





Play out the hand her way...or fold?

*Three of a Kind, Book 2*

After four years, Megan Loxley has given up waiting for her best friend, Desmond Reed, to realize she loves him. It's time to move on. When Des introduces her to his poker buddy, Alex Truman, the instantaneous sparks that flare between them signal her life is about to change forever.

Des could kick himself. How could he have failed to notice the perfect woman was by his side all this time? Now it's too damn late. And her innocent prodding about why he's suddenly so distant is only making his hunger for her worse. Then she gets one step too close—and his self-restraint snaps.

Stunned, bewildered, furious, Meg can't help but respond to the kisses for which she waited so long. God help her, she loves Des. And Alex, too. Immeasurably. Now what?

It may make her the greediest woman alive, but she's determined to win the next hand— even if she has to change the game a little. First step: state her wildly sexy proposition in a language both men will understand...and hope they'll stick around and play by her rules.

Warning: If you're looking for a cool game of poker, you won't find it here. This novella is so hot the cards are still smoking. The heroine may be new to the game, but she knows exactly how to play her two kings.



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# Raising the Stakes

*Jess Dee*



## Dedication

With special thanks to Mari Carr. If you hadn't kicked my butt, I'd never have written this book.

Viv Arend—how did I ever write before I met you? (BTW, Megan is a better woman because of you.)

And then there's Jennifer Miller... you're not just my editor, you're my hero.



# Chapter One

Desmond Reed dumped his cards facedown on the table in front of him. He wished he were anywhere but here, with anyone but them. The five people seated around the table didn't worry him. It was the empty chair opposite that scraped at his soul, ripping out parts of his already frayed heart.

At the front door Alex Truman pulled Megan Loxley in close and kissed her until her eyelids fluttered shut and a tiny groan escaped her. Alex's muscled bulk eclipsed Meg's slim frame, but his size could not hide the heated response of her kiss or the way she leaned into him, molding her body to his, clutching his arms and kissing him right back. The flashes of her pink tongue sliding into Alex's mouth nearly undid Des.

Damn it, he should turn and stare out the window at the Sydney skyline, but he couldn't look away.

He swallowed hard against the desire and jealousy that fueled his blood. He refused, point-blank, to give in to his hunger. His dick could turn blue and fall off for all he cared. He was not going to utter one word to Meg on the matter. He wouldn't comment to Alex either. It had been his choice to stand on the sidelines and feed the unforeseen fire that had flared between the two of them. Too late now to cry like a baby and yank back his approval.

Still, the sight of the two of them together tied him up in knots. It made him wish to God he was the one in Meg's arms, but he couldn't—wouldn't—do a damn thing about it. His envy did not give him the right to act like a complete prick.

Even so, ill-placed resentment stirred in Des's chest, and common sense didn't stop his fingers from tightening into fists beneath the table.

It should have been him. His lips should have been touching hers. Not Alex's. She should be in his arms now, moaning softly into his mouth. Why had he woken up so late? What was his bloody problem? Why'd it have to take Meg's falling for his poker buddy to make Des see the light?

Megan should have been his. He should have gotten down on one knee and proposed years ago.

Couldn't ever do things the simple way, could he? Nope. He'd had to let his twenties pass him by and hit the ripe old age of thirty before realizing the future he wanted—Meg, and all the beautiful babies they could make together—was no longer an option. Meg was in the process of creating an alternative future. One that excluded him.

Why couldn't he realize he was in love with the woman *before* introducing her to a buddy?



Not that the introduction had been intentional. He'd brought Meg along to a party Hunter Miles, another member of the poker school, had thrown. Des had seen the stars in Meg's eyes the second he'd introduced her to his architect friend, Alex. He'd seen the smile that grew in size with every word Alex spoke. He'd stood back and watched as his best friend, the beautiful primary school teacher, gazed deeper and deeper into the other man's eyes, falling harder with each passing minute. By the time the party was done, Meg was a woman in love.

He watched now as she pulled away from Alex and gifted him with one of her special smiles. Her Meg-a-watt smile, as Des thought of it. The kind that melted a man's heart while igniting his lust. Des's arousal lit up just observing. No doubt Alex was ready to haul her over his shoulder and carry her, caveman-style, to his bedroom and fuck her senseless.

A silent growl prickled Des's throat.

The woman was more in love with Alex now than she had been the night they'd met, and from the dazed look on Alex's face, he no doubt reciprocated the feeling.

Des had to give the man credit for stretching an arm around her waist and steering her towards the dining room-cum-poker table instead of the bedroom. He wouldn't have had the strength of mind.

Group hellos were thrown in Meg's direction: cheery, slightly drunken greetings that had her laughing out loud.

Until her gaze met his. Her expression changed then, from a happy, carefree grin, to a look of sheer delight. A look a woman would flash her long-lost brother or a best friend she hadn't seen in weeks.

"Des!" She was at his side in seconds, leaning in to hug him.

"Meggy." He accepted her hug and kissed her cheek, trying hard not to imbibe her sweet scent. Impossible. She smelled like flowers in springtime, and he breathed deeply, inhaling as much of Meg as he could get into his lungs. Problem was, he smelled Alex on her too, got a whiff of his expensive cologne and immediately wanted to smack the guy.

Des had never been prone to violence. Freaky what an unhealthy dollop of jealousy did to him.

"Where have you been, stranger?" she asked.

He stumbled before answering. Christ, there was so much he wanted to tell her, say to her. So much had happened over the weeks they needed to catch up on. Nothing important. Just everyday stuff he usually shared with her on the phone or over home delivery at her place.

Since he hadn't had the heart to call her in over two weeks, let alone knock on her door, it wasn't any wonder Meg called him a stranger.

"I've been busy. You know, working." Yeah, the response was vague, but what options did he have? Meg was too easy to talk to, to confide in. If he opened his mouth now, he'd probably blurt out the fact that he loved her madly and was losing his mind to jealousy. Or maybe he'd admit that she'd become the lead lady in every sexual fantasy he'd ever had.



Ah, now, that would be a classic blooper to make in front of the entire fucking poker school.

Meg stiffened and pulled away. “Pardon?” She frowned at him, her green eyes clouding over with hurt and confusion. “Too busy to phone me?”

Yeah, right. As if a lame-o excuse like that one would ever have worked on her. He’d *never* been too busy to phone. Not even at work, at his mobile phone shop, over the busiest shopping periods. He’d never not had time to see her. If Meg called, Des dropped everything to answer—with profuse apologies to customers or employees he might be dealing with at the time. If circumstances made it impossible to talk, he’d always return her call within the hour. Work had *never* interfered with their friendship, and they both knew it.

He was a shit for trying to pull one over on her. An asshole for rebuffing her. Still, he couldn’t back down now. “We’re getting the books in order for the accounta...”

His voice trailed off as she raised an eyebrow. What the fuck was he trying to do? Dig himself in deeper?

“Yeah, Des. Whatever.” She shook her hair, letting her long brown curls cover the left side of her face, the side closest to Des. A wall went up around her, closing Des out, a barrier the likes of which she’d never used against him.

The snub shocked him. Left him whirling. Instinctively, he reached out to grab her hand and pull her back to him, but she moved her arm out of the way, and his hand rebounded off her defenses.

Served him bloody well right.

A muscle twitched in her cheek. “Sorry, folks,” Meg said cheerfully. “Didn’t mean to disturb your game. You carry on playing. I’ll get you a round of drinks.”

Was he the only one who saw straight through her forced smile? Or was it the flash of humiliation he caught in her eyes when she fleetingly met his gaze before dropping her eyelids and shutting him out that gave her away?

Christ, he was an imbecilic jerk. He’d hurt his best friend.

“Hey, Meg,” Jay called out, “you don’t wanna play a hand or two?”

She laughed, the pitch too high to be sincere. “I’d lose all my money in a minute, but thanks for the offer. Scotch for you and Hunter, beer for everyone else?”

“Coke Zero for me, please.” Julia, the only woman player in the poker school, spoke up. She pointed at her chest. “Designated driver tonight.” Julia sat between Jay and Hunter, a sinfully sexual expression on her face. Both Jay’s and Hunter’s expressions mirrored hers. The three of them were officially together. A threesome. The terrible triplets, as the poker school had taken to calling them.

“You got it.” Meg headed to the kitchen, obviously at home in Alex’s house. Her comfort in a place that was not hers only increased Des’s irritation.

Alex caught her arm. “Need a hand, babe?”



"I'm good, but thanks." She planted a lingering kiss on his mouth and vanished through the door, leaving Des seething with jealousy and cursing himself for his sloppy treatment of her.

Was everyone in the poker school falling in love? Hunter, Jules and Jay. Alex and Meg. Max and Trev never discussed their personal lives, so Des had no idea about their circumstances, but one by one, everyone else seemed to have caught the bug. He'd caught the bug too. He'd just missed out on the woman.

Meg's appearance left him hot and bothered. He wanted her with a fierceness that ate him alive. It stripped his defenses and parched his throat. Christ, he wanted her so bad he, the world's staunchest pacifist, was willing to kill for her. Too bad Alex would be the one he'd have to choke to death in the process. Alex was a decent guy. Not to mention a good head taller than him.

"Yo, Reedy, you gonna call or you gonna lay down your cards like everyone else?" Alex's voice drew Des's attention back to the game. He bit back an instinctive "fuck you". It wasn't Alex's fault Meg had fallen for him. It was Des's. He'd all but pushed her into Alex's arms.

He tried not to glare at the stack of chips on the table. Max, Trev and the triplets had folded. The chips were all Alex's. So, not only did his nemesis get the girl, seemed this hand he got the cards as well.

Des looked at his pocket nines. Average cards. Not a guaranteed win, but good enough to bet on. He shoved a pile of chips into the middle of the table and flashed a challenging smile at Alex. Christ, he hoped he didn't look as evil as he felt. "I'll see your bet."

Frankly, he didn't care if he won or lost. The only thing he cared about was in the kitchen, pretending she hadn't just been hurt and insulted by her best friend.

Alex grinned at him, the humor glinting in his dark eyes. "Game on."

Why did the guy have to be so fucking nice? Why couldn't he just act like a dickhead and give Des the excuse he needed to bash the shit out of him?

Des lost the hand, and along with it a shitload of money. Poetic justice? Served him right for his ominous thoughts.

"Good play," he conceded, just as a piercing crash sounded from the kitchen.

Alex was out of his chair before the noise died down, but Des was faster.

"Don't worry about it," he said to Alex. "I'll go." He owed Meg an apology. What better way than to clean up her mess while apologizing for his own?

Alex hesitated. His gaze darted to the kitchen.

Possessive much?

"You sure 'bout that?" Alex asked.

"Absolutely." Meg may be Alex's girlfriend, but she was Des's best friend. Of that he was damn sure. "Don't wait for me. Go ahead and play the next few hands." Des walked into the kitchen.

Meg was crouched on the floor of the modern, white kitchen, holding her left hand in her right and sucking her index finger. Hundreds of tiny pieces of glass littered the ground.



Des dropped down beside her. “You okay, Meggy?”

She eyed him irritably before pulling the finger out of her mouth. “Fine. I dropped a glass is all. Cut my finger in the process.”

A drop of red dotted the tip of her finger. Des grabbed a piece of paper towel, tore a strip off, wet it and wrapped it around the cut. He cradled her hand in his, refusing to let go when she tried to pull her arm away. The silk of her flesh burned through his skin, and he gritted his teeth against the exquisite agony.

“You’re an asshole.” Meg didn’t pull any punches. She never had.

“I know.”

“How dare you brush me off like that?”

He didn’t answer, didn’t know how. Instead he removed the tissue and inspected her finger. Still bleeding. “Is it sore?”

She glared at him. “Yes.”

He wrapped the wound again, holding the tissue around her finger. “I’m sorry.”

Her mouth tightened. “It’s not your fault the glass broke.”

His heart squeezed in his chest. When had he ever felt this awkward around her? “I’m not sorry about the glass.” Given the blood staining the tissue paper pink, his words sounded ridiculous. “I mean I am sorry you cut yourself, but I’m more sorry for what I said out there.”

Her angry gaze met his. None of the warmth she usually held for him lurked in her eyes. “I’ve left you four messages. Four. Were you ever planning on returning my calls?”

The answer stuck in his chest. How could he explain he’d been waiting for a time when he wasn’t so jealous, or so raw, to get back to her? A time when he wouldn’t ache at hearing her voice? He’d figured after a few weeks it wouldn’t hurt so bad. He’d figured wrong. The pain got worse with every day that passed. “Of course I was.”

Meg recognized his answer for the lie it was. This time when she yanked her arm away, he let her go and instantly missed the heat from her skin.

She stood, leaving him crouched on the floor like an idiot. “Desmond Reed, if you have a problem with me, say so. Don’t you dare shut me out or ignore me.”

He stood reluctantly and took a step towards her. Glass crunched beneath his shoe. “I’m not ignoring you.” As if he could. The woman was on his mind twenty-four hours a day.

“Oh, really?” She lifted a disbelieving eyebrow. “Working too hard to make one lousy phone call?” Meg turned her back on him, opened a long, thin cupboard, and withdrew a broom. “Your accountant? Please, give me a break.”

He held out his hand to take the broom from her, but she shook her head. “Don’t bother. I’ll do it.”



Shit. Stubborn woman. He pulled out a chrome and white leather kitchen stool from the breakfast nook, took hold of Meg's shoulders and bodily forced her to sit. Then he helped himself to the broom and went to work on the shattered glass. Shards lay everywhere, and the task took all his attention.

Her gaze burned a hole through his back as he swept.

"You going to explain yourself anytime soon?" Meg asked when he'd swept the glass into a neat mound.

He gripped the edge of the broom handle and rested his chin on his hands, eyeing her uneasily. Did he open up and tell her he'd fallen crazy in love with her and was consumed by a jealousy that ate away at him?

Yeah, that would go down about as well as a mouthful of the splintered glass.

He took a minute to consider his options, not once dropping her gaze. He might need time to think, but he wouldn't let her believe he was still ignoring her.

"Remember when you discovered your mother had cancer?" he asked at last.

She frowned. "As if I could ever forget."

"Remember how long it took you to talk about it?" Every day he'd asked if she was okay, and every day she'd pulled further away from him, refusing to tell him what was going on or why she looked like hell and hadn't eaten in a week.

"Uh-huh." Her cheek twitched.

"Instead of telling me she was sick, you asked me to give you a little space."

Her cheek twitched again, a telltale sign she was distressed. "Is your mother sick?"

He shook his head. "No, she's fine."

She narrowed her eyes. "W-what about you?"

Crap, she'd gotten the wrong idea. "I'm fine too. We all are. It's not about anyone being sick."

Her shoulders relaxed. "Then why are we discussing my mother?"

"We're not." How the fuck to explain? "We're talking about me. I just, uh, I'm going through something. I need a little space is all."

Meg stared at him. She blinked once, then again, her long, thick lashes sweeping over her expressive green eyes. A million questions crowded them, framing her distress, but she said nothing.

Silence spread through the kitchen, the quiet made even more obvious by the echo of laughter on the other side of the door.

He couldn't stand looking at her a second longer. The need to throw down the broom and sweep her into his arms was so powerful his hands shook. With measured movements, he headed for the same cupboard she'd just opened and found a dustpan and brush.

Thank fuck. Something to do. He crouched down and swept the shards into the pan.

"I don't know what to say." Her words broke the silence.



He shrugged. "Nothing to say. Just give me the space I need and we'll be cool."

"I'm not allowed to ask what you're going through?" Her voice held more than a hint of worry.

He shook his head without looking at her. What else could he do?

"You're asking the impossible, Des. If you're having trouble, I want to help. I need to help."

"I know you do. But you can't, not this time." Not unless she was willing to dump Alex and spend the rest of her life in his arms. Preferably naked.

"What about my shoulder? Can I at least offer that to you?"

Only if it came unclothed and attached to the rest of her nude body. "You can offer..."

"But you won't be taking me up on it anytime soon," she finished for him.

The floor was clean. No more shards anywhere to use as a distraction. He opened the bin and tossed the broken remnants of the glass inside. Finally, when there was no other option left, he turned to face her. "I'm sorry if I acted like an asshole. You know I'd never intentionally hurt you."

"I'm sorry you're dealing with shit." The warmth was back in her eyes. The warmth she reserved only for him. It heated him all the way through to his bones.

Then she smiled at him. It caught him in the gut and yanked hard at his dick, forcing him to remember all over again just why the fuck he needed time away from her.

Jumping his best friend in her boyfriend's sleek, designer kitchen was not something either Meg or Alex would take kindly to.

"I'll get over it," he told her. He probably would. When he was dead.

He studied her face, studied the Meg-a-watt smile and the radiant glow in her cheeks. Her skin shone and her eyes reflected a contentment he'd never noticed before.

The comprehension hit him like a shock to the heart. "You look different, Meggy," he said slowly. "You look...happy." Usually he wanted her to be happy. When she was happy, he was happy. Not this time. This time the joy in her eyes ripped through his gut like a poisoned knife.

Her expression softened, her eyes crinkling. For a long moment she stared out the kitchen door while her lips danced to a secret pleasure. "I am happy," she said at last. "Happier than I've ever been." She looked back at him. "It's Alex."

The knife twisted in his gut, slashing his insides. The simple task of swallowing became impossible.

"He's good for me." Her expression turned dreamy. "He loves me."

"Yeah, I kinda noticed that."

Her eyes lit up. "You did?"

If he could just keep his face blank and his voice normal, Meg would never pick up on the poison spreading through his body, slowly killing him. "Sure. The guy's spirits are as high as yours. When you rang the doorbell earlier, he almost knocked over his chair leaping out of it to get to you." The sensible, goal-oriented, focused bloke acted like a little kid around her.



Laughter peeled out of her. “You’re kidding, right?”

Christ, when had he ever made her laugh like that? “Would I do that to you?”

She shook her head, a fat grin plastered over her face.

“How about you? You love him too?” What the fuck was he trying to do? Pour poison down his throat, just in case the knife didn’t carry enough?

Her eyes closed and her smile grew bigger. “I do.”

*Hell.* Good thing she couldn’t see him. He knew his face had twisted, the agony her words caused more effective than any poison he could ever have swallowed.

“Then I’m happy for you too.” He whispered because he could not find the strength to say the words out loud.

His tone must have given away some of his misery, for she opened her eyes and looked at him. “You’ll be happy again too, you know?”

Yeah, when? “I know.”

“Whatever you’re going through, you’ll get through it.”

He nodded. “I know.” Maybe if he moved to Antarctica the cold would freeze out his pain.

“I’m here for you, anytime.”

“You always have been.”

She frowned then, her face shadowing with doubt. “Des?”

“Yeah?”

“Don’t cut me out. Please. I might be with Alex now, but you’re still my best friend. I haven’t forgotten that.”

“I could never cut you out.” The reply sprang from his mouth before he could double-check it. “You think I could survive without you?” The woman was as vital as oxygen. Without her he couldn’t breathe.

She huffed. “You’ve done a pretty good job of it these last few weeks.”

Showed what she knew. He’d stopped living the day he realized he loved her. The same day she met Alex. He merely existed now. “I’m a mess, Meggy-mine. I’m all screwed up. Believe me, I need you to keep me in line.”

She jumped off the stool and walked over to him. “Yeah, well, remember that when you’re going through whatever it is you’re going through.” She laid her uninjured hand on his cheek. “I’m here whenever you need me.”

Holy fuck and fucking hell. He couldn’t answer. Couldn’t think. She stood so close he need only lower his head a couple of inches and their lips would touch. He could finally do what he’d been aching to do since the night of Hunter’s party: kiss her. Cover her mouth with his and sip from her lips. Discover the unique taste of his very best friend.

Blood roared in his ears, thrashed around his veins and finally pooled in his dick.



While Meg stared sweetly into his eyes, proudly pledging her support and friendship, his erection burgeoned between them. One step closer on Meg's part, and she'd be pressed against the hardest, neediest penis in the history of mankind.

God help him, he wanted her to take that step.

No, he didn't. If she came any closer, he'd be forced to reveal the secret he'd harbored from her this last month. The disclosure would be both a blessing and a curse. A blessing because he could finally admit his true feelings to his best friend and a curse, because once she knew, the truth would surely destroy their relationship. No way could Meg deal with him loving her when she loved another man. Her guilt over his unrequited emotions would eat away at her. She'd begin to pity him and she'd hate herself for it.

He would never allow her to shoulder that kind of responsibility. Nor would he muscle in on her relationship with Alex. He refused to be that big a dick.

Des had to escape the torture of her touch. Her hand seared his cheek.

One of two things would happen if he didn't get his ass the hell away from her. He'd either give in to the urge to kiss her, or he'd slap her arm away.

In the end, he removed her hand from his cheek and held it in his. He took a small step back, giving his erection some much-needed space. "I'm lucky to have you in my life."

Gently as could be, he raised her hand to his face and pressed his lips against the satiny softness of her palm. It took every ounce of his self-control not to open his mouth and run his tongue along her skin, taste her sweetness.

Her cheeks turned pink. "Des..."

"Don't worry about me. I'll be fine." Time to change the subject. "How's your finger?"

She frowned, as though startled by the question. "Uh, it's better now." She shook off the paper towel and inspected it. "The bleeding's stopped."

