

ELLORA'S CAVE *Moderne*

Amanda  
Feral

Stocking  
Full  
of Coal

Merry Kinkmas

## **Stocking Full of Coal**

*Amanda Feral*

Justine Crenshaw is accident-prone. On purpose. It's the bruises...she can't live without them, without the pleasure and pain that closely bind her sexuality to her secret obsession. She chooses men who accept her fetish, who seek it out for their own dark designs, even if they don't understand it. She accepts that. Justine doesn't need them for anything but a little bruise pressure during down-and-dirty sex.

Then she meets Nathan, and her heart starts demanding more than her compulsions provide. She can't hide her body from him forever, can't keep him in the dark, literally. But no "normal" guy could possibly understand her multi-colored kink...could he? It might be time for Justine to shine a light on her fetish and find out.

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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ISBN 9781419931758

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Edited by Kelli Collins

Cover art by Darrell King

Electronic book publication December 2010

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# *STOCKING FULL OF COAL*

**Amanda Feral**

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## Chapter One

### *Accident Prone*

If they found my body tomorrow—cold and dead from some accidental food poisoning or bathtub slip—they'd suspect I was a battered wife or girlfriend for the mass of bruises, contusions and welts on my body.

They'd be wrong, whoever *they* are.

No one ever beats me, ties me up—or down. I never have to lie about falling accidentally, or running into door frames, or searing my forehead with a curling iron.

I'm not submissive to anyone, nor am I bound, gagged, throttled, spanked or any of those other violent verbs.

What I am is accident prone.

In the sense that I'm open to them. Accidents.

Ironically, my name is Justine, like the book.

If you don't get the Marquis de Sade reference, don't worry. It's not necessary. This story is neither literary nor filled with obscure references. It's a base little tale of private kink and Christmas.

So it's festive, I suppose. But really not the point.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the day things began to change for me, my assistant Joel almost caught me admiring a rather impressive bruise on his forearm, just below the crook of his elbow where the hair thins to smooth, distraction-free skin. The specimen was mottled, an irregular grid of fleshy tile around the edges and purpled nicely in the center, with the most amazing branch of broken capillaries, like curls of baby's breath in a floral display.

Gorgeous, take my word for it.

If he'd looked up from decorating the tiny Christmas tree on his desk, he'd have seen my eyes narrowed with lust, my expression wan, unfamiliar. He probably wouldn't have been able to identify the envy, but the way my brain works, that one look would have given away everything.

Joel would put two and two together and come up with thirty years of obsession and tons of break room gossip fodder. That would be bad. It'd be only a matter of time before the other executives in the firm would be whispering "bruiseslut" when I passed.

"Keeping busy?" I muttered, hoping to slip past without a drawn-out conversation—Joel could be chatty.

"Mmmhmm." Joel dangled a tiny pink flamingo from a metal hook, twisting it between his fingers. "Do you think this goes?"

The rest of the ornaments were blue. Fish, peacocks, even a baby blue Ford Thunderbird jockeyed for prime positions.

"You know what would really set it off?" I asked. "Disco ball."

"Right?" Joel nodded, finally tossing the flamingo into his pen cup.

Everything needed to be *just so*, apparently.

Even bruises.

Hurrying toward my office, I keyed in on the metal waste can, tensed my leg muscles as tight as I could and slammed my shin into it with enough force to leave a dent. The pain sliced up my leg and I bit it off at my lip before I could yelp. You have to tense up or you just get an ordinary bruise, a dull thud instead of a sharp, stabbing pain.

"Ooh." Joel briefly appeared in the doorway, his flinch exaggerated as if to inform me he felt my pain. "See what I mean, Justine? Accident-prone!"

The expression on my face was practiced. It only *looked* like embarrassment.

He was right, of course.

Just not the way he meant it.

Most people skirt sharp table edges or the blunt ends of banisters for fear of the biting sting. They want to put those little rubber bumpers on them so children won't bash and bruise, or worse yet, they might end up with a murky purple blossom on their own hip, calf, wrist. It'd be tender and painful and look horrible even under the darkest opaque hosiery.

I get the concern. I do.

But I'm not most people. Of course, I have to pretend I'm preoccupied or rushed, or on my way to an important business lunch or to pick up my sick daughter from school.

Make no mistake—I have no child.

I have bruises.

The phone on my desk beeped. Joel again, his voice a tinny metallic echo from this tiny electronic throat. I always associate disembodied voices with Joel, even when I hear intercom greetings in department stores. Sale on tampons, aisle five.

*And I think, Aisle five has the sharpest shelving.*

*It juts out just a little too far.*

*Thank you, Joel.*

I nodded in his direction as I swept past again. There was a nub on the floor ahead of me. I told myself to keep walking, pass it by without stumbling. Two "accidents" in the course of fifteen minutes would look suspicious.

He looked up from teasing some tinsel onto the tiny tree. "Don't forget lunch with Matsushita. One o'clock at Quinta. I've reserved a corner booth. Because, really, you can't get enough exposure. Oh and your foundation is in at Henri Bendel!"

That was important. Bruises don't hide by themselves.

\* \* \* \* \*

People clogged the sidewalk outside the store windows for the unveiling of some garish holiday display. I kind of like crowds, they remind me that I love this time of year. The scent of pine and mulling spice almost covered the low-lying fog of rotting



garbage, and Starbucks has special flavors to accompany my liquid drug of choice. I slurped a pumpkin spice latté and noticed a teenage boy grinding (or whatever it is they do) on his skateboard. His hair flopped and he brushed it to the side and the girls I was walking behind agreed unanimously that he was indeed “hawt boy ass.”

