren’t, it’s just a funny situation....” I cuddled harder into his side.

“I’ve been dreaming about it for weeks.” Frank shifted so he could stroke my legs as well as Ewen’s. “The two of you flirting, looking and getting pink whenever you got caught. All I could do not to laugh sometimes.”

I hid my face.

“It wasn’t that fucking obvious, was it?” Ewen growled.

“There’s a fucking pool for when the two of you date,” Frank snorted.

“So does this count?” I asked.

“Nice blush. Yeah.” Frank leaned over me and kissed me very softly. He ran his hands up my sides. Tingling followed his fingers. “I ain’t gonna tell on you two.”

“Like you’ll have to.” Ewen hugged me again. “I’m not good at hiding things.”

“Fuck up at work, and I’ll burn your damn ears off,” Frank murmured.

“You are such an asshole,” I giggled. It was hard to even think as he ran his fingers back into my pussy.

“Yup. Paid for it, professional even.” Frank dug his fingers into me. “Oh yeah.”

I shuddered as he pushed three fingers up into me, but not in pain. Harsh pleasure ran up my body as he finger-fucked me. I looked at his face. No smile, nothing gentle there at all. Why was I biting my lips to keep from screaming just at his expression? Because he was scary?

He pulled his fingers out of me. “I ain’t asking this time.” He crouched over me and I felt his dick brushing my lower lips again.

Ewen kissed me. “I can see the answer’s yes anyway.”

I couldn’t say it out loud, but nodded.

He thrust into me. My pussy was throbbing so hard, I couldn’t tell if it hurt. *I’m not going to be able to walk tomorrow.* I screamed as he rammed home. Ewen got out of the way, letting Frank hold me close and tight, thrusting slowly in and out of me, tiny movements that made me shudder in pleasure.

Frank shivered. I managed to open my eyes for an instant. Ewen was behind him, pushing a gloved hand into Frank's ass. Some part of me wondered where the glove had come from, but I lost that thought as Frank groaned and began to thrust harder into me.

"Do you want it?" Ewen leaned closer, his voice a growled whisper.

"Oh fuck, do me, yeah!" Frank moaned.

What was he going to do? Frank clutched me tight, burying his head in my shoulder and moaning again. I looked down his back to see that Ewen was pushing his hand slowly and carefully into Frank's ass. Fisting, oh my God. Frank whimpered as he was violated from behind.

"Best I can do tonight." Ewen had a fierce look on his face. "Keep doing her!"

"Yeah." Frank began to move again.

"Harder." Ewen jerked his arm.

Frank screamed and thrust into me. "Oh, God, you son of a bitch!"

I couldn't even feel Ewen as Frank fucked me, bringing me to thrashing screams of pleasure and pain. He didn't stop this time, didn't check on me. I felt my pussy tighten up on him. I was coming, even in the burn of his huge cock plunging into me.

"Oh, you bitch, oh, God!" Frank shouted. For a moment I saw Ewen again behind him, thrusting into his ass, smiling down on us.

"That's it, I want to see you two come together." Ewen grabbed one of my breasts and squeezed it hard.

That little pain sent me over the edge. I struggled under Frank as the pleasure hit me, spasms so intense I couldn't lay still. He held himself up on his forearms, moaning as I screamed. I couldn't tell if he was feeling pleasure or pain or both.

When I opened my eyes again, Frank and Ewen were kissing. Frank was sweating as if he'd run a race. Ewen was smiling. "I'm taking it out now." Ewen moved slowly.

Frank shuddered and shivered as Ewen slowly took his arm out of Frank's body. I couldn't quite watch; that was beyond anything I'd ever imagined.

"It's okay, Gail, I liked it." Frank looked down at me. "It's one of my kinks. I dunno how soldier boy knew."

"Lucky guess." Ewen stripped the glove away and pitched it into trash. "You said you were a perv."

Frank slowly pulled away from me. I was sticky with sweat, and it wasn't all his. My legs felt weak. My throat was a little hoarse from screaming.

"You good?" he asked, rubbing a hand over me.

I nodded. I didn't trust my voice yet.

He grinned and lay to one side of me. Ewen took the other side, and relaxed with a loud sigh.

Nobody said anything. I found myself drifting off to sleep. I awoke to soft voices over my head.

Ewen murmured, "I might want her to myself once in a while."

Frank sighed and lost the smile. "I can see that. I could say the same about either of you. But not if you ain't interested."

"You didn't let me finish. Only as long as I get you alone, too," Ewen continued.

I lay on my back and smirked. They sounded so serious.

"What about you, Gail?" Ewen sounded a little worried.

"Oh, I was just realizing what I was going to buy with my bonus." I answered. I wanted to date both of them, which was weird. Ewen was strong and sweet. Frank was scary, but strong and careful. Different guys, even more different when they were doing things to each other. There was definitely one thing I'd need to date either of these bikers.

"What's that?" Frank reached out to squeeze my shoulder.

"A leather jacket." I rolled over and smiled hard at both of them.

THE REGULAR GISELLE RENARDE

“Tell me what happened or I’ll tie your ass hair to your pubes!”