"You should probably put a Band-Aid on it, just in case." Maybe a Band-Aid could help him too? He'd place it over the cut the knife had inflicted and hope to God a massive infection didn't set in.

She nodded. "You're right. I think I saw some in the bathroom."

He looked at the door. "Go get one. I'll take care of the drinks." With that, he picked up the tray she must have prepared before breaking the glass and walked back to the lounge room. Another minute alone with her in the tight confines of the small kitchen, and every resolve he had not to haul her into his arms would have been tossed into the garbage along with the shattered glass.



## Chapter Two

Megan found it impossible to remain dressed when she and Alex were alone. Before he'd latched the door shut behind the terrible triplets, the last guests to leave, she was ripping at the buttons of her shirt. By the time he'd locked up and turned around, her panties were on the floor and her bra had landed haphazardly on the back of the couch. In her twenty-seven years she'd never met a sexier man or a more skilled lover.

The scorching look he gave her burned straight through to her bones. Alex's clothes vanished as quickly as hers had, and then she was in his arms, raising her face to his.

"Christ, baby, I've waited the whole damn night to do this." He took her lips in a blistering kiss and molded his hands to the shape of her bare breasts.

Just twenty-nine and he'd mastered moves a man ten or twenty years older would envy.

Billions of goose bumps erupted over her flesh. Her desire had steadily increased the whole evening. Between Alex's kiss hello, the emotional shock of arguing with Des and the feel of her friend's soft lips on her palm once they'd made up, she was primed and ready for a night of carnal loving. Her nipples, already tight from wanting Alex, now pebbled and ached beneath his touch.

Megan's knees buckled, forcing her to lean against the table for support. Her heart raced at an uncontrollable speed and anticipation zipped up her spine. Alex looked at her with eyes as dark as night. Passion blazed in their depths and love lit his face. Love that he'd admitted to just days ago, in the middle of an exquisitely romantic dinner date. A love she returned with an open heart.

Her hands were all over him, tunneling through his thick, black hair, smoothing over the massive expanse of his shoulders, grasping the muscled flesh of his butt cheeks. She couldn't get enough. Wanted more, needed more.

Alex released her long enough to shove the debris of cards and chips aside, clearing a space for them. He lifted Megan onto the table and moved back in for another kiss, pushing her knees apart so he could stand between her legs.

Hunger assaulted her. Lust spread through her body, awakening dormant nerve endings. Alex's touch was a live wire. Sparks flared at every point of contact between the two of them.

Her breasts, heavy and swollen from arousal, were squashed against his chest. Her nipples throbbed, pain and desire combining to work as a potent stimulant. She wrapped her legs around his hips, pulling him closer, holding him tight. His cock was full and stiff and rubbed against the slick lips of her pussy. Leaning



back on her arms, she thrust her hips towards him, sliding up his length and down again, tormenting herself on the velvety smoothness of his erection.

She need only twist to the left and she'd envelop him, take him deep, deep, deep inside. She wanted him deep. She wanted him hard and fast. She wanted him plunging into her, over and over, hard as he could, until every one of those awakened nerve endings roared with excitement and danced with fulfillment.

Maybe later they'd make long, slow, languid love. Now she just needed him to fuck her.

He stilled her movements. "Can't," he gasped. "Not yet. Need..." His words ended with a long moan as she fastened her lips on his neck and sucked.

"Need *you*," she muttered, "inside *me*."

Whether it was the intensity of her feelings for him, or the aftereffect of her argument with Des, Megan was aroused, agitated and in desperate need of relief. Warm liquid gathered between her legs, readying her for the extraordinary ride she knew would follow. All she had to do was twist her hips this way...then that...

Alex clamped down on her hips, trapping her. "No!" His voice was unsteady.

"Damn it, Alex." She sounded wanton and greedy. "Let me go!" Try as she might, she couldn't move an inch. To make matters worse, Alex took a step back, pulling his cock away from her.

"Need a condom." The tendons in his neck bulged. Perspiration dotted his forehead.

Her groan of frustration echoed through the room. "Hurry." Damn it, she should have slipped one in her pocket when she'd gone to the bathroom earlier to get a Band-Aid. The boxes had been side by side.

He swiped a long finger over her slick folds, then dipped it in. Her inner walls grabbed at the digit, holding him there. God, even his finger brought her untold pleasure.

"Don't move an inch." He withdrew his hand and licked his finger. His groan vibrated through her ears.

Cold air washed over her as he staggered off, his finger still in his mouth.

Time stretched out endlessly. Hours passed. Days. Her body thrummed, taut with insatiable lust.

And then he was there, with her, his mouth devouring hers, his chest plastered against her breasts, his hands on her hips, encouraging the twist he'd earlier denied. This time, when she slid her eager pussy along the length of his condom-covered cock, he didn't attempt to stop her. Nor did he impede her actions when she arched her back and wrapped a leg around his waist, encircling the tip of his penis with her wet, hungry lips, sucking him slowly inside.

With a low growl, he drove into her, burying himself in her depths.

Megan cried out, assailed by the exquisite satisfaction of his presence.

"Damn, baby," Alex panted in her ear. "You feel good."

He pulled out and thrust back in, sending her reeling through space.



In her wildest fantasies she'd only ever imagined one man could raise her to this level of ecstasy. Discovering Alex also had the capacity to propel her to this plane was both shocking and amazing.

In her fantasies it had always been Des.

"Kiss me, Alex." Fantasy had no place here. This was real. Alex was real. In a way Des never would be. Alex was solid, naked male flesh, wrapped around her, burrowed inside her. He was here. Des was not. Alex was loving, dedicated and committed. Des was nothing but a dream she'd long stopped dreaming. A friend and no more.

Alex captured her mouth with his and kissed her voraciously.

She fed his hunger. Her lips clung to his as she opened up to his searching tongue. It swept inside, tasting, teasing, thrilling her. With each caress of his tongue in her mouth and every stroke of his cock in her pussy, she fell deeper under the spell that was Alex, lost herself further to the magic he wove around her.

How was such exquisite rapture possible with a man who wasn't Des?

Without releasing his mouth, she lay back against the table, pulling him down with her. Cards fluttered to the floor as he shimmied them into a more comfortable position. After that, Megan registered nothing besides the storm building below her belly.

Alex plunged into her relentlessly, each stroke a delicious caress of torture.

This, now, was everything she needed. Alex was everything she needed.

She gripped his shoulders, digging her nails into the thick muscle layered beneath his skin, and held tight as he took her on the ride of her life.

It didn't take long. Within minutes the storm became a tornado, a windstorm that ripped through her, blowing her control to pieces. She climaxed around his cock, clutching him rhythmically as he pounded into her. Thunder clapped in her ears, a roar of noise. It was her, screaming her release, screaming out her love for Alex.

"Megan—" Alex's cry was cut short by his own orgasm. The impetus of his explosion and the beating of his cock as he emptied himself inside her agitated her sensitized channel, and she came again, her pussy a concentrated bundle of nerves and sensation.

Alex buried his head in her neck, gasping for air. He waited until the last flutters of her orgasm died away altogether before withdrawing from her. While she struggled to find her breath and her bearings, he lifted her off the table and carried her to his bed. Instead of tucking her tenderly beneath the covers as she'd expected, he ducked down, slipped his head between her legs and licked her pussy.

It took all of ten seconds under his clever tongue and Megan convulsed again.

Dear God, how had he known to do that?

She must have asked the question out loud because Alex answered her.

He chuckled as he disposed of the condom. "The last time I tried it, you had four orgasms in a row."



“Ahh.” She nodded, breathless, quite unable to say any more.

Alex slipped into bed with her and pulled the doona over them both. With the last ounce of energy she possessed, she rolled over and snuggled into his chest.

He wrapped an arm around her and kissed the top of her head. “I love you, baby,” he whispered into her hair.

Megan’s heart filled to bursting. She smiled a tired, satisfied, happy smile and before she gave in to the tempting tug of sleep, she whispered back, “I love you too, Desmond.”

The light woke her. She yawned and stretched and instinctively reached for Alex. Her body was already primed for the long, sensual lovemaking she’d forfeited on the table. Her breasts were heavy with desire and her pussy wet with wanting.

She adored waking up beside him every morning. Loved the expectation of what she knew lay ahead. He’d roll her onto her back and slowly seduce her. Kiss every inch of her body until she writhed beneath him, begging for more.

Perhaps today she’d take on the role of aggressor. She’d explore his body, lick every sleek muscle in his chest and taste every beautiful inch of his male flesh.

Searching for him with her hand she found nothing but his pillow.

Lazily she opened an eye. His side of the bed was empty.

Megan frowned. She’d spent almost every night at Alex’s place since they’d met, and not once had she woken up alone. She didn’t like the solitude one bit.

“Alex?” Her voice rasped in her throat, not quite as awake as the rest of her body.

“Over here.”

She turned to look for him and blinked against the glare from the bedside lamp. So, not morning after all.

“Hey, you.” She smiled at the sight of him.

He sat naked in the blue armchair against the wall, the same chair he’d fucked her senseless on just a couple of nights ago. One foot rested on his thigh. His elbows were propped on the arms of the seat, and his fingers were steepled together.

“What’s the time?”

Alex’s gaze flickered to the clock on his side of the bed. “A little after two a.m.”

She scrunched her eyes, trying to clear away the sleepiness. “Whatcha doing all the way over there?”

“Thinking.”



“‘Bout what?” Did he have to think at all? Couldn’t he just climb back into bed so they could start that slow, sexy dance of love?

“About my name.”

She yawned again, and this time when she stretched, she deliberately let the covers fall down to her waist. Perhaps an eyeful of her breasts, nipples hard from wanting him, would tempt him back under the doona with her. “What about your name?”

“It’s Alex.”

“Huh?”

“My name. It’s Alex.”

She laughed. “I know that, dummy. Now come here and kiss me and make me scream your name out loud.” She patted the empty space beside her.

“You called me Desmond.”

“What?”

“Last night. Just before you fell asleep.”

Megan sat up, the last wisps of sleep clearing from her head. “You’re kidding me.”

How the hell could she mistake the two of them? They were chalk and cheese. Alex all steady, focused determination and Des as informal and relaxed as they came. Different as two men could be, and she’d confused them?

He shook his head and Megan took a long look at his face. It was void of the smile he always reserved for her. In fact, it was void of any emotion whatsoever.

“What did I say?” She had no recollection of saying anything at all about Des. Alex had consumed every thought she’d had.

“You sure you want to know?”

Apprehension crept into her stomach. Could she really have done something so bloody stupid? “Yes.”  
*No.*

He pursed his lips together before answering. “Your exact words were, ‘I love you too, Desmond’.”

Megan’s jaw dropped. She gaped at him while her heart dived into her belly, sending mad surges of blood to her head. At least she figured that’s what was going on inside her, because nothing else would explain the consuming dismay or the nausea that rose in her stomach. “Please tell me I didn’t.”

“Wish I could.” He shrugged.

Dear God, what had she done? “Alex.” She breathed out his name. *His* name. “I am so sorry.”

“Yep. Me too.”

She threw off the covers and sat up, flinging her legs over the side of the bed. “You have to know I didn’t mean anything by it. It was a mistake.” A terrible, horrible, rotten mistake.

“Ah.” He nodded. “You make that mistake often? Call all the men you love Desmond?”



A muscle ticked in her cheek. "In the last four years I've only loved one other man besides you." She'd had a string of lovers, but no one special. Until Alex.

Alex.

"So you do love me?" he asked.

"God, yes." The truth of her words resounded through the room.

Alex's lip twitched with a hint of a smile. "You sure about that?"

"Absolutely, positively, one hundred percent sure." Would he ever believe her? God, she hoped so, although she wouldn't blame him if he didn't. How could she have said something so heartless? So bloody stupid?

It was a wonder Alex hadn't tossed her out on her butt.

Alex's mouth did not crease into the full-blown smile she'd hoped it might.

Her heart ached.

"I don't get it." He shook his head. "You say you love me, and I beli...I want to believe you..." His voice trailed off, leaving him deep in thought.

"But?" she prompted, afraid of his response. Why, oh why, did there have to be a but?

"But you called me Desmond." There it was again, the hollowness in his voice.

Shit, she'd done this to him. She'd taken all the solid, unwavering light that was Alex, and stamped it out. She wanted to cry. Wanted to slap herself for being such a moron.

Maybe if she explained, he'd understand.

Somehow, she doubted it.

She had to try anyway. Had to make him see how much she loved him. "Des was on my mind last night. I must have been thinking about him subconsciously and slipped his name in when I should have said yours." Lame, lame, lame.

"That's nice." Alex's smile could have frozen the sun. "Do you always think about him when you're fucking me?"

The blood drained from her face. She did, but how could she confess that without crushing everything she and Alex had built together? Without breaking his heart and her own?

"Last night wasn't about sex," she said in a voice not louder than a whisper. It was all she could manage.

Alex raised a derisive eyebrow.

She rushed in to correct herself. "With you and me it was." Boy, was it ever. "Not with Des."

"No, Des was obviously about love, not sex."

Megan dragged a hand over her face, rubbing her eyes. Alex was so distant, so aloof. She didn't blame him one bit. If their positions were reversed, she'd have marched straight out his front door and never looked back.



At least he'd hung around for an explanation.

"I fought with him last night. During your poker game."

"Aw, what a shame. Lover's quarrel, was it?"

"Alex!" God, could she ever make this right? "Des is my closest friend. He's one of the most important people in my life. But that's where our relationship ends. He is not, nor has he ever been, my lover."

Which wasn't to say she hadn't spent four years wishing he was.

Therein lay the essential problem. No matter how much she loved Alex—and she did, she loved him immeasurably—she loved Des too. She had for years.

When she'd met Alex, she'd given up on her dreams of Des. If Alex had never entered the scene, she'd probably still be pining for the carefree, beautiful blond man who'd owned her heart for so long. But Alex *had* interfered, and now everything was different. Everything. So beautifully, wonderfully different.

She needed to explain all of this to him. She had to help him understand why she'd made that god-awful blunder.

Alex's gaze was hard, unrelenting.

"Des and I have never fought. Last night was a first. It threw me."

Her world had tipped off-kilter. Nothing had felt right for those few moments she and Des were at odds. She bit her lip. Whatever he was going through must be huge, or he'd never have been so disrespectful of her. So disinterested.

"Even when we met, he didn't lose his cool with me, and he should have, considering I drove into the back of his brand-new car."

Finally Alex spoke. "He must have been charmed."

Alex obviously wasn't.

Her heart constricted.

"Not charmed, no. But charming." It had been her shock that had garnered Des's empathy. She'd been both stunned and distressed by the crash. Distraught at the idea she might have hurt him and contrite that she'd crumpled his bumper. "Instead of blasting me to hell for my negligence, he laughed it off. He wasn't pleased with me. But he never lost his temper once. Not even when my insurance gave him a hard time about paying out."

Instead of getting irritated and blaming her for the accident, he'd worked with her to sort out the whole mess. The day he'd gotten his car back from the panel beaters, all expenses paid compliments of insurance, he'd taken her for dinner to celebrate. They'd been friends ever since.

"Great story." Alex rolled his eyes. "Any reason you chose to share it with me?"

"I need you to understand why I was so upset with him last night. Why he was on my mind. We fought. Des and I don't fight. Ever. We made up in the end, but it left me...unsettled. I must have been



thinking about him subconsciously. Going through what happened and sorting it out in my mind.” Oh God, she was babbling. Trying too hard. Talking too much about Des.

Alex’s mouth tightened. He put his foot on the floor and stared steadily at her.

She babbled right on, her cheek ticking away. “Des doesn’t get mad. We don’t fight. We never have, until last night. It shook me to my bones, Al. I didn’t know how to deal with it.”

“So you called me Desmond. Did it help you sort things out in your own mind?”

His sarcasm cut her. “No.”

When it came to Des, nothing helped her sort through her feelings.

The muscle in her cheek throbbed madly. Heat rushed her face. She had to tell Alex everything. “Calling you Des was a stupid, heartless, cruel mistake I wish to God I’d never made.”

This time, Alex was the one who prompted her. “But...”

Her heart lodged in her throat. God, she couldn’t tell him. Couldn’t hurt him like this. But how could she not? How could she keep such a big secret from the man she loved? “But...there’s something I haven’t told you.”

Alex went rigid. He didn’t breathe, he didn’t blink.

Megan launched herself off the bed and across the room, dropping to her knees at his feet. “I do love him.”

“Fucking hell!” His face turned scarlet.

“I’m sorry,” Megan cried. Her heart twisted in four different directions at once, the pain excruciating. She couldn’t breathe. Couldn’t think. God, she hated hurting Alex. What kind of a selfish bitch was she, subjecting the man she loved to such...such...anguish? “So, so sorry. I never dreamed my feelings for him would impact our relationship.”

Alex glowered at her. “If you’re trying to make me feel better, you’re failing miserably.”

Tears stung her eyes. She blinked them back. Alex was the one hurting. Not her. “I don’t want to lie to you, Al. I can’t. That wouldn’t be fair.” She’d never disrespect him like that. “The truth is I’ve loved Des for as long as I’ve known him.” The feeling was as instinctive as breathing. “But he’s *never* reciprocated my feelings. Ever. Never once given me any indication what he feels about me is anything more than friendship.” She swallowed. “Do you have any idea how hard it is to love someone who doesn’t love you back?” It had taken her forty-eight painfully long months to accept the truth.

Alex gave a sarcastic snort. “I’m getting a pretty good idea of it right now.”

“Then you’re getting the wrong idea,” she sobbed. “I do love you, Alex. More than I ever believed possible. That’s what I’m trying to tell you. It’s just not as simple as I’d like it to be.”

“Yeah. I can see how loving two men could be a complex matter from your perspective.” His bitterness stung. “You should look at it from my side. That’d really knock you over sideways.”



She absorbed his emotional punches as he struck out. She deserved every damn one of them. “Al.” She grabbed his knee. “I love you. You have to believe me. Regardless of how I feel about Des, I love you.”

“How about you keep your hands to yourself?” He pulled his leg away, letting her hand drop on the chair.

She stared at it, shocked at his rejection. *No! No, no, no.* She wouldn’t let him push her away. Not until he’d heard the full story. Not until she’d made it clear how deep her feelings ran for him.

And then...then...if he still rejected her...

Megan pulled her offending hand away and clasped it in her lap so Alex couldn’t see how shaken she was. “I’ve...I’ve...” *Breathe. Get yourself together.* “I’ve accepted the fact that Des doesn’t love me. It took a while, but I finally came to terms with it.” Her breath shuddered in her chest, and she forced her gaze up to his. “What I never expected was to fall in love with someone else, knowing how strongly I feel about him.”

She stared up at him, hoping to God he could see the honesty in her eyes. “I fell in love with you, Alex.”

His chest stilled, as if he were holding his breath.

“When I saw you at Hunter’s party, something changed, like a gear shifting inside of me. I knew then it was time to move on. Time to give up on my fantasies of Des and me. I hadn’t been ready to do that—until I met you.”

Alex had attracted her like a child to a lolly. She’d taken one look at him and known her world was about to change forever. “I couldn’t stop looking at you. Couldn’t stop my heart from pounding so loud I was sure Des could hear it too.”

The dark eyes staring down at her softened slightly. “I couldn’t stop looking at you either.” His voice was a tense whisper.

She remembered. Felt the heat of his gaze as it swept over her body before settling on her face.

“I made Des introduce me to you.” She’d taken his arm and dragged him over to Alex, the beginnings of a fire smoldering in her stomach. “When you shook my hand and told me your name I knew I was in big trouble.” She flexed her hand now, the same hand he’d held as Des had made the necessary introductions. “I can still feel the imprint of your palm on mine,” she whispered. “Your touch burned me. It set me alight. Made me feel something I hadn’t felt for anyone but Des in a very long time.”

She turned her hand over and stared at her palm. It tingled now with the same heat Alex’s simple handshake had inflicted the first time he touched her. *With the same heat that flared when Des kissed it last night.* “I fell for you, Al. Every minute I’ve spent with you since has just reinforced what I instinctively knew the minute I laid eyes on you. I love you.”

“You love Des too.” The accusation wasn’t as acid as his previous comments had been.



“Yes, but it’s irrelevant now that I’m with you.”

“It’s not irrelevant when you call me by his name.”

*Ouch!*

“It was a mistake. Fighting with Des is an anomaly. Something out of the ordinary. As far as you and I go it means nothing. I love you, *Alex*. You have to believe that.”

His cock twitched. “Tell me again.”

“I love you, Al.”

“Again.” The word was a demand, not a request.

She loosened her grip on her hand. “I love you.”

He stared down at her, his eyes burning with emotion. Hurt? Disbelief? Desire?

Yes. All three of them.

“Please, believe me. What you and I have has nothing to do with anyone else. I love *you*.” She placed her hand on his thigh and breathed a sigh of relief when he didn’t push it away. The muscle beneath his skin flexed and his cock, which had sat limp and disinterested, pulsed.

She felt an answering tug in her belly.

“*Alex*.” This time his name was not so much a confirmation of his identity as a moan of hunger and need. Megan straightened her back and shifted closer to him.