I agreed. He had a strong jaw for a kid and was thickly muscled, broad through the shoulders. He was bordering on manly; irresistible to the Betsy Johnson-set in front of me.

*He'd be hotter if he fell.*

A row of Christmas trees split the center aisle at Henri Bendel in two, silver and pink foil numbers with coordinating mercury glass globes dangling from their branches. The spaces on either side were flooded with holiday shoppers wielding squared-off bags like butterfly knives, their saucer-eyes targeting sale bins.

I had to jump into the fray. Had to.

Black Friday is certainly the best shopping day to incur accidental contusions, but during a busy holiday season, you never know when an opportunity will pop up.

I was about halfway down the aisle, cosmetics case in my sights, when I caught a spot of slick wax. After some monumentally ridiculous flailing and pinwheeling, I threw myself into one of the trees, accidentally—the first time in years. Ornaments shattered and I connected with the thick wire trunk at my clavicle, riding the rail down to the floor, scraping my cheek and stripping the makeup clean off that side of my face. The entire thing toppled with a loud crash that silenced the waller of shoppers. It blocked the aisle like a twelve-car pileup on the road to disco Santaland.

“Let me help you up,” a nearby voice said, deep and resonant.

A man.

A moment later a tan hand slipped between the branches, scooped me out effortlessly and settled me on my feet.

“Are you hurt any?”

From the looks of my arms and legs, I wasn't any worse for wear. A few slight scratches. The ornaments turned out to be plastic and merely stuck to me like childhood stickers.

A complete rip-off.

Real accidents never produce the kind of bruising I yearn for, and sadly, this holiday disaster was no different. It was probably for the best, what with the lottery later. I could get lucky, after all, and not have to worry where my next bruise is coming from.

"Well, you look okay."

I glanced up at the man, intent on thanking him, but when I finally took in the sight of him, I couldn't find the words.

His nametag read, Nathan Winters, Store Manager.

But it could have read, Nathan Winters—Do Me. Do Me Now.

It was one of those moments that lingers and time slows to a crawl, the kind where your inner-monologue goes into overdrive.

And won't shut up.

*He's too ruggedly handsome to be stuffed into that suit. Is he sizing me up? Is he interested? Does he think I fell into that tree on purpose? Does he know?*

*Does he know?*

Nathan Winters had the kind of sandy blond hair that can barely be tamed into a sleek business style. It wanted to be free. It needed mountain air and a Stetson and a girl with a bruise fetish to run her fingers through it. His face belonged on the covers of magazines, but not *GQ* or *Maxim*, some rag that profiled working men, mechanics with grease on their cheeks and big, long wrenches hanging out of their pants pockets.

"I'm fine. Thanks." My eyes darted toward the mangled tree. "But your decorations have definitely seen sparklier days."

He laughed, a wholly unselfconscious guffaw. "Forget about it. I'm just glad you're alive. The big man upstairs would have me killed if a customer bit it on my watch."

My heart sank. "Are you talking about God?"

Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against Christians, but if they're not going to openly accept gay marriage they're probably not going to open their arms to bruisers like me.

"No. No. Upper-management." Nathan chuckled again. "You're funny."

I nodded, relieved, then it registered the man had paid me an actual compliment. Do not blush, I told myself as I fumbled for something witty to say and ended up with, "Nope. Just awkward."

He leaned in close and whispered, "Do you want to grab some coffee sometime?"

"Uhh..." His words circled my ear like water around a drain. "Yeah. I mean, well...yeah." Smart. I sounded like that skateboarding kid outside, after his inevitable traumatic brain injury.

"Good. I get off at ten. We could go to Swan's, maybe?"

I'd nearly forgotten about the lottery.

"Oh crap. Sorry. I can't tonight." I paused, scrambling for an excuse. "I've got a thing."

His smile faded.

"No!" I exclaimed, possibly too loudly. "I do have a commitment. Can we do it like on Friday?"

Nathan nodded and reached for his wallet and I dug in my purse for a business card, scribbled my cell phone number on the back. We exchanged them, our fingers touched for the briefest electrified second and for a moment, I was floating.

As I left Bendel's, I realized how ridiculous I must have seemed.

*He thinks you're a freak.*

*He knows it.*

## Chapter Two

*One Lump or Two?*

Holiday parties at the Shirley Jackson Society were notoriously edgy, and I'm not just talking about the conspicuous presence of sharp-edged furniture or the seemingly haphazard placement of bricks, anvils and other things you could easily trip over. I'm talking about things like Karen Hailey and her self-mutilation as "art".

I just didn't get it.

*How exactly is carving a still life of a fruit bowl into your belly art?*

*Oh that's right. It's not.*

Being a bruiser, some would say I didn't have a whole lot of room to judge, but I do know the difference between Karen's shaky-handed skin carving and a Warhol soup can or one those Degas dancing girls.

Besides, she was barely even drawing blood. Pathetic.

She cut a zig-zag into her thigh that turned into a Christmas tree—because she's festive, presumably—and I rolled my eyes. I was definitely going to need another drink to get through the night without gouging my eyes out.

"Gin and tonic?" I grimaced at the stone-faced waiter, looking for someone to share in my unease, but the shaved head with black eyes just nodded dreamily. He started to turn away. "Oh! And could I get muddled cucumber instead of lime? The acid plays hell with my stomach."