“What makes you think I have either?” Toby grinned, gyrating his hips in Saada’s direction, green apron flapping as his hands danced above his head. Spinning behind her like a figure skater, he brought more filters down from the storage cupboard.

“Excuse me!” the rich bitch in front of the counter intruded. “Would you mind watching your mouth in front of respectable customers?”

Saada dropped the dozy cow’s vanilla soy latté on the counter, letting a few drips of the fawn liquid splash from the sides of the paper cup. Eyes wide and innocent as a calf’s, she replied, “I would gladly watch my mouth if there were any respectable customers here.”

The woman in the white fur coat bobbed her head like a Thanksgiving turkey, her bad wig threatening to fall onto the glass dessert case. Her mouth swung open long before any words came out. It hung there, gaping, until she finally scoffed, “Excuse me?!”

Snapping a plastic lid onto the paper cup, Saada pushed it across the counter with her knuckles. “I can’t even pretend to respect someone who thinks slaughtered little bunny carcasses make a good fashion statement.”

Rich bitch’s pupils vibrated with such intensity, Toby thought her retinas were about to detach. Eying Saada’s dark serpent necklace paired with a studded-leather dog collar, the rabbit killer muttered, “You’re one to talk about fashion.” Through pursed lips, she then demanded to speak to the ‘intolerably rude’ girl’s manager.

Saada’s expression betrayed no concern as she turned to call Machiavelli von Hitlerston in from the lunch room. After three years of working side by side with the Radi-Femi-Veg, Toby knew her countenance and her true feelings rarely crossed paths. He also knew that with one more warning for vulgarity, she’d be out on her ass.

“I’m the manager here,” Toby declared in the deepest, most authoritative tone he could muster.

Through squinty eyes, rich bitch assessed the skinny arms poking out from his beige standard-

issue shirt as he brushed the coffee grounds from his hands. “Well? What do you plan to do about behavior like this?”

Heart beating like crazy in his chest, Toby was convinced the old bag would call his bluff. Glancing at Saada as she evaded the woman’s peering eyes by cleaning the steam nozzle, he shrugged. “Encourage it?”

Turkey-neck gawked at Toby, collagen lips open wide as a baby’s at feeding time. “Well, don’t expect to see me back in your store any time soon. I only spend my money where I’m valued as a customer.”

A smile broke across Saada’s naturally full lips, revealing a row of perfectly squared teeth. Her ponytail of wavy, black hair bobbed as she waved goodbye with one hand like those ceramic cats you see in Chinese convenience stores. What color was her skin? Not quite light, but not quite dark. Olive, maybe? Where she came from was one of the few things Toby didn’t actually know about her.

Once rich bitch and her dead bunny jacket were out the door, Saada bid, “Good riddance!”

“Holy shit!” Toby whispered, grasping at his heart. With no customers in line, he snuck around to the stools on the coffee-lush side of the counter. “You’re gonna get us fired one of these days, you know that?”

Saada shrugged. “She had it coming. Anyone who has the nerve to wear fur...”

Did she trail off, or did Toby just stop listening, gazing at her in disbelief? Saada had balls. She was a force of nature! Grabbing a raspberry Danish out of the glass case, Saada ripped it into not quite equal halves. The dab of blood-red filling stayed all on one side. Biting off half the circle of jam, Saada passed the big half over to Toby. “Thanks, babe,” she said. “You’re too good to me.”

“No worries.”

Tearing his semi-circle of Danish into shreds of pastry, he watched his best friend scoop the drizzle of icing from hers. “What?” Saada shrugged. “It looks like come.”

Rolling his eyes, Toby threw a Danish strand at her—a pre-emptive strike. He knew Saada was about to launch that saccharine blob straight at him. It wasn’t that he was psychic, only that he knew her so well. Fortunately, Saada’s aim was off, and the icing flew to the left and plopped down on the red vinyl stool beside him.

“Toby! If you’re in front of the counter, you’re cleaning,” the voice of God came booming from the back room. The dreaded Nero de Sade was back from her break.

“No problem, Jin,” Toby exclaimed to his boss in what he hoped was his typically endearing manner. Hopping off his stool, he scooped up the blob of icing with a napkin and grabbed a J-cloth to wipe down the tables.

Toby was the favorite wherever he went, and Saada freely admitted that drove her nuts when he first started working at the café. His pleasant demeanor and eagerness to work didn't jive with the atmosphere of deliberate indolence cultivated by the other baristas. Why was he always so happy? He worked for minimum wage, for fuck's sake! But his amiable manner had nothing to do with the job. He was in love, back then, and when you're in love that glee gushes into every facet of life.

"Sa-ay-da! Sa-ay-da!" the boss hollered, though they were standing side by side.

"Sa-ha-da," she corrected Jin's pronunciation for the three hundred and thirty-third time. It never made any difference.

"Sa-ay-da, go restock the condiment bar. Toby, you empty the trash yet?"

"I'll get right on it," Toby said, clicking his heels.

"Whatever," Saada muttered, dragging hers.

The heavy-sweet scent of coffee garbage filled the air as Toby grabbed hold of the black plastic bag. As Saada nestled in beside him, sorting through the cartons of milk and cream, tossing out the empties, he tried so hard to catch hold of her elusive aroma. Saada didn't wear perfume. The scent of her was truly the scent of *her*. But all Toby could smell in that moment was rotten trash.