His head hit the back of the chair and he groaned out loud. “Christ, woman, what am I going to do with you?”

Megan took a shuddery breath, sensing his capitulation. He believed her. She blinked back tears of relief and tried to speak, but her throat was all clogged up. She had to swallow and clear her throat to answer him.

“You’re going to carry on loving me?” She hadn’t meant for her answer to come out as a question, but she needed the reassurance. Needed to know he’d accepted her truths and assimilated them. Needed to know her feelings for Des didn’t affect how Alex felt about her. “You’re going to tell me you understand, and you believe me. That you know, no matter what I feel about Des, I love you.”

“I hate that you can even think about another man.”

“I love you, Alex. I love *you*.”

“And Des.”

“That doesn’t matter. It doesn’t affect us.”

“Unless you call me by his name.”

“A horrible, terrible mistake. That’s all. Please believe me, that’s all. I’m with you because I love you.” Knowing actions spoke louder than words could, she inched her hand forward and brushed her fingers over his cock.

It swelled at her touch.



“*Shit!*” He clasped the arms of the chair as though he fought to suppress his rising erection.

“Don’t fight me, Al,” she whispered. “Let me prove I love you.” Her gaze was no longer on his face. It rested on his lap, on the movement of her hand as she stroked him more boldly, on the hardening of his shaft.

“God, baby, I *want* you to love me,” he said on a groan.

“I do, Al. I swear, I do.” She bent her neck, kissed the inside of his thigh, slowly working her way upward until she grazed his shaft with her lips.

She whispered his name. “Alex.”

It was an acknowledgment, a sign of recognition. She had no doubt which man sat before her. Which man she’d apologized to.

“Megan.” Her name escaped on a sigh.

She opened her mouth and ran her tongue lightly over the tiny slit in his cock.

“Ah, fuck.” Alex arched his hips, pushing himself against her mouth. “Fuck, fuck, fuck.”

“Shhh,” she soothed, letting her breath breeze over his shaft. “Let me make it okay. Let me love you. Please.”

She risked a glance at his face and found him staring at her with a devastatingly intense expression.

“Okay?” she asked, terrified of the answer.

He looked at her for a very long time, the intensity of his gaze not receding one bit. Finally, finally he nodded his agreement. “Okay.”

A dry sob broke free of her throat. “Okay then.”

Before she could burst into tears and cry like a baby, she turned her full attention to the job at hand.

Sitting on the tip of his penis was a precious bead of precome he’d spilled. For her. She licked it away and swallowed it down over the lump in her throat.

The tension broke free of Alex. His muscles relaxed and he released his death grip on the chair. She suppressed her breath of relief.

Megan ran her tongue down the length of his cock, accepting the chance he’d given her to make things right between them. She lapped up the musky salt that remained from their loving last night. Their mixed tastes mingled on her tongue, a reminder of everything she and Alex had created together. Not just the sex and the loving, but the relationship they’d built. The intimacy of their conversations, sharing thoughts and stories and their lives. Telling each other secrets no one else knew. Well, no one else except Des as far as her secrets went. Smiling at each other over wineglasses and debating world affairs over dinner. Shedding their clothes in their mutual desire to touch, and lying side by side, gasping for breath in the aftermath of their passion.

The taste sensation exploded on her tongue and she lapped at him, ravenous for more.

“Megan?”



“Hmmm?”

“Close your eyes.”

She licked her lips. “Already shut.” She moved over his erection, guided by touch alone.

“Keep ‘em that way.”

She nodded obediently and found his cock again.

“Now...tell—” His voice caught as she sucked him in. “Tell me...my name.”

“Alex.” Her answer was muffled, compliments of the erection interfering with intelligible speech, but it must have sufficed because Alex thrust his hips up, surging deeper into her mouth.

Silence followed, punctuated only by the greedy sounds of her lips as she took him in as far as she could, relishing the thick shaft that tickled the back of her throat. She slid her lips back up his length and circled her tongue around his cockhead before sucking him in once again.

Up and down, over and over she worked him. Her hair fell over her forehead, onto his stomach and thighs, shifting with her as she moved.

He was too big for her, too long, and she wrapped her hand around the base of his shaft, pumping in time with the movements of her mouth. Long moments passed as she loved him, fed on him. His desire increased her own, and her clit throbbed, craving his touch.

She thanked God for giving her this second chance. After what she’d said, Alex had every right to hate her. To reject her and send her away. That he allowed her access to his most private of body parts, in this most private of rituals, was a blessing of the highest level.

Her pussy pulsed. The knowledge that he wanted her regardless of her feelings for Des aroused her more than words or actions ever could.

“Megan?” His legs shifted beside her cheeks, the muscles stiffening, until she rested her chin on one rock-hard thigh. Her nipples brushed against the hair on his shins, abrading the sensitive surfaces.

“Hmmm?”

Her answer vibrated over his cock and he shuddered.

“Your eyes still closed, baby?”

“Mm-hm.” More precome trickled from his tip and she swallowed it, moaning with pleasure.

His balls tightened below her hands, telling her his orgasm was close. God, she was close to coming too, and he hadn’t even touched her.

“Who am I?”

“Hmm?”

“Who am I?” he demanded again.

Loath as she was to let go of him, this was too important an opportunity to ignore. She released him with a wet slurp and tilted her chin so she faced upwards. She couldn’t see him, but she felt his gaze on her face, knew he was watching her.



“You’re the man I love.”

She continued to pump with her hand, refusing to free him altogether. Something told her that so long as they maintained bodily contact she wouldn’t lose him.

His testicles flexed each time she touched them.

“Say my name,” he said with a growl.

“Alex.”

His cock grew in her hands.

“Say it again.”

“Alex.” She pumped faster, heard his breath come out in small gasps. “Alex.”

She opened her eyes to find his gaze on her mouth, his eyes black as night and glazed with desire. Desire whipped free inside her, like a coil unwinding. She plunged her free hand down to her pussy and touched herself.

A jolt shook through her. “Oh, God, *Alex!*”

His body convulsed and he cried out.

She bent her neck and captured his cock in her mouth an instant before he erupted. Jets of come streamed down the back of her throat. She swallowed every drop, every delectable morsel he spurted.

His release spurred hers. She pressed hard against her clit and juice spilled from her pussy as she lost control. His cock pulsed in her mouth and she shuddered around her finger.

When the tremors and the shivers finally subsided, and Alex’s spasms had long run dry, she released his softened cock with a shuddery sigh, collapsed on her knees and rested her forehead on his thigh.

She waited until he’d come down from his high before she looked up at his face and smiled. “I love you, Alex Truman.”

His answering smile was a bigger reward than any she could ever have asked for.



## Chapter Three

“Full house,” Meg announced with glee, showing her cards.

“Unbelievable.” Max shook his head and tossed his hand facedown on the table. “You’ve been playing for all of a week and you’re already cleaning us out.”

Meg grinned. “What can I say? Alex is a great instructor.”

“More like you’re a quick study.” Alex winked at her.

Her grin stretched into the Meg-a-watt smile when she looked Alex’s way. “I should have learned the game years ago. I could have quit teaching and become a professional poker player.”

Des tried not to bristle. It wasn’t as if he *hadn’t* proposed to show her the game a hundred times. He’d been a willing coach, but she’d refused his every offer. A week under Alex’s tutelage and Meg was a skilled player. Or maybe she was just a good bluffer. Either way, her chips were stacking up while everyone else’s were diminishing.

Trevor gathered the cards to straighten and shuffle the pack, readying them for the next hand.

Meg drew her chair closer to Des, scraping the legs against the wooden floorboards. “Hey, you.” She bumped her shoulder against his arm affectionately.

“Hey, yourself.” He bumped her back. He couldn’t help the grin that spread over his face. No matter what shit he had to sort through, and no matter how jealous he might still be after two months, being with Meg always raised his spirits.

Instead of moving away like he’d expected her to, she stayed right where she was, with her shoulder pressed up against his arm. “Wanna see a movie tomorrow night?”

Des almost laughed out loud. Sit beside her in a darkened theater for over two hours? Not likely. A couple of months ago that would not have been a prob. Now? Fucking torture. “I’d love to, but I’m busy.”

“Hot date?”

Oh, yeah. Just him and his telly remote, curled up on the couch together. “Work.”

Was it his imagination, or was Alex watching them?

She scrunched up her nose. “On a Saturday night?”

“There’s a new phone releasing on Monday. I have to be ready for it. Figured I’d slack off tonight at cards and use the rest of the weekend to work.” When had he become such an expert liar? Even if there was a new phone releasing, his store managers were more than able to handle the buzz without him.



“You work too hard,” she muttered, and leaned over to collect the cards Trevor dealt. They played the next two hands without speaking, but that didn’t mean Des wasn’t acutely aware of every move she made.

She neglected to pull her chair back to its original spot, instead remaining right where she was, her arm plastered against his. Usually it wouldn’t have bothered him. Meg was always affectionate. He should be accustomed to it.

A couple of months ago he’d have stretched his arm around her shoulders and pulled her closer. Kissed her head and teased her about the stars that seemed to have settled permanently in her eyes. Now? That same damn arm was cramping from stiffness, and he couldn’t think up one amusing thing to say.

Besides, Alex was watching them again.

Heat radiated off her, burning through his shirtsleeves at the exact places their bodies touched. The familiar floral scent of her shampoo wafted through his nose, and her curls tickled his neck whenever she turned her head.

She drove him slowly insane. His cock had perked up the instant she touched him. His pants—which fit just fine earlier today—drew tight over his groin, making his current position even more untenable. If he had to sit here for the next hour or so, smelling Meg, he’d do himself irreparable damage.

Frustrated, Des rubbed his eyes and imagined as much blood, guts and gore as possible. Of course it made no difference. The erection from hell still plagued him, and it wasn’t going down anytime soon. Not when the sweetest laughter he’d ever heard tinkled through his ear and vibrated through his chest.

He lost the next two hands and half his chips along with them. His concentration was shot, and the most simple of plays was beyond him.

Meg took great pleasure in drawing the winnings of the second hand over and stacking them in color-coordinated piles. Much as he enjoyed her taking delight in her spoils, the click-clack of one chip hitting another tortured Des like a slow-dripping tap.

Jay called for a five-minute bathroom break, and everyone got up to wander around and stretch their legs. Alex blew Meg a kiss and offered to get her a vodka cruiser. She accepted with a smile.

Des was a beer man through and through, but he kept a constant supply of cruisers at home for Meg. When Alex called to say she’d be joining them for poker, he’d set several bottles down beside the regular stash of poker-night beer and scotch.

“You want a beer, mate?” Alex offered. His tone was friendly enough but his gaze was cooler than usual.

“That’d be great, thanks.” Any other time he’d get up and help himself, ’specially seeing as this was his house. Two things kept him seated. The first was Meg. He wasn’t moving an inch away from her anytime soon. The second was his damned erection from hell. If he stood now, his hunger for Meg would be as obvious to the rest of the poker school as it was to Des.



She linked her arm through his. "It feels like we never spend time together anymore." She squeezed his biceps. "I miss you, Des."

He sighed. "I miss you too, Meggy-mine." Way more than she'd ever fathom.

"So why don't you pick up the phone? Talk to me sometime?"

Des snickered. "Because it's too damn heavy."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"It means I have so many text messages from you, they're weighing down my mobile."

She grinned at him. "You could delete them."

"And erase all those pep talks? Not on your life."

Meg had taken to texting him at least twice a day. At first she'd just sent simple, *hang-in-there* or *I'm-here-if-you-need-me* messages. Then they'd morphed into profound philosophical quotes about hope, which made Des want to throw up. He texted her back to tell her as much. Never one to be deterred, Meg's messages became snarky one-liners or silly jokes she'd just heard.

"You don't like my texts?" Her eyes twinkled.

Des tucked in to his back pocket and withdrew his iPhone. He scrolled through his texts, found the one he sought and showed it to her.

*"If you fart too hard you go flying upward,"* she read out loud.

"They're inspiring, Meg. Really help me to get through a day." His voice was deadpan.

Peals of laughter rang from her. "I knew you'd like that one. Had to share it ASAP."

He couldn't help it. He laughed right along with her. "You're bloody nuts."

"I am," she agreed wholeheartedly. "And that, my friend, is why you love me."

This time his laugh held no humor. "That and a whole host of other reasons."

Megan blinked hard. The muscle in her cheek ticked. For a long moment neither one of them spoke. Des just stared at her, knowing he shouldn't have made such a dumb comment, but unable to regret it. Damn it. He did love her for a whole host of reasons. Hundreds of them. Thousands.

Megan bit her lip while her cheek ticked away. She broke the awkward silence with a cry. "Hey. You haven't commented on my poker skills. What do you think?"

"Oh, I'm impressed. Bloody impressed." He nodded to reinforce his words. "But confused too. You? Learning poker? Doesn't compute. What's the story?"

Her brow wrinkled. "You really wanna know?"

"Course I wanna know."

"I learnt it for you."

That had him sitting up straighter. "Me? What have I got to do with your card skills?"

She jutted her chin out, looking defiant. "Well, you said it before. You're dealing with something, and you need your space. You didn't want me poking around in your business."



He winced. "Shit, I really said that?"

"Yes, Des. You really said that." She lowered her chin a little. "Uh, maybe not the part about not wanting me poking into your business, but definitely the bit about needing space. From me."

"I'm sorry."

"Yeah, me too. I figured since you rebuffed all of my attempts to talk to you, and haven't been round to my place in over six weeks, if I wanted to see you, it would have to be on your terms." She grinned triumphantly. "What better terms than poker?"

Fuck the awkwardness. He pulled his arm away from hers, dropped it over her shoulder and tucked her in close. Then he leaned down and kissed the top of her head, just as he had on any number of occasions. "You're a good friend," he whispered, his nose still burrowed in her hair. "The best."

Christ, he'd missed her. Never mind the bit about needing to haul her into his arms, hold her there forever and kiss her senseless. He just missed his friend, Meggy.

"I know." Her smugness made him laugh. "And in just a few short weeks, I'll be a good poker player too. The best." She tilted her head back and looked him in the eye.

Hers danced with humor, and something else. Something Des could not fathom and didn't try to. He just enjoyed this easy moment with her, relished the closeness they'd found again. The rest of the world faded to nothing as the two of them chuckled together.

Of course, Alex chose that moment to break in, setting two bottles on the table. "Here you go, baby. A cruiser for you and an ice-cold Tooheys for your friend."

Des nodded his thanks at Alex and watched as the man sat on the other side of Meg, in Julia's chair.

The moment between him and Meg was gone.

Des removed his arm with reluctance and Meg sat up. He kept his grin plastered on his face, hoping it didn't look as empty as he felt.

Alex stretched across the table and pulled his phone and wallet over, telling Des, without words, that he was staying right where he was. Des-and-Meg time was officially over. Her boyfriend was back.

What the fuck? Did Alex just get territorial?

His spine prickled. He resisted the urge to tug Meg back against him and show the guy just who she'd belonged with first. Long before Alex stepped on the scene.

Fortunately, one by one, the rest of the school joined them at the table, preventing Des from making a complete moron of himself. Jules never said a word about her usurped seat. She just flashed Alex a knowing smile, shifted Hunter up a place, and sat in his chair. Everyone else moved one chair to the right and it was game on.

Des's good mood dissipated. Tension ran through his shoulders and up his neck. Much as he tried to ignore Alex's hand, which had found its way to the small of Meg's back and rubbed tiny circles over the top of her butt, it seemed to be all he could see in his peripheral vision.



The soft, sexy sighs Meg released every few minutes did nothing to improve his disposition. Gone were the few minutes of fun he and Meg had shared.

So help him, he was jealous. Jealous, frustrated and more than a little pissed off, both with himself, for not coming to his senses sooner, and with Alex, for touching the woman Des loved. Every bet Alex made, he challenged. So aggressively, more than one comment was passed around the table.

“Not in your character, Reedy.” Jay laughed.

“You pissed off or something?” Trev wanted to know.

Des didn’t give a shit. He played for all his worth. There might be social restraints dictating the way he had to treat the guy, preventing him from physically attacking Alex. There might also be that small issue of size holding him back. Alex was a head taller and a good few inches broader than Des. Still Des felt an absurd need to get to him, to show the man up any way he could.

He won three consecutive hands and felt no better.

The later the evening became, the blacker Des’s thoughts turned. Alex’s hand was no longer on Meg’s back. It was on her knee. His mouth was by her ear, and even on the other side of her, Des could hear the rasping of Alex’s voice as he whispered to her.

When Alex walked his fingers under the hem of Meg’s sundress, Des had enough. He threw his cards on the table and jumped up.

“I fold.” He stalked over to the sliding doors.

“Where are you going?” Meg asked.

“Outside.” Christ, he tried not to snap at her but couldn’t stop himself in time.

“Why?”

*Because if I don’t, I’m going to break every finger on Alex’s hand. “I need a cigarette.”*

With that, he stepped outside, managing to resist the urge to slam the doors shut behind him. He crossed the small garden in a few long strides, heading for the shadows of the big gum tree in the back. Under the cloak of darkness he let rip with several foul curses and kicked the thick tree trunk hard enough to break his toe.

It didn’t help one fucking bit.

Alex looked from Megan’s face to the sliding doors and back to Megan’s face. Her mouth hung open and her eyes had widened. They were filled with confusion and turmoil.

Her good mood slipped away as tangibly as if she’d wiped the smile off her face.

Tension coiled in Alex’s gut. All was not well in paradise. He’d been a fucking idiot in the car over here, asking if she still loved Des.

Her nod had been a poker through his chest.



He'd grimaced. They'd spent the preceding hour naked and sweaty together. On her initiation, not his. Not that he'd complained. She'd slid her dress over her hip, flashing him a glimpse of her pantiless butt, and he'd been a goner. Before she'd let the skirt fall back into place, he'd dropped to his knees, buried his mouth in her pussy and licked her like a lollipop. But it was his strategically placed finger in her ass that had set her off on her first round of convulsions.

The second round was brought on by his cock in her pussy and the third by an active session of backdoor sex. Alex's own orgasm was about the biggest he'd ever had. He broke into a sweat just remembering.

"I love you too," she'd told him in the car. "More than I ever thought possible."

It was difficult holding on to her words now, when her face mirrored Des's turbulence.

"Think we should call it a night?" Jules asked in the stunned silence that followed Des's exit.

Max nodded. "Might as well. It's late. We'll play again next week."

Hunter gathered the cards together. "Count your chips. I'll sort out the winnings."

Megan ignored her booty. She stared out the door, into the dark night.

Knowing he'd regret his words the second he spoke them, Alex leaned close to Megan. "Go to him."

She turned to him with big, worried eyes.

"Go," Alex said again. "He needs you."

"But..." She didn't finish. Didn't need to. They were both thinking about their conversation in the car. Megan wouldn't express her thoughts in front of five other people. She'd never embarrass Alex like that.

"It's cool, babe." No it wasn't. It was very far from cool, but Megan was already looking back at the door, and whether she physically went outside to talk to Des or not, her focus was totally on him. "Go see what's up with him."

Megan squeezed his hand and walked outside.

Alex's heart settled heavily in his stomach. This was not going to end well.

Damn it. She'd thought she'd made brilliant progress with Des.

They'd connected again for the first time since Hunter's party. Megan even had a sense everything would be okay between them. She was planning on popping in to his place the next morning, regardless of his workload. She'd neglected him long enough, giving him the space he'd asked for. No more. He needed a friend, and she'd be there for him. End of story.

And now? Fun, easygoing Des had looked ready to kill someone right before he marched outside.

Who?



She expected to find him sitting on one of the deck chairs on the patio, but they were both empty. She scanned the garden, giving her eyes a minute to adjust to the dark. Where was he? No shadows lurked on the grass or against the neighbor's wall.

"Des?"

Silence.

"Desmond? Where are you?"

"Go back inside, Megan." His voice came from behind the blue gum.

Megan? Des never called her by her full name.

She walked over to him, making out the profile of his body below the canopy of branches. "Enjoying your cigarette?"

He didn't answer.

"You *don't* smoke." What a bullshit excuse.

"I *don't* want company either."

Crikey, what crawled up his ass? "I *don't* care." She strode over and planted herself in front of him. "What's going on with you?"

"Nothing you need to worry about." He didn't move, just leaned on the tree, one foot resting against the trunk.

"Listen up, mate." She poked a finger at his chest. "I'm getting sick of you pushing me away. You got a problem, tell me about it."

"I'm not in the mood for talking."

She bristled at his tone. "Yeah? Well I'm not in the mood for leaving you out here to brood. It's not your style, and it freaks me out. So why not cut the crap and spill your guts?"

He shook his head. "Go away, Meg. I need to be alone."

"Or else what?" Yes, she goaded him, but she had no choice. If she walked away now, she'd never get through to him. He'd just carry on shutting her out, and she'd have no chance to help him. Rather push him until he cracked. Get whatever troubled him out in the open. She couldn't bear seeing him like this. So tense and so edgy she hardly recognized him.

"Or else someone is going to get hurt."

She snorted. "Did you just threaten me?" The idea of Des getting violent was laughable.

He glared at her.

"Oooh, now I'm scared. The big, bad Desmond wants to hit me."

"I'm not going to hit you. You're being ridiculous."