Don't ask me why I thought the waiter needed to know that one, but if my words registered, you couldn't tell it. Lurch just rolled his eyes and loped back to the crowded bar.

I glanced past him into the shadows, hoping to find my insignificant other, Reginald. I spotted him jutting from a particularly murky shadow, a hot blonde with a

beautiful black eye sucking on his tongue and his fingers digging around the front of her Dolce & Gabbana pants, strumming her clit. The girl noticed me assessing them and whispered something in his ear, her fingers braided in his thick mop of hair. Reg craned around to shoot me a grin.

“Perfect,” I muttered, nodding in his direction as if I gave a damn.

\* \* \* \* \*

Reg Graves was a systems analyst at Ometco, born and raised in Brooklyn and amenable to my kink. I met him online, we chatted and traded specifics and then a few days later, downed lattes at an Eastside Starbucks. He was perfectly serviceable in that same way a manual can opener will *do* when you don’t have an electric. Handsome, stony-jawed face with baby blue eyes and a scar zig-zagging from one tear duct to his earlobe, hands as big as catcher’s mitts and a thick enough cock to lend credence to the myth.

Truth was, Reg could have had a stub for all I cared.

His tongue was the main attraction. Though the scar was an added bonus—made me wonder all sorts of things. I never bothered to ask where he got it. He’d only ruin my fantasies.

Face-plant onto a broken bottle (after a drunken bar fight, naturally).

Fencing injury (Reg would look almost sexy in one of those padded white outfits).

Some bizarre systems analysis accident (involving a stapler, perhaps).

The next night we adjourned from a quick drink at a midpoint bar to a smarmy hotel on 27th. The Abbot had threadbare carpet, stained floral wallpaper and a blind front desk clerk. If there was maid service, you couldn’t tell it from the state of the lobby. Cigarettes blossomed from ashtrays like modern art centerpieces and the couches were so moth-eaten they were nearly see-through. Needless to say, the place was teeming with businessmen with ring indents or tan lines and mistresses who wore their

self-esteem in silicone and saline injections. It's funny how quickly word gets out about the easiest places to cheat without witnesses.

"You come here a lot?" I asked, wanting to gag even as I uttered the cliché.

"Only when I'm nearby."

"How often is that?"

He shrugged. "Twice this week."

I scowled. "I hope you have condoms."

*What douchebag doesn't carry industrial-strength rubbers?*

He did, of course.

Worse than my choice of men were the aquamarine briefs that clung to his big prick like a pair of Underoos. I supposed they were in style for about two seconds, patterned with horseshoes or Lucky Charms or whatever, but to me they were childish. An eyesore. Reg kicked back in the room's only chair, arms bowed behind him and his head resting in his palms, waiting. And I knew exactly what for.

He wanted to see them.

I turned away from him and unzipped the back of my dress, letting it drift to the floor as gracefully as I could. I unhooked my bra and folded it over my purse on the dresser. Pivoting on the balls of my feet, I turned and took in the expression on his face.

Most men will give a clue to their shock right away, empathy weeping from their eyes and mouths, transformed into widows with a single glance at my purpled flesh. Reg just smiled, raised his brow and whistled. His eyes followed the path of my bruises, from the turtle-shaped contusion on my shoulder (freezer door at Safeway) to the pair of purple knots on my hips (doorknobs, both home and office) to the dark abrasion on my left calf (a fresh one from the taxi's bumper).

"You got it bad, don't ya?" he asked.

"I don't need your commentary."

He nodded, stood up and slipped off his ridiculous briefs. His cock spring-boarded and he reached for me by the band of my panties, pulling me in to him. Our faces were close, near enough to kiss, but we didn't.

Reg was undeniably handsome, lucky for him. But beyond that, his score was pretty low. Definitely not relationship material.

Not even kissable.

He turned me around and yanked at my thin lacy thong, dragging them down to my knees. Planting his hand on the small of my back, he pushed me, bending me over the bed.

"Are you clean down here?" his rough voice dared to ask.

"You dick—" I began, ready to rail on him.

But then he caught me off guard and buried his face between my ass cheeks. I gasped. His tongue traveled my crack from cunt to anus, languorously, wetting and tasting each secret centimeter. He flicked at my bud with the point of his tongue, delved inside, deeper and deeper, filling me, fucking me with that serpentine thing he had in his mouth where most men had tongues.

I nearly bit the floral bedding before I remembered it was probably laden with past liaisons. The thought of it somehow made the experience hotter, dirtier. I opted to bite down hard against the flesh of my forearm. The pain pricked through me even as I endured the extremes of the alien pleasure he perpetrated on me.

Reg's hand slid over the abrasions and bruises and welts cluttering my skin like notes, mementos of my mania. He'd linger on them even as he bathed my ass with his mouth, tap at them, harder and harder, drumming, until I winced and cried out for him to move on, spread my ass wider, fuck me harder. Eat me.

"God. Oh my God," I murmured.

He came up for air and rose behind me, gripping my hips with fists instead of palms, knuckles digging into each of the knob welts. He clutched my hips toward him.

Pain shot up my side and stabbed straight into that place in my brain that screams on its own, screams “more,” screams “harder.”

“Deeper!” I growled.

His cock pressed against my folds and he moaned, a gravelly guttural sound that reminded me of dirt, of coal. His shaft slid back and forth over my tumescent clit, which was wet and wanton with need and driven by the bruises. I kneaded the contusion at my shoulder, winced, directed Reg to hold me by it as he plunged his big cock deep inside my pussy. His thick fingers bit into the wound, dug, forcing me closer to the edge.