"So, when are you going to tell me what happened?" she whispered, her sweet breath warm against his long neck.

"I'm moving back in with my parents," Toby relented. He would have to tell her eventually. Saada never let up when there was gossip to be shared. "Simone kicked me out."

"Why? What did you do?"

"Nothing! She just ended it out of nowhere. Why would you assume it's my fault?"

Sniffing at a carton of half and half, Saada offered a casual shrug. That girl had the biggest, greenest eyes he'd ever seen, but they always seemed to be looking elsewhere. Now she was sorting the packets of raw sugar from the packets of refined. Those lashes, too! Saada didn't even wear make-up, and still she had the long, thick lashes of a heifer. They were gorgeous, gorgeous eyes. Why had he never noticed that before?

"I guess it just wasn't meant to be," he continued.

"I'm really sorry, sweetie," Saada consoled, wrapping an arm around his waist and pulling his hip against hers. Shocked she was actually touching him, Toby could barely breathe as Saada set her head against his shoulder.

“Hey, you two! This is work time, not touchy-feely time!” Jin barked behind them.

“Lick my zesty asshole,” Saada muttered, recoiling under the manager’s command. “You deserve so much better than Miss Priss, anyway. Every time Simone came in here, she treated me like dog shit. And she didn’t treat you much better.”

“I know,” Toby confessed, shaking the memories from his head. “I’ve had it with women. From now on, it’s back to guys. Fewer complications. Less mess.”

“Yeah, right,” Saada laughed, giving him a playful shove. “You said exactly the same thing when you broke up with Mark: *I’ve had it with guys. Girls only from now on.*”

“Well, Mark broke my heart.”

“So did Simone, from the look of you. See? Heartbreak is an equal opportunity destroyer.”

“Fine, then I’m not dating anyone anymore.”

The automated doorbell chimed as Mr. Tall, Dark and Handsome entered the building. “Not even him?” Simone’s hot breath sizzled Toby’s ear before she rushed behind the counter to greet the guy they referred to as The Regular. Sure, there were a number of regulars at the café: the morning-rush regulars whose faces were all a blur, the afternoon regulars who stared endlessly at their laptops, playing more solitaire than getting actual work done. This regular was different. He came in every Thursday, late, when the new issue of the free weekly GLBT newspaper came out, so to speak. He bought a bold coffee and drank it black.

Smoky and mysterious, they only really took notice of The Regular because he was just so fucking hot. Half his appeal lay in his thin goatee, with moderate stubble embracing his jaw line. His eyes were such a strange shade of grey, you would almost call the color foggy amethyst. At once cocky and coy, his longish jet black hair was dripping wet with rain that evening. He ran his hand through it as Saada bent over the counter to engage him in a hushed conversation. Strange, since The Regular didn’t usually make small talk.

Suddenly Saada was looking over at Toby, and then The Regular was looking at him too. Were they talking about him? What were they saying? Standing in the middle of the café, a garbage bag in one hand, Toby felt like a total doofus in his forest green apron. Although this was precisely what he’d been wearing when he met Simone, and she fell for him, for whatever reason. Shit, this guy was so striking, like a model or a Bollywood star, that Toby felt like an awkward teenager in his presence. How could Saada converse with him so casually? How could she talk to him without her throat twisting into a dry knot? Without her stomach heaving? She had balls, that Saada. She could do anything.

The Regular picked up his coffee cup, newspaper tucked neatly under his arm, and turned in Toby’s direction. His gleaming leather shoes made a clacking sound against the faux-marble floor as he took one step forward, and then another, and then a third. Toby’s chest seized as The Regular came closer, and he held tighter to the putrid garbage bag. Is this what a heart attack felt

like? But it wasn't all that painful. Actually, now that his heart was beating again, this was more like excitement than anguish.

Maybe The Regular would draw nearer, would press Toby against his hard body, would lean in to kiss him like Clark Gable. That's what Toby wanted, a man like Clark Gable. A man who would take control. A firm hand to show him who's boss. The Regular could be that man. He could easily be that man. And he was on his way over.

"Hey, Toby," Jin bellowed, and his fantasy was gone with the wind. "Do I pay you to stand around, or do I pay you to take out the trash?"

"Do you pay me at all? Barely," Toby scoffed, suddenly aware that he was becoming way too much like Saada. That which we love, we grow to resemble.

The Regular's goatee encapsulated an amused grin, and he offered Toby a formal dip, almost like a bow, as he turned on his heels. At his regular table by the cozy fireplace, he set down his coffee cup and his newspaper. On his regular purple velvet armchair, he sat down himself. Oh, to be that chair, caressing The Regular's firm ass, embracing his back, holding his arms!

"Hey, Toby! What is this, nobody do any work day?"

"Sorry, Jin. I'm going," Toby answered, dragging the leaking sack behind him.

Why did Jin have to be so insulting, and today of all days? Couldn't she see she was embarrassing him in front of The Regular? Well, there was a reason the staff called her names behind her back. She never cut them any slack. Saada claimed it was a management technique—that a team united against their manager wouldn't take out their aggressions on the customers—but as far as Toby was concerned, Jin was just plain mean.