"Oh, really? Then why do you look as if you want to smash your fist into something?"

"Megan!" Her name was a warning.



“Will hitting me make you feel better? Will it help get your frustration and anger out?” He needed to get it out. Whatever else he had bottled up inside needed releasing too. He was wound so tight he could snap any minute.

She opened her arms wide, turning herself into a standing target. “Go ahead, take your best shot.” As if he could ever lay a hand on her.

His arms remained at his sides. “Don’t be an idiot.”

“Me?” She laughed out loud. “The only one being an idiot is you. Now, I’m going to count slowly to three, and when I reach the magic number, you’re going to tell me exactly what’s going on in that head of yours.”

Emotion radiated off Des in waves. Anger, aggravation and a million other things she couldn’t identify.

“You ready?” She paused, waiting for him speak.

He didn’t say a thing.

“One...”

Nothing. No confession forthcoming.

“Two...”

Des shifted against the tree, the stilted action a clear sign of his agitation.

“Two and half...”

“Megan,” he growled.

“You wanna say something?”

Silence.

“Two and three-quarters.”

“Do not say three.” His words rang clear through the dark night.

“Why not?”

“Because you’ll regret it,” was his gruff promise. “We both will.”

“Is there something you want to say before I finish counting?”

“No!” His breath sounded heavy. Labored.

“Okay. Fine.” She shrugged, glared at him then smiled. “Three.”

Des snapped. “Jesus fucking Christ. You just don’t get it, do you?”

“Get what?”

“Get the fucking reason I cannot talk to you, cannot be with you.”

“How can I get it?” she snapped right back, matching his tone and aggression. “You won’t fucking tell me.”

“That’s because it’s you,” he snarled.

Oh, well that cleared up everything, didn’t it? “What’s me?”



“You’re my fucking problem!”

She froze. “Me?”

“Yes, you!” He punched the tree. “I can’t get bloody far enough away from you.”

His answer hit her like a giant breaker, throwing her off balance and tumbling her, ragdoll style, through the sea. “Wh-what do you mean?”

“I mean back off. Do not come any closer.”

She shook her head, instantly denying his response. He hadn’t said that. He couldn’t have. Not Des. “Why not?”

“Because you’re driving me fucking crazy.” Each word was clearly enunciated, as though he forced them out one at a time.

Spots danced in front of her face, blinding her. Oh, God. He had said it. All of it. To her. She stepped forward, waving an arm in front of her, seeking something to hold on to before she fell. A branch, anything. She found nothing.

“I said stay away,” he hissed.

Tears rushed her eyes as shock gave way to reality.

Desmond’s issue was *her*. She was the problem.

Dear God, how could she have been so dense as to not realize it before? He hadn’t stayed away because of some abstract crisis that had nothing to do with her. He’d stayed away because he didn’t want to see her. It was that simple.

A lump the size of China settled in her throat. She couldn’t swallow it down; couldn’t breathe over it. A sob gurgled in her chest and burst out her mouth.

Des hated her.

“Meggy!” Her name was a soft cry of pain. “Christ, please don’t cry.”

What else did he expect her to do? For all intents and purposes she’d just lost her best friend. “You hate me.” The fact burned her throat.

He emitted a sound like a wounded animal. “I could never hate you.”

Semantics. “You don’t want me anywhere near you.” In her mind it meant the same thing.

“You’re wrong.”

“You just told me to stay the fuck away.” The muscle in her cheek ticked furiously.

His shoulders sagged as though he’d lost the will to fight. “Only because I don’t have the strength to stay away from you anymore.”

“I don’t understand,” she told him helplessly. “You’re talking in circles.”

Des said nothing.



She had no idea what she'd done to deserve his ire, couldn't fathom where their friendship had gone so wrong. All she knew was she couldn't stand here any longer. Not when her best friend hated her and her heart was breaking in a million pieces.

She held up her hands in defeat and took a step backwards. Tears ran down her cheeks, spilling into her mouth. Her hurt was too deep to fathom, too endless to comprehend.

Alex. She needed Alex.

"Meg! Wait."

She backed away with another step. Alex would make her feel better. "So you can find another way to tell me to get out of your life?" She shook her head, confounded. "I don't think so. Have a happy future, Des. I, uh..." The cheek muscle ticked. "I enjoyed being your friend."

He let out a fierce snarl. "Damn it, I told you you'd regret this."

Des moved so fast she had no time to register his actions. One second she was edging towards the house, the next her back was flattened against the tree and his arms were around her, holding her so tight she could hardly breathe.

There was no time to think, no time to object. His mouth crashed down on hers, claiming her lips with savage intent. He kissed her like a man starved for a woman, ravenous for a taste of that which had been denied him forever. It was a feverish kiss that went on eternally, scalding her lips and blowing every one of her defenses out of the water.

She whimpered beneath the assault, stunned not just by Des's action—so at odds with his words—but by his intensity and demand.

Her thoughts tumbled together in confusion. How could someone who hated her, someone who couldn't get far enough away from her, kiss her like this?

Her whimper must have registered somewhere in his head because he broke the kiss with a strangled groan.

Megan gaped up at him.

"Christ, Meggy. I don't hate you." The huskiness in his voice rasped over her skin, leaving a trail of goose bumps wherever it touched. "I love you. So much it's killing me."

She tried to answer, tried to put two words together, but couldn't. Impossible to talk when she couldn't comprehend what was being said.

His eyes slid shut as though he tried to block out the sight of her. "I love you, Meggy-mine, but you're Alex's, and the knowledge is slowly driving me insane."

She opened her mouth, shut it and opened it again. Des loved her?

"I'm dying. A little more every day. Wanting you this badly and knowing I can't have you."



He swore then and contradicting his words, sealed his mouth over hers. This time his lips were soft and tender. Loving. They robbed the air from her lungs and the thoughts from her head. They caressed hers until she grew dizzy and opened her mouth to inhale huge lungfuls of fresh air.

At which point he slipped his tongue inside and claimed her. Made her his.

Reality ceased to matter, ceased to exist. Des pledged his heart to her completely. He swept her off her feet and plunged her into a parallel universe where all that existed was him and her and the exquisite kiss that went on forever, promising a future of happiness, joy and eternal love.

Four years of loving him coalesced into this one perfect moment. Tears fell unobstructed from her eyes as every dream she'd ever dreamed about her best friend came true.

He kissed her with what had to be every iota of feeling he could muster—an identical match for the power of her emotion.

Des loved her.

Desmond Reed, her best friend, the man she'd loved forever and dreamed about for a lifetime, loved her.

She drew her arm back, curled her fingers inwards and, taking strength from every day of the four years she'd loved him and wished desperately he would love her back, punched him in the stomach.

Megan glared at Des as he doubled over, the breath leaving his body in a whoosh. He clutched his middle and staggered backwards.

"You love me?" *Bastard.*

He didn't answer, probably because he couldn't talk.

"And you choose tonight to tell me?" Mild hysteria was but a heartbeat away.

He looked up at her, still bent over at the waist.

"Four years," she shouted. "I waited four years for you to say that to me."

His jaw dropped.

"Do you have any idea how long that is?" She did. Only too freaking well. "Forty-eight months. Two hundred and eight weeks. One thousand, four hundred and sixty days, give or take a day for the leap year." She'd stopped herself from working out the hours and minutes. Even she knew that was taking things too far. "That's how long I waited for you to fall in love with me. To give me a sign, something, anything that would tell me I was more than your friend."

"Meggy—"

"Four freaking years," she hollered. "And what sign did you give me? Nothing. Absolutely nothing." She sniffed loudly and swiped at her eyes and cheeks. "Then I met Alex, and I stopped waiting."

He straightened his back, took a step towards her, but she held out her hand, demanding he stop.



"I moved on, Des. I found a man who was open to loving me. Who didn't view me as a friend and nothing more. And I'm happy. For the first time since I met you there's someone I love who loves me back." She shook her head, disbelief squelching any reticence she might have had. "And now, *now* you decide you love me? Now you figure it's the perfect time to tell me? Are you out of your freaking mind?"

"Yes, Goddamn it," he yelled back at her. "I'm out of my freaking mind with jealousy. Seeing you with Alex eats me alive."

"What do you think loving you every day for four years did to me? You think it didn't make me crazy?"

He grabbed her arm. A shudder shook through his body, reverberating over hers. "You loved me?"

Was that reverence in his tone?

"Of course I loved you. I still bloody do."

"Dear God." He stumbled, righted himself and shook his head. "You love me?" His hands were on her shoulders, his face inches away from hers.

Years of unspent passion unwound in her chest. It fired through her body, heating her breasts, tugging between her legs. His taste lingered on her tongue, savory and sweet. Beer and man. She wanted more of it, wanted to sip from his lips and sear his flavor into her brain forever. She wanted to wrap her arms around his neck and her legs around his waist, dip her hips down low and welcome him inside her. She wanted him to lay her down on the ground and claim her. Make her his. Make love to her. Make up for four years of lost time. "Yes."

He hauled her against his body, trapping her there. His breath rasped through her ear. "Meg..."

"As much as I love Alex."

He jerked back as though she'd slapped him.

"What?" she spat at him. "You think because now I know how you feel, I'm suddenly going to fall out of love with him?" Not a chance. Alex had inserted himself in her heart and found a permanent place there. She wasn't letting go of him anytime soon. Maybe not ever.

He shook his head very slowly. "No, Meggy-mine. I'd hoped, but I never dared think as much."

"Fuck, Des." Her chest heaved, her heart racing a million miles a minute. "What am I supposed to do now? What do you want me to say?"

"I want you to say your heart belongs to me and me alone. But what I want and what I know are two very different things." He pressed his hand over his eyes.

"Why?" Megan gasped. "Why did you even tell me?"

"I didn't want to. So help me, I tried to stay the hell away."

"But I wouldn't let you." It was her fault. She'd practically torn the truth out of him. "N-now what?" Where on earth did they go from here?



“Now...” His voice was too gruff to hear properly. He cleared his throat. “Now you go back inside. Back to Alex. I’ll stay away. I promise, I won’t interfere with your happiness.”

He spoke sense. She needed to walk away from him. Walk back to Alex. But the devastation in his tone broke her heart all over again.

“Go inside, Meggy. I’ll stay out here until the game’s finished.” A ghost of a smile played on his face. Maybe it was just a shadow. “Alex is good for you. He makes you glow. Anyone who can do that is okay in my book.” As he turned away from her he whispered, “Be happy with him.”

It wasn’t his stoic decision to let her go that got to her. It was the way he held his head high while the rest of his body shook.

He’d taken maybe four steps before she cried out his name and went after him. She threw herself at him like a boomerang spinning back to its point of origin. There was no premeditation to her actions, she just moved on instinct.

He was Des, and she belonged with him.

He absorbed the impact, catching her to him with a husky moan. Cemented against his body, she placed her hands on his cheeks and pulled his face down to hers, sealing their lips together.

Just as he’d poured every iota of himself into the last kiss, so every ounce of love she felt for him spilled into this one. Because love him she did, and now that she knew he felt the same, she couldn’t let him go.

He held her so close there was no space for air to float between them. The uneven rise and fall of his chest matched hers as they panted together. Her breasts were wedged against the hard, square planes of his chest, and her hips pressed tight against the stiff bulge in his pants.

That he wanted her this much astonished her. For so long it was all she’d ever yearned for, and now here he was, holding her, kissing her frantically, as though terrified she’d slip away.

As for his erection, dear God, it turned her to mush. The evidence of his desire, pressing against her pussy, her clit... She could climax just thinking about it.

His hands were on her butt, pulling her closer, massaging her cheeks, pressing her harder against his erection.

She was a boneless heap of hunger. A roaring blaze of fire, wanting nothing but Des. And Alex. Des’s kiss, Alex’s touch. Des’s erection, Alex’s body. Dear God, she wanted them both. Wanted them pounding into her, showing her the love they’d both professed.

*She wanted them both.*

The need was a bottomless pit, making her ache and yearn. Making her writhe against Des’s groin, rub her clit on his cock. She groaned into his mouth as desire tore through her, and when he rocked his hips, she fell to pieces. Right there, caught in his arms in the darkened garden, she climaxed.



## Chapter Four

Alex cleared the mess off the table and threw the ice down the sink. He stacked the beers and cruisers in the fridge and set the whisky on the lower shelf of the bar. The dining room was spotless, and the lounge room was empty.

He was the only person there.

There was nothing left to do but wait. And hope. And fervently wish that the sounds, the shouts and the silence emanating from outside were resolved soon so he and Megan could climb in his car and drive back to his place together.

Every instinct told him it wasn't going to happen.

He chose an armchair in Des's lounge room, sat and rested his foot on his knee. With his elbows on the armrests, he steepled his fingers together, an old habit he'd always found comfort in during stressful times.

If anyone had told Alex he'd be forced to share the woman he loved with another man, he'd have laughed in their face.

He'd have been wrong.

The night Megan admitted she loved Des, Alex had come to terms with a very simple fact. If he wanted any part of Megan Loxley in his life—and fuck him, but he did—he'd have to throw his pride aside and accept he'd never have all of her. A piece of her heart would always belong to Des.

He didn't doubt Megan loved him too, loved him more every day—just as his feelings for her grew on a daily basis. He just had to accept that she also loved Des. If he *couldn't* accept it, he'd have no choice but to move on, find someone else.

Alex didn't want anyone else. He wanted Megan. She was the one. The perfect woman. She was laughter to his solemnity. Light to his darkness. She was beautiful, sexy, intelligent and sweet. The attraction they shared made it impossible for them to keep their hands off each other. He and Megan were good together, in bed and out.

Every relationship had a negative though, and Alex had long since come to terms with their negative. Des.

At least the love Megan felt for Des was unrequited. Alex had no idea what he'd do if the man ever came to his senses and worked out what a catch Megan was.

A click and a whoosh grabbed his attention. Megan stood in the doorway.



She was a mess.

Her hair stood in disarray, her dress was crumpled. Tears streaked down her scarlet cheeks and her gaze was wild, a mixture of horror, confusion and despair.

“Alex...” His name was a guttural moan.

He bolted off the chair. His knees jerked as he straightened. Warning prickles tapped at his spine. What the...

She launched herself at him, her words tumbling from her mouth as she threw her arms around him. “Alex. I’m so sorry. God, so sorry. I didn’t mean for... Please, you have to know I love you. Have to believe it. I do, I love you.”

Before he had a chance to answer, she kissed him. Her lips begged his for a response, pleaded for his forgiveness. For what?

He stood immobile, his arms suspended in the air. Did he hold her, hug her? Did he kiss her back?

God, how could he not?

“I love you, Al. I swear.” Her mouth was frenetic.

He couldn’t help himself. He kissed her, drowned in the pleasure her mouth evoked, even as her apology worried the back of his mind. He held her waist, pulling her closer. Her skin was hot to the touch, burning, and her nipples were hard points against his chest. This was Megan at her most aroused. A woman unable to step away from the spiral of hunger that whirled within her. A woman who wanted and needed and desired. This was a Megan he recognized. A woman half-sated sexually and half-mad with need.

The half-mad with need he could deal with, he could resolve. The sexual satiation? It made him want to fucking murder someone.

“No!”

The roar came from behind Megan. She twirled around in his arms.

“You don’t get to do that with him.” Des’s protest bellowed through the room. “Not after what you just did with me.”

“Des.” Megan’s cry ripped through Alex’s heart. She pulled away from him and stepped into the other man’s embrace.

Des’s fury and Megan’s response to it rendered Alex momentarily immobile. Shaken, he gawked as Des crushed his lips over Megan’s. Even more astounding was Megan’s response. She gave an animalistic moan and kissed him right back.

*Holy fuck, this is not happening.*

Yes, it was. The woman he loved kissed the man she loved.

Fuck. Fuck, double fuck and cluster fuck. Fuck, fuck, *fuck*.

Alex acted on instinct. He wound his arms around Megan’s waist and tugged her away from Des, pulling her across the room, her back plastered to his front. She went with him willingly.



Des glowered at him.

“Fuck you,” Alex spat at him and spun Megan around. “You. Are. Mine!” That was all he said before he claimed her back, kissing her so thoroughly she couldn’t possibly doubt his words.

“I am. I’m yours.” Megan’s hands were on his back, shoving his T-shirt up. Her fingers clawed at his flesh. He’d have scratch marks there tomorrow, but he didn’t give a shit. Her hands belonged on his body, his flesh. Not Des’s.

He kissed her harder, and she clutched him tighter, digging her nails in deeper.

She tore at his shirt. “Off,” she demanded. “Get it off.”

This was Megan at her sexual peak. She was hunger and lust all wrapped up in one, and Alex would never, could never, deny her.

He ripped off the offending material.

The action cost him. By the time his shirt landed on the floor, Megan was gone. She’d stepped freely back into Des’s arms and was kissing him, groaning into the fucker’s mouth. Buttons flew across the room as she ripped at his shirt.

Bastard.

Des didn’t have to break the kiss to get his shirt off. He just shrugged it over his shoulders.

If Alex followed through on his gut impulse now and yanked Megan out of Des’s hold, he’d hurt her. His need for her and his fury at Des would compel him to act with brute force. No matter how fucking mad he was with jealousy, he would not harm Megan. Not for anything. Ever.

Even if she had voluntarily kissed another man. Not just any other man—the one she’d professed to love for four fucking years.

Shoving back every natural instinct he had to haul Megan away from Des, he took two careful, shaky steps forward. He’d give her the choice. He’d let her decide. His groin pushed against Megan’s butt and his chest pillowed her back. No anger, no aggression. He would not harm her.

“I’m right behind you, baby,” he whispered. “Just turn around and you’ll find me.”

Megan stilled.

“That’s it, sweetness. Look at me. Turn around and look at me.”

Slowly, so slowly Alex thought she’d never bloody finish, Megan released Des and turned to him. She stared up into his eyes. Her pupils were huge, dilated with desire. The tears from minutes ago had all dried. And there, swirling in the midst of her startling green eyes was a determination Alex had never seen before.

“Al!” Her smile left him dazed and gulping for air.

“Yeah, baby. It’s me.” His heart pummeled his ribs.

“Alex.” She sounded out his name, articulating every letter, telling him clearly she was not mistaking him for Des in any way. “I love you.”

*So why the fuck are you letting him touch you?* “I love you too, baby.”



"I know." Her smile grew. "Kiss me," she said, and he did, tunneling his fingers in her hair.

He kissed her with every bit of love he felt, until she purred in his arms and writhed against his aching cock. It was almost perfect. Almost. Except for the man behind her. The shirtless, seething man who stared daggers at Alex.

How could Alex possibly sport a massive fucking erection when the biggest threat in his life, his good friend and mortal enemy, stood less than a meter away, plotting ways to murder him and grab his girl?

Megan rubbed against him, caressing his chest with her breasts and grinding her pussy on his cock, making the ache and the desire all the more unbearable. Soft noises escaped her throat, gluttonous groans and mesmerizing moans.

When he could bear the tension no more, Alex raised his head and, without releasing Megan, looked at Des. "She's mine."

Des's expression blackened.

"Al, wait—" Megan began.

He couldn't. He wouldn't stop now, not even for her. This needed to be said. "You had four years to claim her," Alex notified Des. "You didn't. I'm not giving her up now."

Megan nipped her way up his neck until her mouth found his. "Good," she whispered. "I never want you to give me up."

She kissed him. Slipped her tongue in his mouth and demanded a response. Alex was a goner. He responded, kissing her back even as he silently challenged Des with his gaze. But he could not possibly keep his eyes open when her hand landed on his pants, closing over his erection. His cock jumped at the contact and he groaned out loud.

"I'm here too, Meggy-mine."

The whisper wasn't meant for him, but damn it, he heard Des's words loud and clear. The asshole was employing the same tactics Alex had used just minutes ago.

Megan did not release his lips, but her tongue ceased its sinful exploration of his mouth.

"I've been here all along," Des said. "Just too damn blind to see what was in front of me."

Fuck! The very thing Alex had dreaded was now a reality.

Her lips parted from his, making him ache.

"If you want Alex, tell me now," Des said. "I'll walk away. I'll leave you alone."

Alex glared at him through narrowed eyes. Fucking hero. Alex would never have the courage to walk away from her.

Des's mouth was beside Megan's ear, his hand on her neck. "I love you, Meggy, but if you want Alex, I'll step aside."

Megan's head slumped backwards, landing on Des's shoulder. He lowered his face and rubbed his cheek against hers, a move so fucking tender Alex wished he'd thought of it first.



“Don’t leave, Des,” she breathed. “Don’t you dare step aside.”

Alex would have staggered back, would have jerked away, if not for the fact that Megan’s hand still covered his cock. More than that, it worked him now, cupping him over his jeans while she slid it up and down. He might have believed she’d mistaken his cock for Des’s if not for the fact that every time she reached the base, she squeezed, just the way she had yesterday in the car after he’d told her how much he liked it, how fucking much it turned him on.

Des growled. “I can’t be with you and not have you. If I stay, you are mine.”

Megan smiled again, only this time it was meant for Des, not him. “Okay.”

Alex cursed, jealousy tearing a hole in his stomach.

“I’m yours too, Al,” she whispered. “You know that. I have been since Hunter’s party.” She squeezed the base of his cock as proof.