Right up to the chasm.

Reg pushed me down flat on my stomach, my feet dangled in the air as he fucked me. The sticky slapping sound filled the bland room. The musk of our sex mingled with the mildew. Dirty. Wrong. Right. It didn’t matter.

All that was of any consequence was thrashing between my legs, filling me so completely I couldn’t feel anything but the pounding and the pressure on my welts, my bruises, my contusions, my soul.

Reg sputtered. His hips quivering against my thighs.

Close.

I reached between my legs and rubbed at my clit, even as he ground against me. Inside and out. In my cunt. Against my bruises, my obsession.

I came and came.

My madness quenched in the waves of pleasure and a dull, endlessly aching pain, in the sparks behind my eyelids, the sore moan of my clenched jaw. He bowed atop me, resting, stomach quivering against the small of my back as he found his release. Sweat trickled from him in delicious chilly drops, trailing down the sides of my neck.

And I dozed for a moment and forgot. Forgot that I was different. That this man was different. Of course, with Reg, I needed to do a lot of pretending. But only during.



"Get off," I demanded and curled myself up into a ball.

Reg fell back on the floor and lay there, fondling himself.

"That was decent," he grumbled.

*Fucker.*

I left him there, in that filthy room.

We go back sometimes.

\* \* \* \* \*

Looking at him now, public erection straining against his linen trousers and the slutty girl's fingers in his mouth, I was ready to be done with him.

Just another jerk for the memory wall. One, I'd hope, that was easily forgettable.

Onstage, Karen finished cutting a snowman into her other thigh, collected her things and wandered off to meet up with her emaciated girlfriend, waiting with alcohol swabs and bandages.

The crowd went mild, as my mother used to say. A smattering of applause, a loose collection of mosquito swatting.

I yawned.

Sporting a spiky Heat Miser hairdo, blonde tips sprayed to a crisp and massive shoulder pads under her sequined gown, the President of the Shirley Jackson Society, Mrs. Carson, clapped her way to the microphone stand. "Thank you, Karen. As always, you've outdone yourself. Everyone!" She glared into the crowd, demanding applause.

I was saved the faux display of gratitude by Lurch returning with my drink. "Thank you, doll," I said flirtatiously, trying to get a rise out of the mannequin. He merely snatched the ten from my hand and lumbered away.

"Bruisers!" Mrs. Carson shouted, tar-throated, her eyes black with excitement. "Welcome to the lottery. You and I have been waiting for this night for a year. Twelve months of petty, self-inflicted accidents could come to an end tonight! The pinnacle of

bruising is upon us!" With each word her tone became more and more frantic. "We call the lottery at midnight!"

The crowd whooped and pounded the floor, wild with fanatical fervor.

"You better get your tiles in," she warned, patting the black silk top hat on the pedestal. "You could be that lucky someone."

I snatched up my purse and dug out the shiny white domino, a nine, my name etched onto the back in a scrolling, blood-red cursive. An usher walked through the crowd with a bronze offering plate. A few quick rubs for luck and I dropped the tile in with a clink.

"I feel like it's your turn," Reg breathed into my ear.

Clammy hands slid over my bare shoulders, kneaded the tension there, bit into one of my new bruises. I squeezed my eyes closed as he worked at the kinks, stroking and knuckling. The pain spread as slow as honey drizzle. He probably thought the massage would wash away the memory of his very public indiscretion. And it just might have, right up until I was relaxed.

I turned back to find another set of hands rubbing Reg's crotch.

At eye level.

He'd brought his whore over.

"This isn't a sex club," I said. "It's a basement. You can get a motel room. You know all the best ones."

He shook his head, glowered at me as if I was being ridiculous. "Don't worry about that, doll, just touch it. C'mon."

He shook his hips lasciviously, making his withering cock dance under the delicate fabric of his trousers. Disgusted, I glared at him, wishing him gone.

Reg's expression went from hopeful to bored. He got the message and withdrew into the shadows, his skank hanging from his pocket like a prison bitch.

My eyes fell on the black bowl in the center of the table filled with enough coal for all the naughty children in the room, each rock wrapped in a plush and luxurious holiday fabric, reds, emeralds, even a pale blue shantung with tiny Stars of David embroidered in silver thread.

Halfway down my cocktail, Mrs. Carson retook the stage, this time with Charles Bloodgood, last year's lottery winner. Tall and gangly, he limped up behind her and smiled as broad as his busted fat lip would allow. He wore a sharp tuxedo and a stiff plastic neck brace.

Someone had been busy.

"Attention, bruisers!" Mrs. Carson yelled. "The moment you've all been waiting for. I hope you've left at least a portion of your skin bruise-free in hopes of winning tonight's grand prize!"

I slid from the banquette, snatched my drink and drained it. If there were other people in the room, they'd disappeared in my tunnel vision.

Mrs. Carson held out the top hat for Bloodgood. He raised a shaky arm, wincing from the effort, and stabbed a hand into the black hat. The tiles swished and swirled and the man's pained face recalled the demented effort of a child stirring lemonade with dirty fingers.

There's no way, I told myself. I'm not lucky.

Though, there *was* Nathan.

If that hadn't been luck, I didn't know what was.

Bloodgood pulled a tile, glanced at it, then at me. My heart skipped. I thought I might need a defibrillator. I was seeing things. He hadn't looked. He couldn't have.