When he returned from dumping the trash, the boss was serving a coffee-lush at the counter, and Saada was mopping the trail of coffee the garbage bag had left in its wake. The Regular was still at his table, looking hotter than ever in his reading glasses. Sneaking up beside Saada, Toby's stomach tumbled as he tried to imagine what she might have found out about the mysterious stranger. It wasn't usually his style to reach out and touch the women he worked with, but in all the anticipation he grabbed her by the elbow. A serious spark of electricity sent Toby snapping his hand at his side as Saada turned, wide-eyed, seemingly to ask what he meant by grabbing her.

"Didn't you feel that shock?" he asked to mask his self-consciousness. "Hurts like hell!"

"Yeah," Saada replied, gazing out at the downpour. "Strange that there would be electricity in the air when it's so damp outside."

"Okay, whatever," Toby skipped over the science lesson. "Why were you looking at me? What did he say?"

Saada's eyes shone with their characteristically misleading innocence. "What did who say?"

“You know who—The Regular!”

“Oh, you mean Q....”

She went back to mopping the floor, turning away from Toby. Oh, no. No way Saada was getting off that easy. She could be such a little tease sometimes. “Q? What, is that an initial or something?”

Shrugging, Saada replied, “I don’t know. I introduced myself and he said to call him Q. If you want more information, you’ll just have to ask him.”

“Me? Talk to him? But he’s so...and I’m just...and he’s all....” It was difficult for Toby to express the amount of raw physical sexuality oozing from The Regular’s pores, but easy to admit how inferior he felt.

“He said you’re pretty cute, you know.”

“No, he didn’t,” Toby replied, taking the mop from his friend’s tough hands.

“Yeah-huh. He did.”

“And you’re just telling me this now?!”

“Must have slipped my mind,” Saada smirked, slipping her serpent pendant between her lips.

“I am so not ready for this.”

“Suit yourself,” Saada started to say as their boss squawked for her to get behind the counter.

A group of university students had just traipsed in, creating muddy puddles along the floor Saada had just finished cleaning. Toby dragged the mop across the faux-marble. Weren’t students supposed to be poor? How could they afford to drink here? Or maybe the café was the new bar, and their beer money was being diverted to caffeine. A pretty practical switch, when you thought about it.

The store’s duct-taped cordless phone rang—an unusual occurrence, since it wasn’t to be used to personal calls. It was for Jin. She turned away from her underlings while the distressed voice on the other end parleyed loudly in Chinese. By the time she’d pressed the red ‘end’ button, her eyes were bloodshot and her countenance utterly blank.

“We have to close. I have to go. We have to close.”

Saada topped a peppermint cream hot chocolate with whipped topping and cocoa powder before turning to see how distraught Jin was trying not to be. Grasping at the serpent charm hanging around her neck, she asked the boss what was wrong.

“Nothing. Nothing’s wrong. I have to go. We have to close.”

“You can go, Jin,” Saada offered. “Leave us your keys. Toby and I can lock up.”

Jin stared blankly at Saada, then right through Toby to the rain still pouring down outside. “Okay,” she finally agreed, running to grab her jacket and purse from the back. Tossing the hood over her head, she began to say, “Don’t forget to....” but then seemed to forget what she was warning to remember. Looking straight at Saada, her eyes still red, Jin simply nodded before rushing out the door.

Toby was about to comment on how unlike Saada it was to do any more work than was absolutely necessary. Normally, she would jump at the chance to close up shop early, to get the hell out of there and go somewhere fun. But Toby didn’t get a chance to say anything before a smooth voice with just a hint of a spicy accent addressed them from the corner of the café: “It is a shame about her husband.”

It was The Regular.

Toby glanced over at wide-eyed Saada, whispering, “I didn’t think Jin was married.”

“Whose husband, Q?” Saada asked, bold as brass. Just the idea of talking to that sexy creature....

He took another sip of black coffee, setting the paper cup down on the table all in good time, then running a brown paper napkin across his thin black moustache. “Your manager. Her husband has taken a turn for the worse. It is most unfortunate. You ought to behave very compassionately toward her in the coming weeks. It will be a hard time.”

“Are you a friend of Jin’s?” Toby asked before he realized the words had slipped from his mouth. He’d done it! He’d talked to The Regular without making a fool of himself. But his heart started thumping at double time when this guy Saada called ‘Q’ glanced up at him. Q’s eyebrows arched, and Toby was convinced he’d said something stupid after all.

“I met Jin and her husband many years ago,” Q replied, never letting his gaze stray from Toby. Oh.... Toby was beginning to get the picture. The arched eyebrows were not critical, they were beckoning. So Saada was telling the truth after all: this dark and desirable man was actually interested. Q’s smoking hot stare had Toby feeling suddenly relieved to be wearing an apron and standing behind a counter.

“Here I thought Jin was just a big bitch,” said Saada, whose voice sounded very far away even though she was standing right next to him. “You never stop to think what other people are going through.”