Des swore behind her. Viciously. “One of us,” he snarled. “Choose one of us.”

“I can’t.” Megan’s gaze was solemn. “I won’t choose. Not when I love you both. Not when everything I’ve ever wanted is all around me.”

She caressed Alex’s cock as she swayed her hips this way and that.

Understanding hit him like a smack to the head.

She wasn’t just swaying her hips. She was rubbing her butt against Des’s groin, deliberately.

The same butt he’d fucked not four hours ago, the same one he’d come in, exploded in, now teased another man’s cock.

Des frowned even as his breath caught audibly.

Oh, yeah. Megan had him trapped against that smoking ass of hers. No doubt about it.

“You want us both?” The territorial male in Alex raised its head, instantly dismissing the idea. It was him or it was Des, not both of them.

“No fucking way.” Des’s objection mirrored Alex’s thoughts. “Choose one.”

“Why?”

“Because I will not share you.” Des’s tone was nonnegotiable.

“Hunter shares with Jay.”

Megan’s response was greeted with stunned silence.

Christ, she was right. Jules hadn’t had to choose. She’d helped herself to two men, and they’d gladly split the pot between them.

Had Megan thought about this, about the three of them, before she’d seen the terrible trips tonight? Or had Julia’s behavior been an example for Megan? If Jules could do it, why not her?

“You’re not Jules,” Des snapped. “And I’m not Hunter. Or Jay.”

“I know who I am.” Megan nodded. “And I know who you are. Who both of you are. I’m not interested in Hunter or Jay. It’s you two I want in my life.” She shivered. “In my bed.”



“Fuck that.” Des scowled.

But he didn’t pull away. Perhaps that was because the gentle swaying of Megan’s hips had become a little faster, a little more focused?

Alex’s dick ached. As Megan danced against Des, she flicked open the button of Alex’s jeans and unzipped him. His cock sprang out to greet her, peeking over the edge of his cotton boxers.

Megan swiped her finger over his cockhead and raised it to her face. A bead of his precome dotted its tip.

He opened his mouth to speak but couldn’t find the words.

Megan placed her finger in her mouth and sucked it clean.

Sweat trickled down his back.

Des groaned. “Fuck, Meg.” He shook his head. Squeezed his eyes shut tight. “I don’t know how to share.”

Megan turned her head slightly and kissed Des’s cheek, her lips plump and pliant as they pressed against his skin.

“I do.” A flash of tongue appeared as she licked the spot she’d kissed. “I’ll show you.”

It was Alex’s turn to gape. “You’ve done this before?” Again, jealousy jabbed at him. It was one thing knowing his competition, it was another imagining Megan between two strange men, opening herself up to them, offering herself to both of them. God help either of them if he ever met them. He’d fucking tear them apart.

“Uh-huh.” Her hand was back, pulling at his jeans and boxers, freeing his dick from the prison of his clothes, and her waist still rotated in a sensual rhythm. He didn’t stop her, didn’t try. He couldn’t fucking breathe. Halting her actions would kill him.

“Megan.” Des’s face was thunderous. “Your hands—”

“What about them?” She nuzzled Des’s cheek as she wrapped one hand around Alex’s cock and used the other to play with his balls.

He gasped at the sensation. Megan made him hotter than any other woman he’d ever met. But what she did right now, the way she played with him while she consoled and seduced Des... God, he could blow any second. He was on freaking fire.

“They’re...they’re on...”

“They’re on Alex’s cock,” she finished for Des.

Precome leaked from his tip, dripping onto her fingers. A few more tugs and he’d shoot his load all over. “Don’t let go,” he ordered.

“I won’t, Al,” she promised. Her gaze caught his. Fire flickered in her eyes. “But I can’t let go of Des either.”



For a long moment they looked at each other. No words were spoken, but a million thoughts were shared.

Alex loved her. By God, he was head over heels, crazy in love with her. He'd known for the last month she loved Des too. Known that he shared her heart with her best friend. It wasn't *too* crazy a leap to share her body with him too.

He couldn't walk away. He was in too deep. But they'd reached a point where he could no longer have her to himself. From this moment on, if he wanted her, he took her with Des. There was no more Alex and Megan. If Des agreed, it would be Alex, Megan and Des.

Oddly enough, the thought did not disgust him. If anything it aroused him further. He'd seen Megan in her glory, relishing the love of one man. Seeing her in full splendor, radiant from the love of two men... *She'd be magnificent.*

Alex had to be there to witness it.

Megan lifted an eyebrow in question. Longing shone in her eyes. "Will you do it, Al? Still play your cards if I raise the stakes?"

Didn't she know his answer? If the stakes were her, he'd play any hand she dealt.

"You bet I would, baby." He'd do anything to be with her. Whatever it took. He'd place every damn chip on her.

Her face lit up. "I love you," she whispered.

"I love you too." His cock grew in her hands and she pumped it vigorously.

"I love you also, Des." Her cheek was beside Des's again. "And now that I know you feel the same way, I don't want to play another hand without you."

The pain on Des's face was luminous.

Megan rocked against him in exactly the same way she rocked against Alex when they made love. "I want *your* cock in my pussy," she told Des. "So deep I get to feel my best friend come inside me, finally."

Des let out an agonized sound.

"Play with us, Des. Let us deal you in," she whispered. "Please."

Des glared at Alex. His expression was mulish, tough to look at but easy to interpret. His resentment was clear, as was his anger, pain, irritation and indecision. All perfectly understandable. Alex felt every one of those things too, although he'd dealt swiftly with the indecision. The perplexing parts of Des's expression were the admiration on his face. And the jealousy.

Jealousy? Hah. That was a joke. Didn't the idiot know he'd been Megan's first choice? If anyone had the right to be jealous, it wasn't Des. But it was the naked challenge Alex saw in Des's eyes that brought his testosterone roaring to the forefront.

He instantly quelled the need to throw his weight around and squash the opposition. It wouldn't impress Megan.



He wouldn't let the issue go, though. He'd made a choice, and he was sticking to it, regardless of Des's desires. Quiet determination kept Alex right where he was. In Des's home. "I'm not walking away," he told Des.

"Are you, Des?" Panic tinged Megan's question, making Alex want to thrash Des. How dare the man hurt Megan with his indecision?

Endless moments passed, stretching out silently.

Megan had not released his cock—she still held it in her firm grip, but her movements had ceased.

Anxiety wrinkled her face. A muscle ticked in her cheek. "Des?"

Des squeezed his eyes shut and took an audible breath. "I'm not going anywhere, Meggy. I'm staying right here. With you."

The lines on her face vanished. "With me *and* Alex?"

His nose twitched. "You and Alex," he said reluctantly.

"Oh, thank God." Megan's shoulders sagged in visible relief. Her hands resumed their ruthless tugging on Alex's cock.

Des had surrendered to Megan's seduction. She'd won. He was in.

Her smile was as sensual as it was victorious.

"You'll come in my pussy?" she asked Des while she pumped Alex.

Her lips were sexy and luscious, and if she wrapped them around Alex's cock now, he'd climax in her mouth.

"C-can't think of anywhere I'd rather come." Des's hands were on her waist, moving her against him. He was swaying too, a rocking motion back and forth.

Alex couldn't repress the envy that bit at him.

"Do you know where you'll be while Des is coming in my pussy?" Megan asked Alex.

His breath quit as he anticipated her answer. His cock swelled further and his nuts drew tight. *Close*. He was so fucking close he couldn't stand it. "Where?"

"In my ass," she told him and stroked him faster. "Just like you were earlier."

Des hissed. "What the hell was he doing in your ass?" His voice might have held an angry sneer, but his eyes were glazed with desire.

Megan closed her eyes, still stroking him. "He was fucking me, Des. So deep and so skillfully he made me come." She swallowed and ground her hips harder against Des while stroking Alex's dick faster.

The memory of her coming around him was too much, the stimulation of her hand tactile overload.

Alex's orgasm tore from his balls. Come hurtled through his shaft and jettisoned out of him. It landed on Megan's hands and her shirt. A drop even landed on her chin.

"Holy crap," Des muttered as Alex yelled his release.

"Alex," Megan cried.



He leaned in and licked her chin, then lifted his mouth to kiss her. She lapped hungrily at his tongue, helping herself to the drop of come. Then she swallowed it, making Alex's softening cock twitch.

No matter what she did, he couldn't get enough of her.

"Please." Megan gasped when he released her mouth. "One of you, take me. Fuck me." She wiped her hands on her shirt.

Alex was momentarily spent. No matter how badly he wanted to fuck her, he didn't have the capacity to fulfill her needs right now. He could deliver a good tongue lashing, make her come four or five times with just his mouth, but Megan didn't want his tongue. She wanted a cock. And the only one in working order was Des's.

Des had apparently come to the same conclusion.

Even as Alex shuffled back and collapsed on the armchair he'd vacated when Megan walked inside, Des was pulling her red dress over her shoulders.

The vixen had no underwear on. Her butt was as bare as the day she'd been born, and her pussy juice glistened on her inner thighs. Des froze and stared at her. Hunger lit his face, desire turning the muscles in his shoulders and neck taut.

Jesus, Alex knew how he felt. Knew how the sight of Megan naked blew his mind, blew his self-restraint. When Megan was nude, Alex was aroused and busting a gut to get inside of her.

Des's expression told him he felt the exact same way.

"Meg..."

"Shut up, Des." Her hands were on the waist of his jeans, yanking at his button, his zip. "Enough speaking, just fuck me."

She shucked his jeans and his boxers, as he kicked off his shoes, leaving Des standing there, butt naked.

Staring at another man's erection should have been awkward for Alex. It should have somehow inhibited his own desire but it didn't. If anything it made his own dick twitch harder, find life where there had been none left just seconds ago.

Des was about to find heaven, and though Alex did not resent it, he envied the hell out of the man.



## Chapter Five

Des couldn't move. Couldn't speak.

Christ, she was beautiful. The single most exquisite woman he'd ever seen. He'd always thought her pretty as anything. But naked and aroused? The woman was a goddess.

From the tip of her hardened nipples, over the soft swell of her belly and down her long, toned legs, Meg was stunning. His mouth filled with saliva just looking at her. At the neatly trimmed hair above her mound, at the cream that spilled onto her thighs. At the way her shoulders shivered and her tongue flicked out to touch her lips.

His cock was full to bursting. Two months of wanting her, of fantasizing about her, was about to turn into a reality. He was about to make love to his best friend.

The woman who, with a few flicks of her wrist, had brought Alex to his knees. Made him come in her hands.

And sweet heaven, the sight had just turned Des on more. Or perhaps it was the feel of her butt rocking against his cock. Then again, it was more likely the love that welled in his heart that had him so majorly aroused. Because he loved her. So much it hurt. So much he'd thrown his pride to the wind and agreed to share her with another man.

When all was said and done there was no choice. He could have let Meg walk off into the sunset with Alex, leaving him behind, but that wasn't an option. He wanted her with a ferocity that burned him inside and out.

He had to have her. If it meant sharing her with another man, so be it. He'd deal. For now.

But not this first time. This first time he'd take her alone. This first time he'd learn the curve and shape of every inch of her body by himself. Alex was spent. Done. He wasn't getting up anytime soon. Des, on the other hand, had two months' worth of desire blazing in his dick.

He was more than ready to give Meg anything and everything she needed.

"Reedy? Catch."

Des looked up in time to see a condom spinning through the air. He caught it deftly in his right hand.

Very generous of Al. Des doubted he'd have shared so happily had their positions been reversed. He nodded his thanks, tore the packet open and sheathed himself.

"Treat her good," Alex warned.

Des swallowed. "I will," he promised hoarsely. "Very good."



Slowly he reached out to cup a breast with one hand and run a finger over Meg's slick pussy lips with his other. She jerked.

Her breast nestled against his palm, slightly less than a handful but firm and heavy to the touch. He squeezed gently, aware of the tightening of her nipple between his fingers.

Then he kissed her, pulling her close and running his tongue between her lips, into her mouth. She opened up to receive him. Opened her mouth to his tongue and her pussy to his fingers. As he sipped from her lips and drank from her mouth, he slipped a finger inside her, and meeting no resistance, pushed it further up.

Megan gasped.

God, she was so wet. So responsive. Was she like this with Alex too?

He swiped his thumb over her clit.

Megan yelped into his mouth and came. Her orgasm was swift, a series of sharp, hard convulsions as her inner walls tightened over his digit, and then she relaxed again.

It left him reeling.

Fuck that. He wasn't ready for the orgasm to die away. More. He wanted more. Wanted to wrench another orgasm from her loins, make her groan in his mouth. Des massaged her clit as he fucked her relentlessly with his finger, kissing her the entire time.

It worked. She convulsed once more. A few powerful clenches of her pussy walls as she groaned into his mouth, and then residual tremors shook her body.

"Christ..." He couldn't finish his thought, couldn't speak. He'd never been with a more responsive woman, never been so freaking aroused. His balls ached more with every quiver in her pussy.

*Another one.* He had to wring another orgasm from her before he sank into her hot, wet depths.

He pulled his mouth away from hers and rubbed her clit in small, soft circles, asserting more pressure than he had before. "One more time, Meggy-mine."

He'd make her come a hundred times if his cock would let him. But the damn thing pulsed against his stomach, demanding attention, making him dizzy.

"One more, and then you are all mine," he promised.

He slid in a second finger and pumped.

Meg flung her head back, her curls falling down her back and over his arm which supported her. Her mouth was open, her eyes closed. Her skin had flushed a deep pink.

Alex had had been a real sport about sharing Meg. It was only fair to somehow include Alex in the action now. "Watch her, Al," Des growled. "She's about to climax on my hand a third time."

"I'm watching," came Alex's hoarse response. "I can't stop watching."

Meg cried out and came again.



“Christ, she’s so wet,” Des said as Meg’s juices trickled over his hand. “So fucking hot.” He inhaled a few times, trying to regain his balance, his control. “How do you stop from orgasming before you’re even inside her?”

He could blow right here, right now, without her even touching him.

“I don’t always.” Alex gave a husky laugh. “As you’ve just witnessed.”

“Compare notes later,” Meg snapped. At least Des assumed she’d tried to snap, but her voice was clogged with desire, and the command came out as a feverish plea.

“As you wish.” He plucked her up and lay her on the couch. Half of him wanted to kneel on the floor, bury his head between her legs and lick up all that delicious cream. The other half demanded he take her, claim her. Fuck her. Make her his.

The latter half won. He lay on top of her, using his arms to support his upper body. The couch was too narrow for this, but he didn’t care. He’d make do.

“Wrap your legs around my waist.”

He didn’t have to ask twice. Her thighs wound around his hips and she arched her back, dragging her sodden pussy over his cock. He exhaled in a long, shuddering breath and pushed into her an inch.

“Oh, God. Desmond!” She convulsed around him, her fourth orgasm in as many minutes.

“Jesus, Meggy.” He didn’t wait for the spasms to pass. He slammed into her, burying himself as deep inside as he could get, relishing the clenching of her muscles around his cock. They clutched him as he pulled out, and they caught and held as he swept back in.

Des let her ride out the climax before he drove into her again. She was too damn tight to move anyway. He’d lose control if he had to struggle against the force of her orgasm.

Meg panted beneath him as her pussy relaxed.

Thank fucking God for small miracles. Des withdrew and stroked into her, her channel slick and welcoming. It offered no resistance as he pulled out and plunged back in, found a rhythm and moved with it.

His brain could hardly compute the facts. He was fucking his best friend. Making love to Meg. His Meggy. He was inside her, making her come, making her scream with pleasure.

Dear God. He’d never believed the day would arrive.

He gazed down at her flushed face. Air rushed from her lips, mingling with his breath. Her curls were a wild mess on the couch cushions, and her lips were as inviting as her pussy.

A goddess. Sure as the night was dark, Meg was a goddess.

“Look at me,” he whispered.

Her lids took forever to open, and when they did, she gazed up at him with sensual, desire-filled eyes that had him lengthening inside her.



“Is this real, Meggy?” Maybe it was another wet dream. Fuck knew he’d had a million of them these past weeks.

“I...I’m not sure.” She squeezed her muscles around his cock, as though checking to see if he were really there. “God, yes!”

Whether her words were an answer or a cry of pleasure he wasn’t sure.

He stroked in and out of her, couldn’t help herself. “Feels too damn good to be real.”

“If it’s a dream, don’t wake me.”

Her voice was bewitching. Low, smoky and tantalizing. Like a caress down his spine.

“If this were a dream, I’d be fucking you too.” Alex said wryly. “I’d be balls-deep in your ass right now. But you emptied me, baby. I’m spent. So yeah, this is real.”

“Al?” She twisted her hips, taking Des in deeper as he plunged into her.

“Uh-huh.”

“Your dream becomes a reality next.” She looked into Des’s eyes, connecting them while she addressed Alex. “I want you balls-deep in my ass too.” She blinked. “While Des fucks me.”

“Meg,” Des gasped. “*Fuck...*” She was driving him insane, fueling the fire that already burned like an inferno in his stomach.

Come. He had to make her come again.

It was the sole purpose of his life. His reason for being. He had to give Meg another orgasm. One that didn’t include Alex.

He slipped his hand between their waists and found her clit. It didn’t take much. A little pressure as he fucked her and she dissolved with a sharp yelp.

Again he was trapped, clenched in her convulsions, unable to move.

He grit his teeth. Sweat poured from his chest as she milked him, her orgasm teasing his out.

*No way. Not ready. Can’t come yet.*

He rode her shudders, waited until they’d passed and then asked, “You like that, Meggy?”

“S-so much.”

“Want me to make you come again?”

Her answer was a hissed yes. “Want you both to make me come.”

Jealousy flared in his chest. “Not Alex. Not this time. It’s just me inside you now.”

“You’re in my pussy.” She licked her lips. “Alex is in my head.”

“But he’s not touching you. I am. I’m the one making you come.” He sounded competitive and childish, but he didn’t care.

“He doesn’t need to touch me.” Meg’s lips broadened into a satisfied smile. “Knowing he’s watching is enough to make me sizzle inside.”



"I am watching, baby," Alex said. "I'm watching every move. Every orgasm. You're so fucking hot, you're making me crazy."

"Do you still love me, Al?"

"God, yes,"

"Even knowing Des is the one fucking me?"

This answer took longer to come than the last. "I'm jealous as all hell. I wish it was me."

"It will be," she promised. "Soon."

"I love you, baby. But if it were anyone other than Des inside you right now, I'd walk away."

Meg smiled up at Des, melting his heart. "It's not anyone else. It's Des. My friend." She rolled her hips, taking him deeper.

Much as he wanted to move, pull out of her and ram himself back in, he didn't. He was still too fucking green with jealousy. "Prove it."

"Prove what?"

"Prove that Alex can make you come just by looking at you."

"You sure?"

"Oh, yeah." He'd prove it was all him. He was the only one making her horny as hell.

She rolled her head over and looked in Alex's direction.

"You feeling okay, baby?" the other man asked.

She nodded. "Better than okay."

"You know what I'd do if that was my cock in there?"

"Yes." Her voice was a long sigh. "God, yes."

"Then pretend it's me. Think about what I'd be doing."

As Des watched, Meg's eyes closed, her hips jerked and her inner walls flexed around his cock, once, twice, a third time. She emitted a long, low moan, contracted the muscle of her pussy and...

Came.

She fucking came, on his cock, thinking about Alex.

Only this time the convulsions were not quick and sharp. They were long and languorous and went on and on. Pissed off as he was, Des could not keep still. Damn it! He pulled out and thrust back into her, his cock swamped by her climaxing pussy. By God, it felt unbelievable. Unfuckingbelievable.

He drove into her again and again, unable to stop. Her climax, brought about by another man, was going to make him come too. Hard.

Back and forward he rocked, plunging into her repeatedly. Her walls grasped him, caressed him, called him back. He was out of control, moving too slow, too fast, too soft, too hard.

God, she felt amazing. Slick and wet and tight and fanbloodytastic.



She cried out his name and Alex's, and Alex answered, calling her name. Still she climaxed, her pussy undulating around him, begging for his release.

He couldn't stop it, no longer wanted to. Trapped in her convulsing channel, he came. So fucking hard he thought he might have a stroke.

He emptied himself deep inside her, the orgasm every bit as mind-blowing as he'd ever fantasized. He came inside his best friend. Inside the woman who'd climaxed around his cock while imagining it belonged to her other lover.

Implausible. Impossible. And fucking incredible. The most unbelievable orgasm ever.

He collapsed on top of her as the final spasms in her pussy died away, and she wrapped her arms around him and held him tight.

Long moments passed in her arms, in heaven, before a hand pulled at his shoulder.

Alex.

"Move over."

Every instinct yelled no, but Des forced himself to reconsider. Alex had shared, Meg had shared. So far, he was the only selfish ass in the room. Much as it went against every grain of his being, he too had to share. Had to give Alex the access he required to Meg.

Des dragged his postclimactic dick from her pussy, each movement extreme torture. Exhausted, he pushed himself off the couch and collapsed on his butt on the floor, leaving the way open for Alex.

Alex turned her slightly towards him, then he knelt, naked, on the floor beside Des. He leaned over to brush his lips over hers.

Meg smiled. "Hey."