"Justine Crenshaw!" Mrs. Carson shouted.

"No way!" Reg screamed from behind me and I felt his big mitt patting my ass and pushing me forward. I turned back to chastise him but all I could see was the girl he'd

been groping, grinning broadly, lipstick muddied and streaked across her face like bloody slobber.

I stumbled for the stage, reaching for Bloodgood's hand to steady myself and nearly pulling him over. Mrs. Carson slipped her fingers into my palm and shook daintily, her other hand hovering over our clutched palms. She smelled of cigarettes and White Diamonds, or whatever the Elizabeth Taylor perfume was. "Congratulations, dear. It's such an honor."

"It really is," I managed. I could hardly catch my breath.

I'd won.

It was the spelling bee, homecoming, the prom, all wrapped up in one.

Hardwood and solid, the makeshift stage nonetheless rolled like water. Or it was my knees shaking. The anticipation swirled around me, a squall of nervous energy. The others, the formerly applauding and now disappointed members of the Society, approached, Reg and his fuck buddy too. Some carried the bowls from their tables, others a couple of the padded, wrapped lumps of coal, tails trailing like ribbons from Christmas presents.

I heard Mrs. Carson's voice yell, "Now!"

The first one hit like a kidney punch.

The next minute of my life was an orgy of wish fulfillment. Coal hailed down on me from every direction, blow after blow, pounding my legs, hips, breasts. The crowd avoided my face—I made sure to check that box on the waiver (I had a job, after all). They fell everywhere else, making me cry out as they thudded against my shins, my pale forearms and my back as I spun and spasmed. The pain was excruciating and exquisite and it felt alive inside me, terrible, miraculous at the same time.

I opened my eyes a crack to find Karen Hailey grimacing madly at the apex of the crowd. She cocked her arm back and threw a fastball in slow motion, the gold lamé tassels flapping, a Christmas comet's tail. The impact reverberated through my

abdomen, forcing the air from my lungs and rippling all the way through me to stomp my spine like a combat boot.

That was that. I dropped.

The rumble and chatter of the Society began to fade as I lie there panting and struggling for coherence, for some clue that I'd made it through the stoning and moved on to the other side. I vaguely sensed the presence of another, a mere shadow passing across me, and hoped it wasn't Reg swooping in to pretend he gave a shit. The bastard was so transparent I could see through him. He'd just love to get a hold of a girl with the kind of massive injuries I'd just lived through.

And in theory, that's what I was into as well.

But the reality is just a little more...real. The last things I wanted were his clumsy hands, his dick or tongue, anywhere near my body. I didn't even want to look at him. Possibly ever again.

"There you go, Ms. Crenshaw." Mrs. Carson draped a damp cloth across my forehead, soothing and cool. "You're swelling beautifully. The paramedics will be here soon to take you for observation at our private hospital. It really is a lovely suite we have arranged, positively luxurious."

The good news was, I understood her. No concussion.

Shock, sure. That was to be expected. That was part of the prize.

I mouthed a garbled response and the older woman just nodded, a pleasant, albeit sinister smile playing on her crinkled lips—the far too orange lipstick she wore spread away from her mouth as if her skin were made of coffee filters.

\* \* \* \* \*

The hospital was lovely, even if it was really a discreet clinic for plastic surgery recovery. Great Central Park view. Diligent nursing staff that didn't ask questions. Well, except for Rick, the orderly.

"Your phone has been beeping like crazy. A man?" he asked, eyebrow cocked saucily, a little gold ring catching the light like an accent.

I reached for the phone, again.

A text from Nathan. *We still on for tomorrow?*

I smiled. "Yep. A man."

A man who didn't know a damn thing about my little eccentricity or my current state of hospitalization. *How long had I been here anyway? No more than a couple of days. Couldn't be.* I shifted on my elbows and the pain, even dulled as it was by drugs, rattled my insides like fireworks. That was going to make dating difficult.

"He after you?"

I shrugged. "I don't know."

"You want him to be after you?"

That was definitely a better question. Nathan's ruggedly handsome face floated into my mind. He would have to be both those things, wouldn't he? Rugged and handsome. Because whose life is more a romance novel than mine?

"Of course," I responded.

After all, in addition to the hotness factor, he actually seemed like a decent guy. After the cavalcade of freaks I tended to hook up with—by necessity, I realize—a real man was sounding pretty refreshing.

I fumbled with the Qwerty, my thumbs slippery as a pair of breakfast sausages from the salve and twice as useless as instruments of intelligent communication.

Luckily, Orderly Rick had a solution. "You want me to text him for you?" He air-typed to model his dexterity.

"Tell him, 'I wouldn't miss it for the world'." What I didn't say was, "I'll be the one wrapped in bandages rolling around in the electric wheelchair."

Rick typed in some words and the phone beeped in response.

"There you go."

"What did you say?"

He turned the phone in my direction. *I haven't stopped thinking about you...and your ass.*

Perfect. Nice way to set a tone.

I scowled, shaking my head. "Just when I was beginning to think the service in this joint couldn't get any better."

The orderly winked and strutted from the room. "You said you wanted him after you. What do you think he'll be thinking about until your date? Ass."

Rick was right but that was beside the point.

Self-satisfaction is never pretty.