“Yeah,” Toby agreed, fixated on the mysterious man whose gaze was fixed on him. He wanted to squirm, to scratch his nose, to cover the smile breaking across his lips, but Q’s confident stare held him still. He could barely breathe, but he stood still.

“Q,” Toby addressed the man in the corner, then realized he hadn’t planned what to say next. “Are you...do you....”

“Can we get you another coffee?” Saada came in with the save. “You should try the Sumatran blend, on the house of course.”

Leaning back in his armchair like Alistair Cooke, Q pressed together the pads of his fingers and held the arch against his lips. Toby almost fell to the floor, imagining that dark pink mouth against his own fingers, against other throbbing portions of his anatomy.

“A most generous offer,” Q replied. “It is unfortunate that I must depart.”

“No!” Saada cried.

“Don’t stay!” Toby echoed, realizing his mistake. “I mean, stay! Don’t go. I mean...that’s not an order. Like, I know you’re not a dog. I just mean...you should hang out with Saada and me a little longer. We don’t get much excitement around here.”

Rising easily from the deep purple chair, Q brought an antique pocket watch from his jacket and pressed the clasp. “I would be most inclined to stay, if it were not closing time.”

“Closing time?” Saada asked, checking the clock on her cell phone. “This can’t be right. Jin left just after nine, and that was only a couple minutes ago.”

Toby gave the café a quick once-over. “Wasn’t this place full of coffee-lushes just a second ago? Where is everybody?”

“Everybody has gone home, and so must I. It is late. I should leave you two to your lock-up activities.”

Nearly tripping on Saada’s heels, Toby made a mad dash for the glass double doors. Q must have thought he was a total nutter, blocking the exit alongside his punk of a best friend. He had to redeem himself, somehow. He needed to say something that would make him seem a tad less...crazy....

“You can stay,” Saada blurted before Toby could come up with anything. “It won’t bother us. You can have your second cup while we’re cleaning.”

Glancing back and forth between them, Q petted the stubble of his chin like it was a black lab. He stood there by the fire for a moment, his every action slow and deliberate. “It would be my pleasure. But, please, let me be of service. Allow me to help you by clearing the tables.”

The image of the man in the gorgeous suit cleaning their café made Q seem more approachable, somehow, but Saada wouldn’t hear of it. “No, that’s our job. You sit right down while Toby gets your coffee.” Glaring, she motioned madly for Toby to fetch a cup of Sumatran while she

ingratiated herself on the arm of Q's chair.

"Why are you reading the personals?" she was asking him. "A hottie like you? I bet all you have to do is look at a guy and he strips naked and falls into your bed. I know I would, if you were looking at me."

"Ah, but Saada, I am indeed looking at you, and yet you remain fully clothed."

Bringing Q's hot coffee over to the table by the fire, Toby tried to ease himself into their conversation, but Saada threw him Jin's keys along with the instruction to lock the doors. The keys landed with a clink and a splash on the muddy faux-marble floor. What the hell did Saada think she was doing? Toby'd been convinced she was trying to procure this delicious male for him, as a consolation prize after his break-up. And all along, she wanted Q for herself?

Toby didn't want to take his eyes off the pair, but he didn't know how to lock the double doors from the inside. He had to go out in the downpour, lock up, then walk all the way to the rear entrance in the dark, rain striking the back of his neck like ice pellets. The café had fallen into darkness, illuminated only by the gas fire. From the corner of the shop, Toby heard a weird noise. Before he could compute precisely what it was, he was running to its source, shouting, "Saada? What's going on? Are you okay?"

His drenched boots soaked the forest green apron strewn on the floor. The gold letters of her nametag glinted in the firelight. S-A-A-D-A. Her beige top was hanging from a wooden chair near the window and her familiar cargo pants had found their way under the coffee table.

Honestly, it was her bare ass he noticed first. That's probably because she was waving it in the air as she straddled the guy to whom Toby was so drawn. He never imagined he'd be seeing Saada in this state, in this context. Well, maybe back when they first met, but then there was Mark, and then there was Simone, and Saada was always getting pushed to the side. Always at his side, though. Always there for him. She was his best friend, his closest friend. Even when he ignored her to get with Simone, she always understood. And there she was, kissing some other guy, some guy whose name she didn't even know. Q? What the hell kind of a name was that?

"Get your hands off Saada!" Toby cried, before measuring the implications of this statement.

The dark hands cupping luscious cheeks fell away as the pair on the purple velvet armchair stopped kissing to look up at him. Toby braced himself to be yelled at, or maybe to have shoes launched at his head. But Saada didn't yell. She didn't throw things, either. She simply looked up at him, eyes wide as a calf's. Then her amazement melted, transformed into understanding, alliance.

"Jealous, Toby?" Saada asked, turning to reveal a black bra overflowing with more cleavage than it could handle. Who knew that under that hideous green apron, she'd been hiding this beautiful pair of breasts? Mesmerized by the sight of dark lingerie kissing olive flesh, he could barely compute what she'd asked, let alone reply.

“Huh?” Was it rude to be so fixated on his best friend’s tits? Even if she was half-naked and walking straight toward him?