"Hey, baby. You doing okay?"

"Oh, yeah. More than."

"Was it good?"

She sighed. "So very, very good."

"Show me."

"Hmmm?"

Alex was hard, his cock standing erect and proud. "Show me what he did to you, baby. I wanna see."

Des swallowed. He'd never have considered looking, but now that Al brought it up, damn it, he also wanted to see.

"Anything you want." Meg smiled her Meg-a-watt smile and opened her legs to Alex's gaze.

Des stared, dazed, at her puffy pussy.

Alex groaned, drawing Des's attention.

He looked up at the man.

Alex's eyes burned. His cock thumped against his stomach.



Meg moaned breathlessly before his heated gaze.

Des watched Alex. Couldn't take his eyes off him.

"God, your pussy's so wet." Alex licked his lips. "So pink and swollen. It's pulsing, over and over, leaking juice onto your thighs."

Meg raised her knees higher, spread her legs wider.

"Was he that good?" Alex asked.

Meg whimpered. "Better."

Des's chest expanded.

Alex nodded. "I can see. Did you come hard?"

"Very," Meg wheezed.

"Good for you, baby," Alex praised her.

"Very good for me." Meg chuckled softly, telling them both she'd deliberately misunderstood.

Before her laugh died down, Alex buried his face between her legs.

*Fucking hell!*

Meg shrieked but resisted not at all. Another red flush crept over her neck and cheeks. Her nipples hardened again, and her eyes fluttered closed.

Alex's moan was muffled, but Des couldn't miss the slurps or licking sounds as he worked her with his mouth. And then Meg was crying out again and shaking helplessly on the couch as another orgasm ripped through her body.

Her nipples poked upward and she arched her back, pushing herself harder against Alex's face. Alex was merciless. He didn't even stop to take a breath.

Meg's violent shaking continued, on and on, until she finally gasped and rolled over, pushing Alex away.

Alex lifted his head, licked his lips then wiped his mouth, a satisfied gleam in his eyes.

He nodded at Des. "She's always this sensitive, this responsive after sex. It's a handy trick to know."

Des gawked at Alex, unsure what was more astounding. The idea that the man had told him that little tidbit or the fact that Meg's orgasm had sent blood gushing back down to his cock, making him semihard again.



## Chapter Six

The feathery sensation against her cheek roused her.

Megan opened one sleepy eye, scanned her surroundings, and then let the other drift open.

She smiled. "You're naked."

Des smiled back. His fingers were on her cheek. "So are you."

She reached out to trail a hand over his chest, running her fingers over the solid lines of his six-pack. His torso was hairless and absolutely gorgeous.

"I've never seen you without clothes before." The closest she'd gotten to such a treat was their weekend or holiday trips to the beach. Des filled a pair of boardies better than any man ever had. Except maybe Alex. Although she hadn't been to the beach with Alex yet, so it wasn't fair to compare.

"Disappointed?"

"God, no." She pressed her hand over his heart, savored its thudding against her palm. "You're beautiful."

He exhaled shakily.

Good grief. Had he been holding his breath? Ridiculous. Fully clothed, the man was breathtaking. Naked, he made her knees weak.

"So are you," he whispered, his gaze filled with reverence.

She grinned at him.

"I'm sorry I woke you."

"You didn't. I wasn't sleeping. Just...resting." Dear God. After what Des and Alex had squeezed out of her, she'd had no choice. She'd lost count of the number of orgasms she'd had with Des, and she had not an ounce of energy left in her body. Which was quite unacceptable, considering all the delightful, naughty activities she had planned for the three of them.

"Where's Alex?" She scrutinized his face for any sign of resentment at the mention of his name.

She saw nothing. Not resentment, but not acceptance either. Des simply hid his thoughts about Alex from her.

"He's running you a bath. We thought you'd appreciate one."

*Steamy hot water to unwind in? Yum.* "You were right."

"It'll be ready in about five minutes."

"Perfect." She watched him watch her. Let the love she'd suppressed for so long shine in her eyes.



Her adoration was reflected right back at her, his love a warm trickle of syrup running down her skin.

“Des?”

“Yeah?”

“Thank you.”

“For what?”

“For staying. Tonight.”

His lips twitched. “This is my house. I didn’t have a choice.”

“Yes. You did. You could have said no.” Thank God he hadn’t. The wait for his decision had played hell with her emotions. Panic struck her just remembering. While Alex had accepted her suggestion of a threesome with relative ease, Des had not just hesitated, he’d been visibly shocked.

She’d waited, heart pounding, for him to deny her. Expected the word *No* to fall from his swollen, kissable lips. When he’d agreed to her proposition she’d almost fainted with relief. She would have passed out if she hadn’t been so hell-bent on finally making love to Des. She’d waited four years. She had not been prepared to wait one more minute. Not when she had both Alex’s and Des’s approval.

“I could have,” he said at length. “But I didn’t.”

“Are you okay with your decision?” *Please, don’t let him be having regrets now.*

Des framed her face with his hands and placed a sweet, sensual kiss on her lips. “I love you, Meggy-mine. I could never regret making love to you.”

“You really do, don’t you?” Even now, after the mind-boggling sex they’d shared on this very couch, she couldn’t quite believe Des loved her. After all this time loving him from afar, his reciprocated feelings seemed like a dream. A very nice dream, mind you, but a dream nevertheless.

“I love you so much it hurts just to look at you.”

She shook her head violently. “It shouldn’t hurt. It should make you happy.”

“It does, sweetheart. It’s just that seeing you fills me with an ache so intense, so deep, I can’t breathe from wanting you.”

Ah. Okay then. Let it hurt. “I ache for you too,” she whispered. Her body churned with low-grade desire. A need that squeezed through her chest, yanking on her breasts. It cut a trail down into her stomach, where it tugged relentlessly on her pussy, making it weep at the emptiness inside her.

“We’ll ease the pain. Together. I promise.” Des tucked his arms beneath her and lifted her up, snuggling her to his chest. “Later. After your bath.” He walked with her down his passageway.

She burrowed her cheek into his shoulder, inhaled his musky scent. “Together with Alex.”

His sigh was soft but audible. “Together with Alex. Whatever it takes to ease the pain.”

A second pair of arms wrapped around her, taking her weight. Des released her.

“Alex,” she whispered, delighted beyond words to see him.



“Hey, baby.” He hugged her close and then bent over, lowering her until warm, wet ripples licked at her back. Gently as he could, he settled her in the bath. Steamy water enveloped her, and she relaxed into the calming, heated depths.

Bliss.

She let the water lap over her, soothe her.

Des and Alex couldn’t have thought up a better plan. A bath was just what she needed.

“Have I told you lately I love you?” she asked the dark-haired man as he sat on the side of the tub, watching her with broody eyes.

“You have.” He nodded. “You’ve told me and Des both.”

Something squeezed at her heart. “Should I have lied?” Maybe she should have pretended she felt nothing for Des. Walked away and never looked at him again. Preserved herself for Alex alone.

He blinked and his gaze softened. “No. Never.”

Lucky, because she could never have walked away from Des. “Just as well. I couldn’t have withheld the truth from either of you anyway.”

“It’s part of what makes me love you so much. Your honesty.” Alex worried his lower lip. “Is this what you want, baby? Both of us?”

*God, yes!* “It is.”

Megan desired them both, loved them both—equally, but differently.

Alex was her lover before her friend. They’d not had the chance to develop a camaraderie as deep and eternal as the one she shared with Des. But they’d had time—endless, exquisite nights—to discover each other as lovers. Learn each other’s needs and desires, and fill them in as many ways as possible. The companionship that blossomed between them as a result was rooted in love and trust and would continue to grow and flower.

Des was her friend before her lover. She knew him almost as well as she knew herself, shared his humor and his love of fun. But his passions and hungers were a mystery to her. She longed to learn more about his sexual needs, yearned for his touch and his kisses. Their friendship would surely provide a basis of love and respect upon which they could explore their physical needs.

“It’s exactly what I want. Both of you,” she told Alex.

Having both of them shouldn’t be an option. In principle, loving two men seemed so wrong, so...immoral, so against everything society dictated. In practice it felt right. Openly loving both of them was as natural as breathing. It shouldn’t be, but it was.

She watched Alex carefully. “But this isn’t just about me. It’s about you and Des as well. I can’t be the only one who wants this.”

He didn’t respond.

“Do you want this, Al?” He’d acquiesced earlier. Was he besieged with second thoughts now?



"I want *you*, Megan," he said at last. "I've never wanted a woman as much. Ever." He nodded, reinforcing his words. "I'll take you however I can get you. If that means I have to share you with Des..." He shrugged. "So be it."

Her heart swelled with relief. "It's not just about wanting for me. It's about love too. I love you, Al. I love you so very, very much."

He smiled. "I know you do. I wouldn't be here if I didn't believe it."

"Can you go through with it though?" She had to ask. "Can you make love to me while Des is inside me too?"

Alex made a funny sound. Not a laugh, but close. "Look at me." He sat up straight, moved his arms to his side and pointed at his groin with both hands. His cock stood ramrod straight, thick and hard against his stomach. "The idea of it, of loving you with another man? Of seeing you explode around both of us? Yeah, baby. I can go through with it. I can't fucking wait."

Megan couldn't talk. She licked her lips, wanting to taste him, wanting his cock in her mouth.

Alex must have read the intentions in her expression, because he gripped his dick and squeezed hard. "Uh-uh." He warned. "This time I'm not sitting on the sidelines. This time I'm in all the way."

Megan took a great, gasping breath of air. "God help me," she whispered. "I need you in all the way."

"Bath's over!" It was Des who pulled the plug, under the surprised gasps of the other two.

"What?" he challenged. "You think you're the only ones ready for this?"

Megan found herself lying face-up on Des's bed in a matter of minutes. While Alex made love to her mouth, kissing her with a passion that blew her mind, Des focused on her pussy. He spread her legs wide and tucked in, settled down to a feast of her lower lips and clit.

"Meggy," he groaned between licks and sips. "Christ, you taste better than I ever imagined."

Her orgasm built fast. With the combination of Alex's mouth on her lips, his hands teasing her breasts and Des's tongue in her pussy, she was fit to explode in seconds.

She fought it off.

No way was she coming this soon. She wanted the build-up. The slow—or fast, as it may be—climb to ecstasy. She wasn't giving in to the short, sharp convulsions that had overwhelmed her earlier. This time she was counting on one big O, and she wanted it with both men inside her.

"Too much," she wheezed, and pushed Des's head away.

Alex kept right on, fondling her breasts, caressing them, teasing her nipples into hard beads, making her breasts full and tight.



Des withdrew only long enough to chuckle devilishly, and then he was back, licking, kissing, exploring. But not her pussy. He placed his hands beneath her butt and lifted her hips higher, stretching her cheeks apart and exposing her to his marauding mouth.

Holy shit.

Dear God.

Sweet heaven.

His tongue was on her ass. Between her cheeks. Licking, prodding, exploring. Oh God, it was inside her.

“Alex!” Her cry of rapture filled the air.

Alex’s hands were all over her, sweeping over her stomach, up her waist, down her arms, kneading her breasts, reassuring her, loving her. “Shh, baby,” he whispered. “Let Des do what he has to do.”

Let him? She couldn’t spread her legs wide enough, couldn’t get his tongue in deep enough.

“Kiss me,” she demanded, and once more Alex’s mouth fused with hers. His tongue was in her mouth, Des’s tongue was in her ass, and she... God, she was in heaven. Had to be. Now way anything on earth could feel this good.

Des released her ass with a low laugh. “You like that, Meggy-mine?” His hot breath blew over her pussy and her butt, and she squirmed but couldn’t answer.

He laughed again. “I’m guessing that’s a yes.”

Hot liquid leaked from her pussy, and Des groaned and licked it up.

She would not come. Could not. Instead she let the anticipation and desire build. Let the cream spill from her lips. God, she couldn’t contain it. She’d never been this aroused. This...aware. Every nerve ending in her body was alert. Alive.

Two men loving her. Not one. *Two*. She could barely believe it. She’d had threesomes before, but never with anyone she loved. Never with anyone who turned her on even a hundredth as much as Des or Alex.

Words were uttered. Alex and Des spoke, but Meg had no idea what was said. And then the world moved. Or maybe it was her?

Yes, it was her.

Alex and Des turned her, so Des now perched by her head and Alex knelt between her legs.

Alex lifted her, placing her ass on his lap, pushing her legs open in the process. She lay spread-eagled before him, totally exposed, feeling sexier than ever.

“Lady,” Alex muttered, “you are so damn beautiful.” He laid his hand on her pussy, and using two or three fingers, Megan couldn’t tell, drew them from her clit, over her sodden pussy lips and down to her ass, painting her cream all around.

She shuddered.



God, Alex was talented with his hands. An artist at work, a veritable genius, and the pictures he drew over her nether region would have made a porn star blush. She turned her head to Des with a heady sigh and came face-to-face with his engorged cock.

“Suck it,” he directed.

As if she needed the instruction. Her mouth was open before he’d said the words. The angle was awkward, there was limited access, but she took what she could between her lips and sucked, just as he’d ordered.

“Ah, fuck. Meggy.” Des’s cry filled her ears.

She sucked as Alex painted. Heavy panting echoed through the air.

When Alex pulled his hand away, Megan dropped her head. Her neck was cramping, and anyway, in this position it was easier to lick Des’s testicles. And lick them she did, tasting every centimeter of her friend’s tight sac while he palmed his cock above her mouth.

She squeaked in surprise when Alex inserted a finger in her ass. He must have spread lube on it, because it slid in unobstructed, pushing straight past the ring of muscle that should have kept it out. She gasped his name around Des’s balls.

“I’m right here, baby,” Alex said and slipped another finger in, stretching her.

She clenched her ass cheeks together, loving the intrusion but instinctively trying to push him out.

Alex flicked a finger—or thumb, who knew?—over her clit, soothing her.

It didn’t soothe, it inflamed. Dear God, she was so close. So close, and she didn’t want to come like this. Not on his fingers. But the ache, the exquisite agony, Lord, she just wanted to give in to it.

“Please, Al,” she begged, sobs building in her chest. “Not your hand. Don’t want your hand.”

His hand stilled, his fingers wedged deep in her ass. “You want my cock, baby?”

“God, yes,” she exclaimed.

Above her mouth Des’s balls tightened further. He pumped his shaft faster.

“Y-yours too,” she wheezed, and licked Des so he’d know she spoke to him.

“Al?” It was Des who spoke now. He stretched over and passed something to Alex. A condom.

She was forced to wait, her patience running low, as the men sheathed themselves.

How freaking long did it take to put on a condom or two? An hour?

Alex took longer than Des, probably because he’d taken his sweet time extracting his fingers from her butt. He laughed softly at her. “Impatient much?”

“Done yet?” she snapped back.

“Almost.” He made a show of rolling the condom over his shaft very slowly, knowing she’d react somehow.

She did react.



She flung herself on top of Des, using her weight to push him backwards. He landed with a chuckle. "Lucky I work faster than Alex."

She straddled him. "Is your condom on?" Her patience had run out.

His laughter died, but his eyes gleamed. Not with humor, with something else. Something that made her heart soar. "It's on."

"Thank fucking God." She grabbed the base of his penis, steadied it and lowered her pussy onto it. Onto his thick, hard cock, exalting in every inch that slid inside her.

Their cries intermingled, gratification echoing off the bedroom walls.

Des's hands were on her butt, pulling her down harder, closer, lodging himself deeper inside her. Where he belonged. He drove into her once, twice, fifty times.

She could have come right then. Wanted to, but didn't. She closed her eyes and beat down the urge.

Not without Alex. This time she wanted Alex with her and Des, not just observing from the sidelines. She leaned over Des and kissed him.

"That is so fucking sexy," Alex said from behind her.

She turned to look at him but he didn't notice. His gaze was focused on her butt.

"So hot. I've never seen anything like it." He had his hand on his cock, squeezing. "Fuck her, Reedy," Alex instructed. "Fuck her while I watch."

She whipped her head back around in time to see Des's eyes squeeze shut. He complied, withdrawing from her depths and plunging back in, making her whimper.

"That's it," Alex exclaimed. "Just like that. Do it again."

Des clasped her butt cheeks tighter and fucked her like Alex said. In and out, over and over. "Ah, Meggy..." he groaned.

She would have responded but couldn't. He felt too damn amazing seated so deep inside her.

"You should see her, Reedy," Alex rasped. "She's on fire. Her pussy's soaked. Dripping all over your balls."

"I...feel...it." Des gasped.

Megan clenched the walls of her pussy tight around him.

Alex made that little noise again. The not-quite-a-laugh sound. "She's grasping your dick with her lips. As though she won't let go."

"She's so tight," Des said. "So...fucking tight." He licked his lips. Breathed. "H...how's her ass?"

"Perfect," was Alex's breathy reply.

Des pulled at her cheeks as he fucked her, parting them for Alex.

"Now...how's her ass?"

Alex's answer was a long time coming. And when he spoke, his voice scalded a path down her spine. "Empty. Too empty."



Suddenly Des's hands weren't the only ones on her butt. Alex's were there as well. Massaging, rubbing, touching while Des pumped into her. Alex's finger skimmed over her cleft and pushed inside.

"Oh, God," Megan yelled. His finger was in her ass and Des's cock was in her pussy.

"She likes that," Des told Alex. He'd know, since she'd just constricted the walls of her pussy so forcefully he couldn't move. "Whatever you did, do it again."

Alex removed his finger, and she was forced to wait a few agonizing seconds before he replaced it. When he did, it was cool and slippery. So cool and so slippery, Megan forgot to move. She just lay, straddling Des's cock as Alex worked his finger—fingers—inside her. Making her squirm. Making her want to explode all over them.

"Alex—" she kept her voice calm, when all she wanted to do was scream at the top of her lungs, "—if I come on your finger, I will never forgive you."

"No more fingers," Alex promised, withdrawing his hand. "If you want my cock, it's all yours."

"I. Want. It."

The mattress dipped and bounced behind her. A leg brushed hers, then another. Des shifted but did not pull out of her. He did, however, raise his head to her chest and suck deeply on her nipples, first one, then the other. As he sucked, he rocked inside her, satisfying Megan in a way she'd never believed possible. And as he rocked, Alex pressed his cock against her anus and pushed.

His head slipped inside with a pop, and the breath left her lungs.

"More," she demanded.

Alex pressed on, sinking his shaft deeper.

Des groaned and stilled. "Can't move," he said. "No space."

Megan choked back a retort. She had a dick in her pussy and one burrowing into her ass, and Des had no space to move?

Alex tunneled further, his cock pressing inside her, splitting her in two. Her butt burned, stung beneath the assault, and still she demanded more. She had her best friend in her pussy and her lover in her ass. Although the pain and the physical pressure brought tears to her eyes, the incredible fullness in her heart and in her pelvis, made her want to cry with joy.

This was how it was always supposed to be for her.

She was always meant to have Alex and Des as her lovers. The rightness of their joining, the perfection of the moment—pain aside—left her with no doubts. Alex and Des were *both* fated to be hers. They always had been. No wonder she couldn't deny either of them. No wonder she'd never wanted to. They were both hers.

Alex drove into her and cried out. He was seated to the max in her ass.

Des groaned beneath her, forgetting her breasts. He was just as affected by Alex's presence in her body as she was.



Megan could do nothing but breathe. Breathe and feel and exist. This, now, was the most alive she'd ever been. The happiest. The fullest. She had Des and Alex inside her, and she was never letting go.

Alex grasped her hips, panting, while Des held her shoulders, steadying her beneath Alex's weight. Des withdrew from her pussy then rocked back inside. His jaw clenched when he ground to a halt. Alex's presence had obviously narrowed his path, providing resistance. Sweat beaded on his forehead, and he pushed harder and groaned, the sound a mixture of agony and bliss, until he found his place deep inside her again.

"Dear God." Megan exhaled.

"Fucking hell," Des agreed.

"Christ," Alex breathed behind her.

"I never thought..." Des didn't finish.

"Me neither," Alex agreed.

Megan had. She'd thought and she'd fantasized, only she'd never dreamed this big. This was better, way better, than anything she'd ever imagined.

Every ache, every burn was worth it. So, very, very worth it.

Alex's panting filled her ears, and then he too withdrew and drove slowly back into her.

Megan saw stars. Exquisite, beautiful stars. Millions of them.

She couldn't move. She was jammed between the two men. Her incapacitation only heightened her awareness. Her pleasure was out of her hands. Des and Alex held the ropes. It was all up to them.

Her faith in them was supreme. Neither would disappoint.

It took a few uncontrolled and devilishly delightful strokes before Des and Alex found a rhythm, but when they did, dear God, they took her breath away. She forgot to inhale. Forgot to think. All she could do was experience the ungodly thrills that zipped through her, rousing every carnal craving she'd ever had.

She could have helped, could have squeezed her inner muscles around them, but that would have brought on her own climax, and Megan was determined not to lose it. Not yet. She had to wring every scrumptious drop of pleasure from this experience. Make it last.

Damn, she wanted it to last. Wanted to remain trapped forever between the bodies of the men she loved. Wanted them loving her eternally, expressing their desire, showing her theirs was just as strong, as passionate as hers.