## Chapter Three

### *The Unwrapping*

If you've ever tried to walk in heels after a major car accident, you'd understand that my performance that Friday was legendary—Oscar caliber. I guilted the cabbie into helping me from the backseat—and by “guilted” I mean I paid him—and hobbled into Kostas on my sexiest, most treacherous heels. I chose an outfit that was both sexy and held me together like a mummification—tight black banded dress, black tights, red “fuck me” heels to match my lipstick. Though, in all honesty, I was hoping it wouldn't come to a physical altercation, not unless I could leave my clothes on, and not bend, also no quick movements or jarring.

But if we could work around those things then, what the hell?

“Justine!” Nathan stood, an oasis of beautiful in a desert of average.

He wore a casual corduroy jacket with a hoodie underneath and a pair of striped wool trousers. Stylish, but in an unkempt, masculine way that seemed effortless. His hair, wave upon wave of it, begged to be stroked, smoothed, sniffed. He looked amazing dressed down. He'd look even better undressed, I imagined.

“Have you been waiting long?” He pulled out my chair and I maneuvered myself down, clenching my teeth through the pain.

“Not long,” He took his seat and grinned at me, a great big natural smile designed to drop panties. “I would have waited much longer. You look amazing.”

“Thanks.”

We talked about our jobs, of course, and how it was we'd made our way to the city and gripes and all those things people talk about on first dates—but not bruises, never bruises. We avoided the pitfall of past relationships, an easy one for me, since I didn't consider any of the men I'd been with actual relationships, merely people I'd put up



with—men who were only interested in my bruises. That was my own fault, of course. I didn't seek out normal guys.

Not anymore.

Not until Nathan.

"Now, the twenty thousand dollar question," he said grimly, his eyes dark and sparkling.

I snapped a breadstick off in my mouth and pointed the blunt nub at him daringly. "Shoot."

"Cap'n Crunch or Bran Flakes?" He held up his finger, a warning. "Think carefully. Our future hangs on this."

"Wait. Are the Bran Flakes mixed with some melted butter and marshmallow?"

"I see where you're going, but no. They're loose and not in the form of a square dessert. Though the people who use that shit instead of Rice Krispies are clearly mentally unstable."

I nodded. "Agreed. I'm going to have to go with Cap'n Crunch. Cap'n is a treat that stays with you. It stays sweet in your teeth, thereby supplying random snacks for hours afterward."

Nathan shook his head, chuckled. "You might just be perfect, you know that?"

"I do. I work at it."

"You do, do you?"

I laughed and downed some liquid painkiller, the condensation from my martini glass trickling down my thumb. I licked it off surreptitiously. His eyes followed my movement, his mouth parted and head cocked to the side, his mind making connections. It's funny how you can see fantasies playing across a man's face like a projection.

The conversation turned to the rich chewy center. Desire.

"I'm looking for someone I can laugh with. Share my weirdness."

I cocked an eyebrow. "Oh yeah?"

"Sure, everyone has a little something weird about them, it's what makes us unique, right?"

"Right." I shrugged, pretty sure he didn't mean "weird" like couldn't get off without the subtle pressure-pain from a week's worth of "accidental" bruising. Though the ones currently spread across my flesh like grape jelly could never be misconstrued as anything but sheer masochism.

"Have you got anything weird about you, other than your massive stash of Cap'n Crunch?"

I almost slipped and told him everything. He'd been so comforting, so open, so...perfect. He was both hot and a lover of junk food. He'd lulled me with acceptance and sugary cereals. I could hardly believe my luck.

"Maybe," I said coyly.

He feigned shock, shook his head and called for the check all in one movement.

Now let's get something straight right now. I was in no physical condition to have sex. You and I both know that. But the martinis had been both delicious and plentiful and Nathan was so beautiful, witty and just as intoxicating as the liquor. I couldn't not consider it.

That would be wasteful.

He got us a cab and walked me up to my apartment.

We didn't say anything. I didn't offer for him to come up for a "nightcap", coffee, nothing. I just held out my hand and we wandered past the doorman, rode silently up the mirrored elevator and were making out before I'd wrestled my key into the lock.

I'd expected him to be rough when he kissed me the first time, passionate. Hard.

But it wasn't like that at all.

Nathan's lips were full, his body hot to the touch. His tongue masterful – not slimy at all – and so sweet, I couldn't help but suck it. He cradled the backs of my arms in his sturdy palms and where they touched, my flesh tingled.

I wasn't used to this kind of reaction.

Freaks like Reg never make me tingle. They barely give me orgasms.

Let alone tingles.

Never tingles.

Before I knew it, Nathan had led me to the couch and was rubbing up my tights, passing his hand over the brocade of bruises underneath. A dull ache swelled beneath the fabric, along with the memory of what he'd be facing if clothes started to come off. Our kisses turned hungry, fevered. I wanted to swallow him whole.

My heart skipped and my mind raced. I brushed his hand away.

"Too fast, maybe," I muttered, panting.

But he saw the lie in my eyes, the need.

"Then we'll take it slow," he insisted.

He kissed me again and I quivered, melting under the pressure of his lips, his touch on my ruined flesh. Nathan pivoted toward me, his arousal straining behind his wool trousers. I covered it with my hand, assessing it, feeling its heft and length through the fabric.

I pushed away then reached for him, guiding him to the bedroom. He reached for the light switch. I covered it with my cupped palm and pushed him back toward the bed.

"C'mon. Turn the light on," he huffed, the excitement speeding his speech, his breath stuttering in his throat. "I want to see you."

"My eyes hurt from the alcohol," I lied. "Let's just do it this way."

He nodded and I pushed him onto the bed. He fell flat on his back and tore at the front of his trousers, yanking off his belt, slashing open his zipper, the fly of his boxers.