Because the floor was so wet, Saada’d slipped her feet back into her heavy boots. Those and the studded collar around her neck starkly contrasted with beautiful lingerie embracing her tits and hugging her hips. She was spectacular, that girl. Why had he never noticed before? Maybe he was jealous after all. Not of Saada, but of Q. Maybe he didn’t want anyone else kissing the girl he cared so much about.

Now Q was on his feet as well, his jacket abandoned on the chair, deep red shirt unbuttoned midway to his navel. His pants were high and fitted, lending him the air of a tango dancer. Toby’s mouth gaped at the sight of the thick protuberance reaching for freedom from the cage of fabric between Q’s thighs. As the smoking hot man and newly-discovered friend approached, he got the distinct feeling of being a gazelle surrounded by two pumas ready to pounce. And why, exactly, was he backing away?

When his ass met the plate glass window, there was nowhere else to go. Tall, Dark and Handsome towered over Saada, behind her but not touching her. She reached around Toby’s waist to untie his apron strings. Q’s expert fingers helped unbutton the standard-issue shirt while Saada worked blindly at his belt. She dropped his pants to the floor as Q tossed the top from his shoulders.

There stood Toby, naked as a cherub under his forest green apron, bare ass pressed against the cold plate glass. Suddenly concerned somebody might see, he glanced upwards to see the hard rain pelting down, running in rivers and streams against the window. The glass was so cold against his ass, it was a miracle his cock remained rock solid. Or maybe not such a miracle, what with the persuasion of the two stunning people before him.

Like a body with two gorgeous heads, they leaned in until they were so close the aroma of Saada’s coffee-scented skin combined with Q’s spicy cologne. Pulling the green apron up and over his head, she let it fall to the floor before pressing her Lycra-enveloped tits against his undeserving chest. Toby tried to look, tried to stare down into the mysterious depths of Saada’s cleavage, but there was something in the way. No, two somethings. Two pairs of lips descended on his neck. Saada’s hot lips caressed that shadow of a curve while Q ran a scorching tongue all the way up to his ear, tugging on the lobe like a wild thing.

Throwing his head back in utter delight, Toby launched a hand into Saada’s tightly-ponytailed hair as she sucked relentlessly at his neck. That was going to leave a serious mark! Soon, he was running wicked fingers through Q’s jet black hair as the mysterious man devoured his ear. Hadn’t this hair been soaking wet just a few minutes ago? How was it bone dry now? Where had the evening gone? It was like time had just disappeared.

Suddenly, Saada was descending, descending, leaving a trail of wet kisses all the way along his chest, along his shuddering abdomen. When she dropped to her knees, Q twisted around to reveal a device of his own invention: clipped to the back of his belt was some version of a coin dispenser, but instead of doling out nickels and dimes, it dispensed condoms and lube. Toby

would have laughed at the gadget had the atmosphere not been so sexually charged.

“Would you care for a mint-flavored condom, Saada?” Q inquired. His best friend’s name had never sounded so beautiful as when spoken by that smooth, deep voice.

“Thank you, Q,” she accepted with the grace of a queen. As she tore the wrapper with her teeth, Toby’s cock lunged so hard it nearly punched him in the stomach. Sliding the smooth latex down his solid shaft, Saada was about to press her lips to his sheathed cockhead when he lost sight of her.

Q had grabbed hold of Toby’s wrists, stringing them up above his head against the windowpane. Straddling his kneeling friend, intense amethyst eyes gazed straight into Toby’s soul as Saada’s silky-warm mouth enveloped his straining cock. The pure pleasure of being both restrained and sucked caused him to leap forward of his own volition. Q’s lean face was closer than ever, his breath hot and heavy, his massive erection veiled by cruel fabric pressing against Toby’s core.

Toby’s cock felt enormous between the beautiful, moist lips of the lovely punk in the crook of his thighs. She sucked him masterfully, cupping his balls in one hand while she jerked on his rigid shaft. He wanted so badly to see her, to observe this action, but Q was moving in, his dark aura enrapturing Toby, making his mind feel foggy and distant.

That dark grotto of Q’s mouth summoned Toby’s to open wide, possessed like Ali Baba’s cave. Like the black Sumatran coffee he’d sipped on, his taste was sensual and deep as the centre of the earth. His tongue forced itself upon Toby’s, offering no surrender, no escape. Toby was dying to feel Q’s chest against his own, but with his hands pinned against the glass, there was nothing he could do about that. Nothing he could do but thrust his cock deeper and deeper into Saada’s receptive mouth. Oh, the warmth of that silken room....

All at once, the two of them fell away and Toby was left standing naked against the plate glass, his jeans around his ankles. Where were they going? Why had they forsaken him?

Like some urban version of a quick-draw cowboy, Q unzipped his fly with one hand, snatching a condom from the dispenser with the other. Reaching into his pants, he pulled out the juiciest slab of meat Toby had ever laid eyes on, wrapping it in purple latex. In the deep velvet chair by the fire, Q set himself down, welcoming visitors by slathering his ample cock in glistening lube. When Toby made no move, Saada grabbed him by the curvy cock and dragged him over to the purple chair, to the fully-dressed man whose penis protruded from his pants like a tree sprouting through concrete. Eyes wide and welcoming, she set her lips against his. Softly. Sweetly. That kind of a kiss wasn’t at all what Toby expected from the punk girl. It was sort of...well, sort of nice.