Alex swore behind her, and his movements became wilder, more forceful, increasing the pressure in her ass and the pleasure in her groin.

Des responded by thrusting faster, harder. His eyes were glazed, his chest heaved.

"Faster," Alex demanded and Des increased his pace.

"Fuck, yeah," Alex gasped.

"Deeper," Des ordered, and Alex shifted behind her, driving deeper than she'd have thought possible.



“Perfect,” Des whispered.

The two of them pounded into her, sent her world spinning off its axis. The sensation built, grabbed hold of her, refusing to let go, refusing to be shoved back. Megan was too close to prevent it now, no matter how she might want to prolong the experience.

“Ahh, fuck, Meg!” It was Des. His jaw was clenched, and the muscles in his shoulders bulged. “Can’t stop it, Al,” he muttered. “Can’t hold it back.”

“Me neither.” Alex slammed into her. “God, me neither.”

Des clutched her waist, plunged inside her and stilled with a hoarse cry. As Alex continued to thrust, Des came, his cock beating steadily in her pussy.

It was all too much, sensory overload. Megan couldn’t hold back, no longer wanted to. As Alex fucked her from behind, filling her with immeasurable pleasure, and Des filled her with his seed, she lost control, spinning helplessly into her orgasm. The pleasure was so intense she almost blacked out, would have, but for the cry that echoed in her ear as Alex slammed into her one final time and exploded in her ass.

Her pussy clutched at the pulsing penises, drawing out their climaxes even as their wild beating extended her own. Over and over she convulsed, her muscles clamping around Des and Alex, holding them, trapping them.

It was too spectacular to be real, too magnificent to end.

But end it did, days later, when her spasms finally receded and, no longer erect, Des slipped out of her.

Alex cried out again as he pulled out, and with nothing supporting her, she fell on top of Des.

A heartbeat passed and then another. Ten more. Maybe a thousand heartbeats. Voices sounded, but she couldn’t make them out. Her heart thumped too hard, too loudly. Blood roared in her ears.

Then she was being moved.

She lay on the mattress, not on Des.

*Huh?*

She was on her side, with her top leg bent at the knee and her butt cheeks spread open.

*Oh! Wet.*

But soothing too.

*Aah, very soothing.*

*Wait, what...?*

There were two heads at the juncture of her thighs, one in front, one at the back.

And then the assault came. The deft, clever licks. The tongues on her pussy and her ass. Two tongues—a joint attack. One on either side.

*Not on, in! A tongue in her ass and a tongue in her pussy.*

God, it was fabulous. An extraordinary, magnificent, marvelous attack.



An attack that threw her straight into another merciless orgasm.

The pleasure was too extreme, the relief too intense. Megan feared she might die of it, of the rapture that threw her into distant galaxies.

She didn't die.

She rode wave after wave of pleasure until the exertion and the ecstasy were too acute and she quite simply passed out.



## Chapter Seven

Alex awoke to the glorious sensation of Megan in his arms. His arms alone. Des was nowhere to be seen. The scents of coffee and toast wafted through the air, giving him a good idea of where the other man might be.

His stomach rumbled. Brekkie seemed like a grand idea. No wonder Des had left the cozy comfort of his bed.

Megan stirred, yawned, and burrowed her face into his chest.

Maybe brekkie could wait a bit.

She suckled his nipple.

Who needed food, anyway?

His cock grew as her tongue laved.

No words were necessary. This was a routine he and Megan had perfected. As Megan kissed her way down his chest, he reached over and grabbed a condom from next to the bed, then passed it to her.

Even sleepy, her hands were deft, knowing, and so damn sensual he grew harder as they worked. She had him all sheathed up in seconds. Then she was back, pressing herself against him, breasts to chest, her arm around his neck, her leg around his waist.

He slid inside her.

Slowly, ever so slowly, they rocked together. The urgency of the night before was absent. This, here, was a gentle, tender moment. A time for just the two of them, a chance to bond again, to realize once more what they were together. Without Des.

She peppered tiny kisses on his neck and his shoulder.

He held her as though he'd never let her go.

They made love. Sweet, hot, beautiful love.

The rhythm didn't change, the tempo did not increase. He stroked into her, she arched to meet him. Even as his orgasm approached, as pressure snuffed his oxygen and his balls tightened, they swayed to the same leisurely beat.

When a long sigh of pleasure escaped her lips and her thigh flexed around his hip, he didn't slam into her. He just rocked. She arched, he rocked to meet her. She rocked, he swayed his hips to her beat.



And when her pussy spasmed and she stiffened in his arms, losing her beat, he continued to rock. Not for long though. Seconds later he was spasming with her. Climaxing in her depths. Alone. Just him and Megan.

Beautiful.

Perfect.

Almost as good as the night before.

Megan must have agreed, for she shimmied off him, rolled over and nestled her back into his chest, winding his arm around her waist in the process, ensuring he held her tight. They lay cuddled together for endless moments.

Des flipped the last sausage onto a dish and set the pan to soak in the sink.

He popped the dish in the oven and added milk to the egg mix. Criminy. He was starving. Absolutely famished. Just as soon as the eggs were scrambled, he'd rouse the other two.

Ah, not necessary.

The sound of running water echoed down the passage. Someone was up, taking a shower.

Footsteps pattered along the wooden floor.

Des glanced at the door. Meg. Wearing nothing but a towel wrapped loosely around her breasts and a large yawn.

She sniffed heartily. "You cooked?"

"I did." His heart stood still just watching her. Her eyes were sleepy, her skin flushed. God, she was exquisite. His cock twitched and grew.

She lowered her gaze to watch, and smiled.

The combination of that Meg-a-watt smile and a tousled, sleepy Meg had him breathless.

Still clutching the towel around her breasts, looking remarkably virginal and innocent, she crossed the kitchen. "Alex is in the shower."

He nodded. "I figured as much."

"After last night and this morning, he figured he needed to get clean." She dropped the towel slightly, revealing the tops of her breasts.

Gone was the sweet virgin. A sexual minx stood before him. He couldn't draw his eyes away from her exposed nipple. "This morning?"

"Mmmm. We made love."

Des snapped his head up. Jealousy whipped through him.

She smiled. "Now it's your turn."

Fuck, she'd done that on purpose.



Meg let the towel fall away, exposing herself to him in all her naked glory, setting his teeth on edge.

"Just so happens, I brought this from the bedroom." She held up a condom. "Would you like it?"

Des growled low in his throat. His hands shook so badly, he wouldn't be able to complete the simple task. "Put it on me."

Meg's eyes glittered as she used her teeth to tear open the package. Her fingers were warm on his cock, agile. She had the condom in place and his shaft full to bursting in seconds.

When she walked over to his small kitchen table and leaned down over it, squashing her breasts against the tabletop and pushing her butt in the air, Des lost all control.

He was inside her before he'd taken his next breath.

Her silken pussy was hot and wet, drawing him in deeper every time he thrust his hips. Her moans filled the air, making him dizzy.

He made her moan. Not Alex.

"Feels amazing," she said in a breathy voice. "Don't stop."

Stop? Now? He'd do himself a permanent injury. "Won't. I swear." Not until she'd come.

This Meg, this soft, open, teasing Meg, was every bit as wonderful as the wild lover from last night. Every inch as sexy.

"I love you, Des," she sighed. "So very much."

He grew an inch inside her. "Love you too, Meggy-mine." And yes, she was his. Alex's also, but definitely his. Right now though? Just his. He pumped a little harder, loath to finish this anytime soon but desperate to avoid interruption.

He wanted her to come on his dick. His alone. No Alex there to usurp her attention.

"God, that's unbelievable." Meg pushed back to meet his thrusts.

He drove into her.

"Again, Des. Do it again." Her fingers balled into fists on the table.

He did. He plunged into her, again and again, relishing their solitude, relishing her responsiveness. Relishing...her. Just her. God, he loved her.

The knowledge heightened the sensation of being inside her.

She loved him.

Made it a million times more incredible.

They loved each other.

He clutched her hip with one hand and wound the other around her waist, burrowing his finger between her pussy lips and finding her clit.

He rubbed gently.

Meg let out a long, low howl, and came.

Thank fucking God.



Des lost it. Lost control. He erupted in her depths, an overwhelming sense of love consuming him. This was how it should be. Just him and Meg. No one else.

The day was perfect. The whole weekend was.

After establishing Des had used work as an excuse to avoid seeing a movie with her and was indeed free, she and Alex spent Saturday at Des's place. They ate and talked and sat together in comfortable silence. That evening the men watched telly, taking in a footy game, while Megan sat companionably between them reading.

The night was spent in Des's bed, sometimes asleep, but mostly awake, and very active.

When Megan collapsed in an exhausted ball, sure her body could not take one more iota of sex, the two men laid her out on her belly and massaged her from head to toe until she'd dipped into a trancelike state and slipped into a deliciously revitalizing sleep. She awoke hours later, once the sun had risen, to the pungent aromas of coffee, pancakes and maple syrup.

On Sunday morning, Des and Megan went along with Alex to visit his current project, an old house about to be revamped. Alex's first love in architecture was renovating, and Megan understood why as he walked the two of them through the tumbled-down, rickety, single-level structure and painted graphic images of what the place would look like once redone. The walls of the living area would be opened up and the house extended outward, so the current lounge/dining room would become two separate rooms leading off an open-plan kitchen. The now small two-bedroom home would become a larger, modern building that could house a large family.

Meg took the time to admire a stunning house next door, one with tumbled marble tiles and sleek angles that fit in perfectly with the up-market neighborhood.

Alex grinned at her and proudly explained it was one of his designs.

One of his masterpieces, more like it.

Back at Alex's place, naked once again, Alex seated himself on the armchair in his room and pulled Megan on top of him, positioning her so she straddled him. As he plunged inside her, Des stood beside the chair, his cock rigid beside her breast. With Alex deep inside her pussy, she reached down and took Des in her mouth.

They all three climaxed within minutes of one another.

Over takeouts for lunch, they chatted easily about everything and anything, and Alex even brainstormed a couple of new marketing ideas with Des.

Megan took a moment to sit back and survey what had changed since Friday night. In one weekend her life had changed entirely, and she could not be happier or more content.

Her uninhibited pleasure made Des's declaration that evening even more shocking.



Alex had left to meet with the homeowner to discuss the plans for the renos. She and Des were alone for the first time in...criminy, in two months.

She switched on the telly and settled down beside him to flick through channels and find something they'd both enjoy.

He took the remote from her hands and set it on the cushion beside him. "Meggy-mine?"

"Yeah?"

"We need to talk."

Alex parked his car in the drive, anticipation building with every step he took closer to his house. Megan was inside with Des. It was anyone's guess what they'd been up to while he was gone, but he didn't begrudge them their time alone.

As surprising as the idea of their threesome still was, in reality it worked beautifully. Rather than spitting with jealousy whenever Des claimed Megan, Alex found himself aroused beyond reason. Plus, he'd been right. Megan relishing the love of one man was a sight to behold. Radiant from the love of two men, she was magnificent.

He could not fucking wait to open the door. What would they be doing? Would they need to shift around to make room for him, or would he be able to join them without any rearrangement of bodies?

The last thing he expected was for Megan to throw herself in his arms as sobs racked her body.

He clutched her tight. *What the fuck?*

"He left," she gasped.

"What?"

"Desmond. He left."

*No fucking way.* "When?"

"T-twenty minutes ago. Maybe h-half an hour." Tears streamed down her face, soaking his shoulder.

"Why?"

"B-bec-because..." She didn't finish.

Alex lifted her like a child and carried her across the room, settling them down on the couch. He held her, rocked her on his lap as she tried, breathlessly, to explain.

"He said he tried." She sniffed and wiped at her eyes, but still her tears fell. "Said it was good. But...but not for... Not for him."

Alex listened, tried to make sense of her words.

"He doesn't want this." Big, shuddery breath. "Doesn't want...us."

*Well, fuck.* "He said so?"

Sobs consumed her again. She couldn't answer, nodding instead.



*What the...* Alex struggled with her words. Des didn't want to be a part of them? Didn't want to continue the threesome?

He shook his head in disbelief. No way. It didn't make sense.

He'd been there, right alongside Des, almost every time the man had made love to Megan. He'd witnessed Des's lust, his unconcealed hunger for Megan, his rampant desire for sex—three-way sex. Des may have been hesitant in the beginning, but after that first time—when Alex had been forced to sit back and watch—he'd flung himself into their ménage à trois. No question about it, Des had been as willing and as active a participant as he and Megan had been.

*Fuck, double fuck and cluster fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck.*

"Des walked out on you?" he asked at last. "On us?" Because damn it, they were an "us". Or they had been when Alex left for his meeting. Now, it was all different.

"It gets worse." Megan hiccupped.

How could it possibly? Des had walked away from Megan, breaking her heart in the process and ending the most incredible sexual encounter Alex had ever experienced. Alex had sported a fucking erection the entire way through his meeting. While the glut of sexual activity over the weekend should have allayed his hunger, it had instead had the opposite effect, making Alex hornier than ever, and more impatient with work than usual.

All he'd wanted was to come home, pull Megan between Des and himself, and sink his cock into her depths on one side while Des took care of the other.

Not gonna happen now.

He ran his hand over her hair, soothing her. "Tell me how it could get worse, baby."

"H-he-he—" She took a big, shaky breath. "He wanted me to leave with him."



## Chapter Eight

Des awoke as semen gushed from his dick onto his stomach, releasing his pent-up frustration in unexpected and unwelcome spurts.

Again? Another fucking wet dream?

How many could one man have before his sanity began to slide?

Only it wasn't a dream that had led to his current state of disarray. It was a memory. Another one. Of making love to Meggy. Of driving his dick into her ass as she feasted on Alex's cock. A memory of the feel of her tight, hot channel—slickened with lube and her own natural juices—pulsing around him, claspings him in her depths, holding him there, while Alex moaned his approval out loud.

How could he not recall the way Meg had dissolved on his finger when he found her clit and thrummed, or the way Alex had bucked as he came in her mouth?

How could he forget how a satiated Al had swiveled around, tunneled beneath Meg's body and licked her pussy while Des continued to take her ass? Or forget the way Meg had come again and again, milking his own orgasm in the process?

He couldn't. That was the problem. He couldn't forget one fucking second. Which explained why night after night he awoke in a cold sweat with come dripping off his stomach.

Even in the two months he'd spent alone before, wanting Meg and not being able to have her, his dreams were never this vivid, this kinky or this needy. He couldn't forget, not Meg and not Alex. And certainly not their encounters together.

Des grabbed a box of tissues and wiped off the mess.

Fuck, this wasn't supposed to happen.

He wasn't supposed to miss *them*. Just Meg. He'd walked away because he couldn't have her to himself. So why did it now hurt to think of both of them?

He'd come to terms with the idea that if he couldn't have Meg to himself, he wouldn't have her at all. Better that than to be forced to share her.

He was an adult. A grown man. He wasn't looking for a little sexy fun on the side, a little three-way play. He sought a life partner. A wife. A woman who'd stand by his side every day, and perhaps even, sometime in the not-too-distant future, bear his children.

Meg could have been that woman. Should have been, but she didn't envisage the same future. The one she saw held Alex in it. Alex and Des.



Des's vision did not.

Way too big a difference to conquer. There'd been no choice. Des had to walk away.

He'd given Meg the choice to come with him. Hell, he'd begged her to come, but in the end, her love for Alex proved too strong. As much as she professed to love Des, she wouldn't leave Alex for him.

Her alternative was for the three of them to attempt a future together.

Des could not accept that. Could not accept a future where he shared the woman he loved with another man. No matter how fucking good it felt making love to her at the same time as that other man did. No matter how super incredibly satisfying the sex had been.

His future held one other person. Not two.

So why the fuck did his dreams, his memories, now revolve around two people, not one?

Des's day at work was no improvement over his morning. He was in a foul mood—as he had been the entire week. The day did not improve with the knock on his office door. And it only got worse when said door opened, revealing the very man he'd dreamed about God knew how many times this week.

Des scanned the area behind him, hoping to find the woman in his dreams as well.

She wasn't there.

He nodded at his guest. "Alex."

"Des." Alex nodded back. "Mind if I come in?"

Shit. What was he doing here? Des held out his hand in invitation.

Alex shut the door behind him, closing out the noise of the shop and the shopping center beyond it. He pulled out a chair and sat, resting one foot on his knee and his elbows on the arms of the chair. He steepled his fingers together.

Des flickered over a thousand things he might say to the other man and settled on nothing. Offering him a drink was too damn inane, and admitting to missing him and Megan so much he hurt was a little too personal.

He needn't have worried about making conversation. Alex began talking almost immediately.

"Know why I like renovating old houses?" he asked without preamble.

Des couldn't hide his surprise. There were many things he'd expected Al to say, ranging from what an asshole Des was to how much Meg now hated him. Architecture had not been a foreseen topic of conversation.

"Uh...no."

"Because I love working with an existing foundation."

"Ah. Right." Des nodded again, pretending he knew just what the hell Alex was talking about.



“There are houses out there that need to be knocked down. The walls are crumbling, the foundations are sliding. The material isn’t strong enough to build on. You have to start from scratch.”

Another sage nod in Alex’s direction. *What the...?*

“But a fixer-upper? Not so. A fixer-upper you can work with. You can change. You can take average and create magnificence.”

Okay, so Des still had no clue what Alex was going on about, but he understood what Al meant. Alex was good at creating magnificence. Bloody good. Last weekend Des had seen the evidence of his brilliance.

“Know the part I love best?”

Alex waited for the inevitable *No* from Des before continuing. “Seeing what could be. Visualizing how a wall could be knocked down here and a room extended there to craft something new. Something better.” He dropped his hands to the arms of the chair. “And when the building process starts and the roof comes off to make place for the expansion, man, the possibilities are endless. That house can become anything.”

Des tried not to shift in his seat. An unpleasant sensation tickled his spine. Alex was making a point here.

“That house I took you to on Sunday?” Alex paused, as if asking Des if he remembered it.

“Uh huh.”

“That was supposed to be a ground-floor renovation. But the owners changed their minds.”

“They’re not renovating anymore?”

“They are. But they’ve decided to build up now. Add a second level to the house.” Alex stared beyond Des at the wall, deep in thought. “I advised them not to,” he said after a while. “I didn’t think a double story would suit their plot.” He shrugged. “But they were adamant, so it was back to the drawing board for me.”

“You’re drawing up a whole new set of plans?” Des hoped they were paying Alex well for his troubles.

“Yep. It took a while to wrap my head around a new idea. Had to give it a lot of thought. But the family wants what they want, so I had to envision something different. You know what?” He looked at Des.

How could he possibly know? He was swimming blind here. “What?”

“I’ve come up with something that’s not half bad.”

“Uh, that’s good.” Des expected nothing less of him.

“It’s good. It’s damn good. Gonna be amazing when it’s done. I wouldn’t mind living there myself. And the views from the upper level? They’re endless.”

“Which one do you prefer?”



“See, that’s the thing. Now that I’ve had the chance to see both options, I don’t like either one better than the other. I think they’re both unbelievable choices. But in the end, the decision wasn’t mine to make. The family chose. Their needs changed, their outlooks changed, and they went for the second level.”

To Des’s surprise, Alex stood. “You’re leaving?”

“Uh huh.”

Okay. So no mention of Meg, no mention of their weekend. Just house talk. *Riiiiight*.

Alex walked to the door and opened it. “Pretty amazing, isn’t it?” he asked.

“Isn’t what?” Fuck, Des was floundering here.

“The foundations. So solid they can withstand any alteration the house undergoes. The obvious, easy revamping, or the more complex, unexpected renos.” Alex nodded. “Pretty damn amazing.”

And then he left, leaving Des gaping at the closed door, mulling over the tale of *The Little House That Could*.



## Chapter Nine

At least Alex was still with her. Megan snuggled in closer to him, eternally grateful for that miracle. He hadn't walked away.

Alex wrapped his arm around her shoulders and hugged her tight. They sat together on her couch watching telly, although Megan couldn't say what was on. Her concentration was shot. This time last week, she and Alex had been with Des.

God, she missed him. Ached for him, physically and emotionally. He hadn't just walked away from her love when he'd left. He'd walked away from their friendship—and their shared history—and about ripped her heart out in the process.

She'd hoped to see him at poker last night, but he hadn't been there. Even Alex had been shocked at Des's absence.

She still couldn't believe he'd gone. Didn't want to believe it. How could she face the world without her best friend?

How could she face a future without one of her lovers?

His absence made her love for Alex even stronger. He was her rock. Her stability. Her lover. She hugged him tight, terrified if she let him go he too would disappear, just like Des.

Des's departure had left a hollow emptiness in her life. Without him, Megan was no longer complete.

Alex wiped a thumb tenderly under her eyes.

God, she was crying. Again. And she hadn't even realized it.

"Shh, baby," he soothed. "We'll be okay. I swear, we'll be okay."

"When?" From where she sat, a thousand years seemed too soon.

Alex sighed. "One day. We did it without him before, we'll do it again. Hey, we have each other."

"Thank God." She swallowed over the aching lump in her throat. "Thank God for you, Al."

The doorbell rang.

"Can we leave it? The thought of seeing anyone..." She couldn't face the world right now. She just needed time alone with Alex.