His cock jolted from the opening and I seized it in the shadows, wrapping my fingers around it, stroking.

“I need to fuck you now, Justine. I need you. I need this.” His voice was urgent and tinged with a sadness that melted my resolve.

I needed him too. Not just someone like him. Not an ideal.

This guy, with all his promised quirks.

*Please God, let him have a few.*

I swallowed and pulled down my tights gently, stripping them off my sore legs and kicking them over to the dresser even as Nathan wrestled with his pants. They draped around his knees nonchalantly. I left the dress on—he might mistake the bruises for shadows on my legs, but my torso would be a clear giveaway that something was wrong—I clambered atop him, wrestling his prick to my center.

Nathan shot his hand down between us and gripped himself, rubbing his slick head between the folds of my cunt, teasing my clit with the slit at its end. I writhed over him, gulping as the pleasure took hold. He produced a condom, tore it open with his teeth and slipped it on in one smooth movement.

His lids were heavy with lust. His brown eyes mirrors to his desire.

I bit my lip and nodded, knowing instinctually what he was asking with his eyes. Practically drooling over him, I spit in my hand and reached for his cock, slid it between my palms, greasing the latex, and focused it toward the depth of my desire. I ground myself slowly down his length, savoring Nathan’s thickness, reveling in his deep moans. The alcohol was wearing off and the haze gave way to a chorus of complaints from my assemblage of welts. They sent screams of pain to meet my pleasure, reminders of my other, darker need.

I reared off him and shifted myself around, turning my ass for him to see, to knead. He massaged my cheeks and reared up, covered them in kisses, trailing his palm up my back as far as the bunched dress would allow.

"Why don't we take this off?"

I glanced back at him and grinned mischievously, disregarding his question and working his cock slowly between my ass cheeks, up into the tight sheath of my anus.

"Oh shit!" he cried out, neither expecting nor refusing, but forcing his head back into the pillow, nearly disappearing into its dark creases. His cries turned more feral and before long he was thrusting and my hands were on his sac, fondling his balls, his quickly tightening scrotum, slick with my juices.

"So tight. So tight," he whispered and laughed, obviously nearing the brink of insanity, his orgasm rapidly approaching.

I cupped him, teased the soft flesh cradling his heavy balls, thick with his need. I wanted all of him inside me, every part. I wasn't thinking, just acting. And as he thrust into me, burying himself to his root, I clutched at him. My tongue probed my lips hungrily.

"Stop. Stop. Stop," I whimpered. "Hold on right there. Hold deep."

He stilled his thrusts. Groaned.

Gently, I coaxed one of his fragile jewels inside my pussy, nestling it tight.

A breath stuttered from him as he stiffened. "Easy." He bucked his hips, urged again, "Easy."

The second one didn't go in at all and I busted up with laughter as both fell out entirely, flopping against the comforter, glistening.

"Having fun?" he asked, heaving with laughs himself, and as though someone had clicked slow motion, I saw his hand reaching for the lamp.

There was no time to complain, to stop what was about to happen. He flicked it on and light fanned out across my bruised lower back, my jaundiced thighs and ass.

His face registered the inevitable shock, eyes gone wide as they traveled the florid hills and valleys of my suffering.

"Oh Justine, what happened?"

"Jesus!" I snapped and pulled myself off him, frantic, completely out of my mind and still tingling with lust, with the feel of him, his thick cock.

I snatched up my panties and ran from the room, working my dress back into place. Nathan followed behind me, stumbling free of his pants. He'd pulled up his boxers, the front tented dramatically. It was endearing that he was still aroused, I told myself. I grabbed a bottle of wine from the kitchen and two glasses, then poured them.

He sat down beside me on the couch and reached for my hand. I let him take it.

"Were you in an accident recently?"

The lottery was certainly more accidental than, say, running headlong into a doorframe. I took a big swig of the wine. "Kind of?"

"What does that mean? Why didn't you tell me about this? If you're hurt..." His voice trailed off, his eyes full of concern, genuine and heartfelt.

I wasn't sure what to do with that emotion. Revealing my secret was never a good idea. Or it hadn't been in the past, with either of my two "normal" boyfriends. That had been a long time ago. Nathan seemed different. Better, somehow. I decided on the truth.

"You need to know that I don't talk about this. I don't. Not with anyone, okay?"

He nodded, a serious expression replacing the confused concern. He grabbed his wine, gulped.

"When the bruises fade, so do I."

"What?" His mouth hung open and his head shifted as though he hadn't heard correctly.

Leaning forward and resting my head in my hands, I stared at the floor. "The easiest way for me to explain is this. When I was a kid, my family wasn't exactly the happiest on the block," I began. "My parents were going through a rough divorce and yet continued to live together under some idiot's recommendation. Their focus was on their anger, their quarrel, and I didn't exist. It didn't help that I was socially inept in high school. It got to the point that the only thing that felt real was the pain."

"The bruises?" Nathan asked, squinting empathetically.

"Yes. It started out innocuously. An accident. I fell off my bike. The bruises were everywhere, scrapes, contusions, all that. I'd look at them for hours. I had these mirrored closet doors in my room. I'd strip off my clothes and stare at them, see how they were progressing." I paused to watch his reaction as I said, "And touch them. Touch myself."

He tilted his head, clearly confused.

"The pain was real, you see? It meant I was real. It's actually pretty common, Nathan. You've heard about those girls who cut themselves, right?"

He nodded.