Then, holding his arms with all her might, Saada pushed Toby backwards, lowering him onto the mysteriously masculine form in the purple chair. A slippery finger greased his hole, rubbing it with lube, massaging his ass with loving care. His hole grasping and gaping, crying out to be stuffed, Toby brought his legs up to kneel on the velvet chair. When he found Q’s stiff dick with his aroused ass, he traced circles around the tip until he was ready to take it in. Pressing down, he

let his ass ring envelop that bulging cockhead little by little, until that sheathed tip was held prisoner inside Toby's clenching hole.

When Saada slid her hands down his core, all the way down to his surging cock, Toby's balls quaked like he was going to come there and then. How did he manage not to? He couldn't figure it out. As his dearest friend grasped his rod, tits bouncing in their bra with every pump, he urged a bit more of Q's solid dick into his welcoming ass. That's when Saada leaned in to kiss him again, harder this time, with the force he'd expected before. She was an incredible kisser. The way she kissed made him want to do back flips across a plush lawn, but for the moment, he settled for lowering his body a little further down Q's rigid shaft.

All the lube let Toby slide easily up and down his rod, like a well-greased stripper pole. Saada climbed atop their arrangement, letting her black bra and panties fly across the café. Her tits poured onto Toby's chest like a fleshy waterfall, nipples dark and hard. Grasping those beautiful breasts, he brought their lovely mass up to his mouth and traced his tongue all around them. Her tits were soft, malleable, warm as hell, culminating in tweaked peaks. He sucked them until she threw back her head and moaned deeply.

Toby was so turned on by Saada's reaction, his ass ring loosened the grasp it had on Q's cock. The mysterious guy was bucking with metronomic control beneath him, firm hands grasping Toby's thighs. Oh, his ass was glowing with friction by the time Saada guided his mint-sheathed cock into her hot pussy. This was crazy! This was totally nuts! There he was at work, surrounded by glass windows, with a stranger's cock up his ass, getting fucked by his beautiful best friend. In what world did stuff like this happen?

With no room to set her long limbs, Saada spread her legs wide open so each of her knees clung to the arms of the velvet chair. She didn't thrust. She didn't move. She didn't have to. Q's increasingly-frenzied pumping drove Toby's cock up and into Saada's scorching cunt. She pulled her dark hair from its binding elastic, letting the waves fall over her shoulders. Leaning back to toss it about, she inadvertently – or maybe not – shoved her bountiful tits into his face. Toby's cock surged, his clenching muscles making the heat in his ass all the more palpable. Wrapping Saada in his grateful arms, he plunged his nose between her luscious breasts, taking in the sweet and dark aroma of her skin.

Seizing hold of his flopsy hair, Saada kissed Toby with stellar intensity. Without even moving her body, she somehow managed to clamp her pussy muscles down on his cock, milking that curvy meat while she sucked on his tongue. Oh, there wasn't much more he could take of this. They'd seemed constrained before, but now there was suddenly more space in the chair. Wrapping him in the searing warmth of her arms, she leaned in close. Toby found the strength to lean Saada back while her legs clung to the armchair for support. She leaned back and back and back, until her head was upsidetown and her hands met the floor. The mountainous landscape of her body made Toby feel like more than a man, like his cock was so huge it might sprout through her belly button.

Plunging his cock inside the upside-down Saada time after time, he gripped her around the waist, riding hard and fast. Her heavy tits bounced like water balloons. As the rigid cock beneath him

plowed Toby's hole, Saada cried out with abandon in a language he didn't recognize. Her hot cunt was a vise, ever-tightening its grip on his dick. Oh, this was it. This had to be it! That familiar warmth spread like pee in cold snow from his ass to his thighs, clutching hold of his churning balls. Yeah, this was it. No holding back. Toby thrust into Saada's warm pussy, grasping her olive cheeks until his whole body went into spasm. Come raced through his shaft like fireworks as he clamped down on the smooth cock in his ass, issuing a few more involuntary thrusts.

With heroic arms, Toby pulled Saada right-side-up and into a grateful hug. He stayed like that, straining in the warmth of Saada's beautiful body, for hours, or minutes, or maybe only seconds. Hard to say. She kissed his cheek, his neck, his shoulder, before her whole body froze. Eyes wide as a calf's, and lashes just as long, Saada glared over Toby's shoulder like she'd seen a ghost. Her jaw fell wide open. "What the hell?!"

"What's wrong?" Toby demanded, never wanting to see this wonderful girl so flustered.

"Where's Q? What happened to him?"

"What do you mean, where's Q?" Toby laughed. "His cock's shoved halfway up my ass!"

That's when Toby realized his back was touching velvet. He looked to his sides, in search of Q's hands, Q's fitted pants, Q's...anything! But there was nothing left of the mysterious stranger. Except....

"What the hell is in my ass?!" Toby cried, jumping from the armchair as Saada hopped from his lap.

"Omigod, omigod, omigod!" she shrieked, shaking out her hands and running naked in place.

"Take it out!!!" he hollered, bending over across the coffee table.