"No worries." He leaned down and kissed away her tears. "We don't need to see anyone we don't want to."

She breathed a relieved sigh.

The bell rang again.



They ignored it.

A third time.

“Someone’s getting insistent,” Alex said quietly, but made no move to answer the door.

Another ring, this time followed by a muffled oath.

Megan’s ears pricked up.

Whoever stood outside banged on the door. “Megan? I know you’re there.”

Her heart slammed against her ribs.

“Alex,” the voice yelled. “Open up.”

She looked at Alex, startled.

He looked back at her, his face calm, his eyes alert. “Still want to ignore that?”

Her voice caught in her throat. *No, dear God, no!*

“Breathe, baby. It’s okay,” Al whispered.

She tried to inhale but couldn’t. He rubbed her back.

The banging persisted. “Meggy, please. Open the door.”

“Want me to see what he wants?” Alex asked.

*Yes!* Still no sound came out. But she could nod, so she did. Every other part of her body was frozen in panic. In anticipation. In fear.

“You sure?” Alex checked.

Again she nodded.

He stood and crossed the floor. She sat immobile as he turned the handle.

And there he was, looking as desperate and as heartbroken as she felt.

“I get it now,” he said to Alex. He didn’t walk inside, just stood at the front door.

Alex raised an eyebrow. “Get what?”

“Your little analogy. I’m the second level.”

She blinked in confusion. *Huh?*

“You two are the ground floor and I’m the second-level extension. That’s what you were trying to tell me.”

Alex shrugged. His face was blank. “That’s quite a stretch, don’t you think?”

Des marched in and slammed the door behind him. “I think everything’s been a stretch since last Friday night.” He looked past Alex to where Megan sat on the couch.

God help her, his expression changed. Softened. All the chaos left his eyes as he focused on her. What she saw in their depths was love, pure and simple. “Meggy,” he whispered.

She tried to speak, but her voice still wouldn’t work. The muscle ticked furiously in her cheek.

He swiveled to face Alex again. “You and Meg. You’re the ground floor in this house. And I’m the unexpected extension.”



What house? Megan lived in a unit.

“Or maybe you’re the foundation.” Alex’s lips thinned. He folded his arms across his chest defensively. “You and Megan. Friendship makes for a powerful base of any...building.”

Des’s jaw dropped. “You’re jealous?”

“Fuck you, Reed. What are you doing here anyway?”

“*You’re jealous of me?*” Des laughed, but it was a harsh sound, completely lacking in humor. It told Meg the only one he laughed at was himself.

She shook her head. What the hell was going on?

Alex glared at him through narrowed eyes. “She’s loved you for four years. She’s loved me for a few months. What do you think, asshole?”

Was that pain in his voice?

“I think she fucking chose you. Doesn’t matter what kind of foundations we built four years ago.”

Alex scoffed. “If you think that, then you’re a bigger fool than I gave you credit for.”

Megan finally found her voice. She might be stumped about their talk of houses and foundations, but one thing she clearly understood was her heart.

“I chose you both,” she whispered and pushed herself off the couch. “It wasn’t a question of having one over the other, I chose you both.” She turned to Des. “You walked away.” *And shredded my heart in the process.*

He dropped his head and his shoulders slumped. “I was an idiot.”

She stared at him, befuddled. “Meaning?”

“Meaning I should never have left.” His voice rasped over the words. “Should never have asked you to choose.”

*Well... Duh!*

“But you did leave,” Alex interjected. “Now why don’t you leave again?” He motioned to the door. “Leave Megan and me in peace.”

“Because I can’t.” Des turned to face him again. “Because I looked at the plans you brought me. Studied them. And I think you’re right. The possibilities for a second level are infinite.” He looked back at Meg. “And the views from up here are incredible.”

Blood pulsed through her veins as her heart raced frantically. The love in his eyes ran so deep she thought she might be looking into his soul. Her hands shook uncontrollably.

Des had said something about an analogy. Had Alex compared the three of them to a house? If so, when? “Could someone please explain what you’re talking about?”

“Isn’t it obvious?” Alex sneered. “It’s just like Des said. He’s an idiot.”

Des let Alex’s comment pass. “Al came to visit me on Thursday.”

Megan gaped at Alex. “You did?”



Alex shrugged.

“He came to talk about the house he’s working on. The one we went to see. Apparently the owners have changed the plans. They’re building up now.”

“They are?” Des’s revelation shocked her. Alex had slaved over those plans.

“Nope.” Alex shook his head. “The house is going exactly according to original plan.”

Again Des gaped at Alex. “Then what the fuck was that conversation all about?”

Alex sighed softly, but his arms remained folded over his chest. “Possibilities. Alternatives.”

“What possibilities?” Megan asked, feeling just as bewildered as Des looked.

Alex just shrugged again.

Des answered. “Alex compared the three of us to an unrenovated house. Without me, you could have a stunning single-level home with all the trimmings.”

“But with you, we could have so much more,” Megan finished for him. Her head reeled. Alex had gone to see Des? To convince him to come back? He’d done that?

“I was wrong,” Alex bit out. “We’re better off without him.” He looked at her. “You’re better off without him.”

She wanted to kiss him. He’d gone to Des. Gone to get him back. He wanted Des back as much as she did. Dear God, she loved him. So much. Never mind his bravado and fuck-you attitude now. Alex wanted this threesome as much as she did.

She didn’t kiss him, but she did grab his hand and hold it tight in hers.

“What do you want, Des?” She almost didn’t want to ask, but Des was here. He wouldn’t be if he didn’t want the same thing, would he?

Could the men see how terrified she was of his answer? Could they see how badly she wanted it to be them? Her and Alex?

“I want you, Meggy-mine.” Color flooded his cheeks and he took a deep breath. “I want us. All three of us. I want the double storey.” His gaze fell on Alex. “Regardless of who built the foundations or the ground level.”

Joy and relief seeped through Megan, so intense they took her breath away.

But Alex remained stoic. “You’re too late,” he said. “Plans are with council. We can’t change them now.”

“That’s bull,” Des told him. “No way you’d have come to my office if you’d finalized the plans.”

“I submitted them yesterday. You walked away, Reed. You made your choice. Deal with it and move on.”

Megan wanted to intervene. She wanted to throw her arms around Des and welcome him back. She wanted to yank Alex’s arm and make him see reason. Wanted a second chance at what they’d begun last weekend. But she didn’t say anything. Didn’t do anything.



If she, Des and Alex were ever to have a future, then the two men had to sort out their differences. Alex had been her rock up until now, her champion—going to see Des like he had. But the one thing he hadn't done was express his feelings on the whole matter.

It was irrelevant that her heart hammered with excitement, and every dream she'd ever dared to dream was suddenly a hairsbreadth away. If this were to work out the way she hoped, she'd shut up and let them have it out.

"I was wrong." Des's words carried through the house. "I panicked, and I made the wrong choice." He pushed a hand through his hair. "My whole life I've always thought I'd get married and have kids." He nodded at Megan. "You were perfect, Meggy. You'd have made the perfect wife. Realizing that wasn't what you wanted? It fucking tore me apart."

Not what she wanted? Damn it, she'd fantasized about it for four years. Until Alex entered the picture.

"You think I didn't have the same aspirations?" Alex snapped. "You think I haven't been thinking about marriage since the day I met Megan?"

She slapped a hand over her heart, sure it had stopped beating. They wanted to marry her? Both of them?

Alex glared at Des. "You fucked up my plans."

"Yeah?" Des raised an eyebrow. "Well you fucked up mine, so I guess we're even."

The two men stood in the middle of the lounge room, glowering at each other.

"Shit," Des muttered. "Shit, shit, shit." He held his hands up. "I didn't come here to fight. I came to apologize."

Alex didn't give an inch. "For what?"

"For my behavior. For acting like a dickhead and running away when I didn't get what I wanted."

"Dickhead's a fairly accurate description," Alex agreed.

"I don't want marriage anymore," Des said.

Alex continued to glower, so Megan asked the question, pretending her heart hadn't just broken. Pretending Des hadn't just offered her everything she'd ever wanted with him, then hauled it back before she'd had time to accept. "So what do you want, Des?"

Des looked at her with those soft, gooey eyes. "I want us, Meggy-mine." He looked at Alex then. "All three of us. I want to take what we started last weekend and make it a permanent arrangement. Hell, I wanna spend the rest of my life building and perfecting our second level."

Megan's heart stuttered.

Alex didn't look convinced, but neither did he look as aggressive as he had a minute ago.

"I even bought us something to decorate our new house. Our first picture, so to speak."

Megan looked around. No picture in sight.



“Give me one minute.” Des was gone less than that before returning with a small, flattish package wrapped in brown paper. He held it out to them. “Go ahead. Open it.”

Megan took it from him but gave it to Alex to open.

Reluctantly he tore the paper off.

Megan took one look at it and broke into a huge smile. Even Alex couldn’t keep a straight face. He raised an eyebrow and the darkness in his eyes lightened.

In his hands he held a framed photograph of three playing cards: two black kings with the Queen of Hearts wedged between them.

“It might be clichéd,” Des said quietly, “but this is what I want now. This is all I want. You, Meggy, centered between Alex and me—forever.”

She tried not to cry, but tears were welling up in her eyes again. Tears of joy this time. “I want it too. More than anything.”

Alex didn’t say anything.

“I love you, Meggy,” Des told her. “And Al, I love what the three of us had last weekend. I loved spending time together, I loved hanging out, I loved making love. I want a shot at making this permanent. It might not be the marriage I’d always thought I’d have, but that’s okay. I don’t want to be part of the perfect couple anymore. I want to be part of the winning set.”

Megan could no longer stop the tears. “I want it too,” she sobbed. “I want it forever.”

Des made to step towards her and then stopped. “I wanna kiss her, Al. I want to take her in my arms and hold her, but I won’t do that if it’s not okay with you.”

God, she wanted Des to kiss her. “I want him to,” she told Alex. “But not if you don’t want it.”

Alex was silent for a very long time. And then slowly, slowly he began to smile. “Of course I fucking want it. It’s all I’ve wanted since I watched Des making love to you the first time.” He walked over and cupped her cheek. “You and I made a good couple, baby. But the three of us together are going to make a freaking perfect threesome.”

Des walked up to her then and cupped her other cheek. He wrapped his free arm around Alex’s shoulders, and holding them both, leaned forward and kissed Megan. He kissed her until her tears turned to laughter and her knees turned to jelly. He kissed her until she had absolutely no doubts about his true feelings for her, and then he kissed her some more, for good measure.

And when he released her, he turned her to face Alex.

“She’s all yours,” he offered gallantly.

Alex shook his head. “No, buddy,” he disagreed. “She’s all ours.”

That was the last cognizant thing any of them said. Alex drew her into his arms and kissed her mouth, and Des molded himself to her back and kissed her neck.



Hours later, sated and happy and still trembling from coming so many times, Megan placed the photo Des had brought them on her bedside table.

“You know this is going to cause trouble at poker,” she commented absently.

Alex, who lay on his stomach on the bed looking utterly exhausted and totally edible, lifted his head just long enough to see the picture Megan referred to. “It is?”

“Uh huh.” She nodded.

Des, who lay on the other side of the bed, looking just as sexually satisfied as Alex, gazed at her through passion-filled eyes. His expression made her belly fizz with excitement all over again. “Why?”

“Because—” she grinned in delight, “—I’m about to introduce another winning hand to the game. An all-new three of a kind—two kings and their queen.”



## About the Author

To learn more about Jess Dee please visit her website at [www.jessdee.com](http://www.jessdee.com).

Or you can drop by her blog: <http://jessdee.wordpress.com>.

Jess loves to hear from her readers. You can contact her any time at [jess@jessdee.com](mailto:jess@jessdee.com).



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## Going All In

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### *Three of a Kind, Book 1*

Julia Savage's weekly poker games are tearing her apart. She's in love with two of her fellow card players, and much as she'd like to pick and confess her true feelings to one man, she won't. Not if it means risking the love of the other.

Hunter Miles has wanted Julia for months, and he's about to deal a hand she couldn't see coming. He's determined to give her a New Year's Eve celebration she never expected. He's going to seduce her—in front of his friend and rival for her affections, Jay Baxter. But Jay's not willing to lay down his cards. He's going after Julia too, and he's not above bluffing to get what he wants. Either way, one of them is going to win her over.

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*Warning: This book contains two hunky heroes, a heroine worth betting on, sizzling hot three-way action (m/f/m and m/m/f), a whole lot of unexpected fireworks and a New Year's Eve to remember.*

*Enjoy the following excerpt for Going All In:*

God, he tasted good. Clean and musky, with an occasional salty drop for flavor.

Hunter lay on the bed with his legs hanging over the side. His upper body rested on his arms so he could watch Julia at work. The air was filled with his soft, encouraging murmurs.

Julia's one hand held the base of his penis, the other caressed his balls. His cock was slightly thicker than Jay's, but just as delectable.

Julia felt someone's gaze on her back and turned to find Jay standing butt-naked by the bathroom door.

"Fuck," he swore hoarsely and strode over to the bed where he dropped to his knees beside Julia.

She swirled her tongue around the tip of Hunter's dick, watching Jay's face the entire time.

"Jesus, Jules," Jay gasped. "If I thought I fancied you before, I reckon I'm falling in love with you now." He did not take his gaze off her mouth.

Her heart lurched beneath her breast, but she forced herself not to get too excited by his words, no matter how much she loved him. After all, they were being said in the heat of passion. Nevertheless, still holding Hunter's cock in her hand, she lifted her face to Jay's, inviting him to kiss her.

He did so, hungrily, and when he pulled away and motioned for her to return to Hunter, her lips were swollen and puffy.

Hunter let out a loud groan. "I reckon I'm falling pretty damn hard myself."



He dropped backwards onto the bed as Julia sucked his cock into her mouth again, tickled pink by his confession. She loved Hunter too. She had for the last four months. Once again she warned herself not to get her hopes up. There was very little a man wouldn't say when a woman knelt at his feet.

Hunter flung an arm over his eyes and thrust his hips upwards, filling her mouth. She had to relax every muscle in her throat to fit his dick in.

Jay breathed heavily beside her. "Watching you blow Hunter is giving me a hard-on from hell."

Julia smiled around Hunter's shaft and stilled his movements with her hand. She drew away from him then dipped her head back to lick off the precome that leaked from his cock head. Without swallowing, she turned back to Jay and offered him her mouth. She was mildly surprised by the greed with which Jay kissed her, licking the offering from her tongue. Mildly surprised and majorly aroused.

She squeezed another drop from Hunter and repeated the process. This time when Jay's lips met hers, he groaned low in his throat.

Keeping her gaze on Jay's face, she held Hunter's dick in her hand and licked it from the base up to the tip and then back down again. Twice she did it, and then a third time, conscious of Jay staring, his eyes glazed with hunger.

Perhaps it took her a few seconds to see the truth because her glasses were off. But once she noticed it, she couldn't deny the fact. It wasn't just her mouth Jay ogled. It was Hunter's penis as well. Hunter's delectable penis.

She licked the head of his dick and then paused to watch Jay.

He licked his lips.

She did it again.

He licked his lips again.

Her pussy tightened.

Jay wanted Hunter's dick.

Ever so slowly she raised her head. While still holding Hunter's shaft, she tilted it, offering it to Jay.

Jay didn't move an inch. Indecision flashed across his face, made obvious by his frown.

Julia pursed her lips and sucked Hunter into her mouth, sliding her lips up and down, making him mumble on the bed. She watched Jay while she feasted.

He watched Hunter's dick.

When he bit his lower lip and his tongue flashed over it, soothing the reddened spot, Julia pulled away, and once again offered him Hunter's penis.

This time he faltered for a second. Then he leaned over and swiped his tongue over the tip of the proffered cock.

Blood raced to Julia's head, making her dizzy. In her entire life she had never seen anything as mesmerizing.



Jay did it again and then again.

Hunter writhed and his hips surged up, as though asking for more.

Jay obliged. Tentatively he opened his mouth and lowered his lips over Hunter's shaft. They touched Julia's fingers, and she released her grasp on Hunter, giving Jay free rein.

Hunter let out a long breath. His arm still covered his eyes, but his lower body was moving now, thrusting up into Jay's mouth.

God, Julia thought, stunned. She was watching Jay go down on Hunter. A man on a man. The one man she loved doing the other man she loved. It was shocking. Scandalous. It was outrageous. And fascinating. And hot. Oh, dear Lord, the very sight turned her on almost more than sleeping with both of them did.

Julia pushed her hand against her pussy, hoping to ease the sudden ache between her legs. Desire burned within, growing hotter as Jay devoured Hunter. Jay's face was a study in concentration. His eyes were closed, as though he relished the experience. With each bob of his head, Jay's confidence seemed to grow, his movements became faster, his expression more intent.

She closed her other hand around Jay's penis, stunned to find it harder than ever, with a vein pulsing tangibly through it.

"Jules," Hunter cried. "Fuck, Jules!" He flung his head from side to side, his eyes still closed. "That feels unbelievable."

Jay froze. His eyes popped open.

"No." Hunter panted. "Christ, don't stop."



*Thirteen stories up. Two broken hearts. One last chance...*

## Shaken

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Surgeon Grant Sullivan's once-perfect life lies in ruins. His daughter is gone—lost in a tragic accident he dare not allow himself to remember—and his beautiful wife now stares at him from across a legal table, insisting she wants nothing from him.

Julia Sullivan lost everything, especially her illusions about her marriage, after the accident. Her grief only seemed to drive Grant further into his emotional shell—except for the nights he turned to her in silent, furious passion. Unable to live like a ghost in her old life, she's packed up what's left of her broken heart and is ready to move on. Alone.

Determined to break their stalemate, Grant follows Julia onto the elevator just in time for an earthquake. Trapped for hours in a building pressure cooker of unspoken pain, he'll do anything to remind her what she's leaving behind, as deliciously as he can. But giving her what she needs to save their marriage is the one thing that could destroy his soul.

*Warning: Heartbreak and passion ahead—desperate doctor determined to save his marriage at any cost...except for the one secret his wife will do anything to uncover.*

*Enjoy the following excerpt for Shaken:*

Julia leaned against the wall of the elevator car, watching her husband come ever closer, each step a slow, stalking movement. She could still taste him on her lips, knew what he planned to do if she let him close enough. The question was whether or not she wanted to.

No, that wasn't even a question.

Whether she *should*.

Her body shook, not in fear—she could never be afraid of Grant—but with need. That kiss ignited too many feelings, awakening something in her that had been blessedly numb since she'd left their home. Desire.

He stood almost over her now, their bodies nearly touching. His warmth called to her, his breath. If she wanted him, all she had to do was reach out and touch. Undo the buttons on that gray shirt, find the muscled flesh beneath. Then she'd be able to press her face to his skin, taste it with wet, sucking kisses that made him groan deep in his chest. Her fingers itched, ready to seek out the muscled ripples along his ribs.

She tightened them on the metal handrail instead.

This was why she'd left. Because Grant turned every quiet moment, every opportunity to talk, into sex. He disappeared from her emotionally, verbally, physically in every way except for the moments he was stripping her. Pleasuring her. Filling her until she screamed from the raw pleasure of it. And then he'd



always leave her afterward. Leave her more alone with each experience, until she felt as if there were nothing left of her. She couldn't face it again.

"This is hardly the place for what you're thinking," she said, but the argument lacked the strength she knew it needed.

"This is the only place we have left, don't you think?" His fingertip touched her jaw, soft as a feather, tilting her face up to his. "Haven't you missed this, Julia?"

So much her body, her soul, ached day and night.

His lips grazed hers. "I feel like I'm breathing again for the first time in months." Firmer pressure...or had she lifted onto her toes to press closer? She wasn't sure. "Like my heart's beating again, just touching you."

Hers, too. Beating so fast it felt like a flutter.

His fingers left her jaw, the backs of them trailing down her neck to the collar of her blouse, which felt like it was strangling her. He tugged on the tie, gently. Asking permission. God, how she wanted to give it to him.

She stared up, his face so close to hers, but his gaze was on the tie at her neck. His black lashes spread like thick fans just above his stark cheekbones. So haggard, so...lost. She lifted her hand to his cheek, his heavy stubble tickling her palm. If she gave in, though, he'd be gone in a heartbeat...

It hit her then. Gone where? They were trapped. He couldn't walk away this time. Couldn't leave her behind. Couldn't hide from her questions. Her love.

Against all her better judgment, hope flared in her heart.

"Let me touch you, Jules," he whispered roughly, lowering his mouth to the corner of hers. Slowly he made his way down her body, touching but not taking. Almost as if he couldn't help himself. Until he knelt before her, hands on her thighs, waiting. Watching her. "Let me make it better."

God, did she have the strength? Could she take one more risk, after everything she'd already lost? Her daughter, her marriage... Could she bear it if she tried to reach for her husband and everything she feared about their relationship was true?

Could she bear it if she was wrong and never took the opportunity to find out for sure?

Closing her eyes, she finally let go of the rail. She reached blindly for his hands, guiding them to the hem of her skirt...and underneath. Her breath slipped out in a rush when he began lifting the fabric, sliding the skirt higher and higher up her thighs.

Her breath disappeared.





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