"You take it out! It's in *your* ass!"

"PLEASE?!"

Saada made no response except to slide across the floor to Toby's side. He let his head collapse into his hands, elbows perched on the coffee table. He couldn't watch. What if it was...who knows?

The mystery item slipped easily from his ass. "It's an...arrow?" Saada proposed, holding the phallic silicon item by its red tail flanges.

It *did* look somewhat like a fat, dildo-shaped arrow. And there seemed to be words written across the interior, like a ship in a bottle, but they were blurred by the tremendous amount of lube on the outside. Clearing it away with a napkin, Toby read out the message: "All the best in life and in love."

Saada flipped it over and read out the other side. “Struck by Cupid’s arrow.” She looked at Toby, wide-eyed, naked but for her necklaces. “This has got to be some kind of joke. Struck by cupid’s arrow? I mean, who was that guy? Who the hell was he?!”

Rolling the question over in his mind, Toby suddenly realized, “Q as in....”

“Q-pid?” Saada finished his sentence. “That’s nuts. There’s no such thing....”

Seating herself, naked, on the purple chair across from Toby’s, Saada set the curious dildo upright on the table between them. Q-pid’s arrow? Well, it was said to strike its target in the ass. But anal play wasn’t the first thing that came to mind when Toby conjured up images of cherubic Valentine’s tricksters. From the bizarre dildo, his gaze rose to Saada’s gleaming eyes, the same eyes he’d greeted at the start of every shift, bid goodnight at the end of every evening for over three years. A pang of warmth struck Toby in the heart. His chest expanded with every breath until he couldn’t bear being even three paces away from her.

Mirror images in the reflective glass pane shielding them from the torrent outside, Toby and Saada rose to their feet. As he stepped around the table, so did she, until he was wrapping his arm around her waist, pulling Saada’s smooth flesh against his. She kissed him – no, they kissed each other – like it was the first time, and suddenly Toby’s heart was too big for his chest. Suddenly, his skin tingled with goose bumps as a warmth like hot coffee flowed through his veins.

“Thank you, Q-pid,” Saada whispered.

Gushing with gratitude, Toby added, “Wherever you are.”

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Camren August

Camren August is a Texas writer and artist. She's been writing since she was eleven, and while her interests were originally traditional Harlequin type heterosexual romances, over the years, the course of her work has veered happily in the GLBT direction. During her early twenties, she wrote sold quite a bit of erotica to various magazines, and have just recently begun to submit my work again.

C.C. Bridges

CC would like to say that her writing is influenced by a variety of wild and exotic sexual experiences. It turns out she just has a really good imagination. She writes surrounded by books, spare computing equipment, a very fluffy dog, and a long suffering husband all in the tiny state of New Jersey.

BA Collins

BA Collins lives in Vermont in an old hippie commune with her husband, dogs, cats and horses. When not working as a chemist, she spends time on an old fashioned sailboat and doing medieval and War of 1812 re-enactment.

Dianne Fox

Dianne Fox has been writing nearly as long as she could read. Her first novel was nearly a dozen pages long and featured full-color illustrations by the author. It was about a caterpillar. Years later, she managed to get herself published in several college literary magazines, but she stopped writing due to a traumatic experience she likes to call "graduate school."

Now that she's finished torturing herself via higher education, she works hard to find the balance between writing, which she loves, and her day job, which she... also loves. More information about her - and her writing - can be found at <http://www.foxwrites.com>, while her (almost) daily mutterings can be found at <http://diannefox.livejournal.com>, her journal.

Erin O'Riordan

Erin has sold fiction to *Playgirl*, *Hustler Fantasies*, and the webzines Clean Sheets, The Erotic Woman, Oysters & Chocolate, and Tassels & Tales, among others.

Giselle Renarde

Canadian eroticist Giselle Renarde is author of *The Birthday Gift* (Dark Eden Press), short story contributor to *Coming Together: With Pride* and *Coming Together: Out Loud* (Phaze) and poetry/erotica contributor to the upcoming anthology *The Longest Kiss: Women Write on Oral Sex* (Mojocastle Press). Ms Renarde lives across from a park with two cats who sleep on her head.

BA Tortuga

B. A. Tortuga enjoys indulging in the shallow side of life, with hobbies that include collecting margarita recipes, hot tub dips, and ogling hot guys at the beach. A connoisseur of the perverse and esoteric, BA's days are spent among dusty tomes of ancient knowledge, or, conversely, surfing porn sites in the name of research. Mixing the natural born southern propensity for sarcasm and the environmental western straight-shooting sensibility, BA manages to produce mainstream fiction, literary erotica, and fine works of pure, unadulterated smut.

With characters ranging from supernatural demons to modern-day cowboys, alternative illustrated men to Victorian dandies, the addiction to history and atmosphere is everpresent, and laced through with sensual pleasure.

Vic Winter

Heat in real life is the bane of Vic's life, whose favorite season is winter, and Vic's life is far more mundane than fiction. And when it comes to fiction, the hotter the better is Vic's motto. Make it romantic, make it sexy, make it erotic, but definitely make it hot. Visit Vic's in progress website at <http://www.stemsandfeathers.org/vwinter/index.html>