"Some of us bruise. A lot of the people that you'd say were accident-prone. They're like me."

"And what are you like, exactly?"

"I like them. The bruises. I need them. So much that I make them happen. My pleasure is wrapped up in the muffled pain that comes from their healing."

I could sense him withdrawing. His big hand covered his eyes.

My voice took on a pleading tone that I didn't care for, but couldn't help. "Imagine me as girl, figuring this all out. It was horrible. I felt freakish and so fucking alone. So alone." I shook my head and managed a tiny smile.

His eyes widened.

"I was exploring my body, the sensations of both my developing sexuality and this newfound sense of presence, of..." I flung my hands about looking for the perfect word.

"Self?" he offered.

I nodded. "Yeah. It was like I knew I was alive. I had something to hold on to amidst the turmoil in my family. It just got all mixed up with the sex stuff. Like lots of things do at that age."

His eyes drifted off, lost in thought. "It doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me, Justine."

I reached for his hand and he didn't pull away. "It doesn't have to," I promised. "It's my thing, it's a secret. But we could share it. I mean if you want to. I understand if this is too much. If you just want to go, pretend it never happened..."

Nathan leaned back on the couch, his cock no longer straining in his cotton boxers. "The Christmas tree? At the store?"

I laughed. "That really was an accident."

He sighed. "Justine, I like you."

Oh no. My heart sank. I didn't want to hear anything after that, no buts, no doors slamming.

But instead he said, "You should know that. I'm comfortable with you like I haven't been with a woman in a long time. A long time."

I nodded. "I feel the same."

Nathan fell silent. He drained his wineglass.

"I've never been with anyone like you. I can talk to you. I'm comfortable, you know. So I'm going to try this, even if I don't get it."

He listed toward me, gaze heavy with my secret but somehow okay.

*Is it possible? Really? Can one man be this understanding? Or is it just that he's a guy and so close to coming he'll go through anything to finish?*

The kisses he placed on my lips quieted my thoughts. Soft. Tiny kisses.

Across my cheeks. My eyelids.

Nathan lifted my hand and opened it, planted a gentle peck on my palm before returning to my mouth, parting it gently and tasting, sucking the tannins of the pinot noir from my tongue.

Breathing me in tentative breaths, swallowing me.



Steam whistled through the pipes, filling the big steel radiator. It ticked and tocked and breathed out warmth like a sauna, blistering the air, our kiss. Nathan backed me on to the couch and as we landed, the bruise on my lower back screamed. The sensation rolled up through me, rippling pleasure, echoes on a once glassy pond.

My flesh was alive.

His mouth was on my neck, speaking silent requests against my skin, lips descending to flutter above a contusion. Then he stilled. For a brief, horrible moment I thought he'd changed his mind; thought he'd turn and run.

Find a normal girl.

Be normal.

But then his tongue darted from his mouth and traced the purpled outline, the fading filagree, so lightly it was as though a butterfly landed on the bruise, fluttered there, wings brushing against the tiniest white hairs, playing them like a wondrous, sensual instrument. He pressed his tongue into its center and I gasped. The dull pain of it swept shivers across my shoulders, down my back. Beads of sweat broke out on my forehead, in the hollow of my throat.

My sex went slick, a fantastic aching thing between my legs.

Spreading the neck of my dress, he followed my sweat with his tongue, chasing it in long, languorous swipes into the indent of my collarbone.

Nathan's hand found my breast through the soaked silk. He cupped it gently in his palm, his heavy-lidded gaze seeking out mine as he slipped the fabric across the rigid swell of my nipple, hardening it and stilling my heaving chest with a single light pinch.

"Too tight?" he whispered and I ran my hand through his hair, bit my cheek. I didn't respond.

I didn't need to.

He read me. He was different from the others.

A skilled student, he took lessons from my body, studied the subtle arching of my back as he explored my intent, the purpose of my accidents, every tortured welt of my flesh and my heart.

And I watched him.

The light bristle on the bow of his brutish jaw, another shadow, like his eyes...black with lust and something else, something possibly more frightening. Acceptance.

The buttons between my breasts popped open with deft, clever flicks of his fingers. He spread the bodice, revealing the largest of my injuries, heart-shaped and black and resting against the curve of my ribs just beneath the swell of my tits. I reached down and lifted my breast for him, allowing him a better perusal. He trailed his fingertips across the dark lake of my obsession, pressing ever so slightly and then a little more as I heaved for air, gasping at it, waves of pleasure radiating from the apex like an orgasm.

Like the promise of an orgasm.

I reached for his cheek and guided his lips back to my mouth, splitting them with my tongue, filling him with my hot breath. He sucked at me deeply, and I him. His hands wound through my hair and pulled at me, winding my torso around his until I straddled him, my cunt resting against the swell of his cock. The dress bunched up like a belt around my waist. My hands tore at his shirt, the buttons bulged and one popped off as I spread it open, revealing his gorgeous, toned physique, his firm pecs, his hard, rippling abdomen. I traced the dips and curves of his abs with the tips of my fingers, imagining jerking him off and watching the cum trickle over them, collecting in the shadowy creases.

Then we were kissing again, our tongues battling as though the winner had right to swallow the other, to consume them. I'd gladly hand over that right.

Nathan bucked against me, lifting me.

"I need to grab some condoms," he breathed.

I shook my head. "Not yet." I brushed my lips against his eyelids, sucked on the soft pillows of his earlobes. "I want to taste you. Every inch of you."

He sighed, nodded. Not with the eagerness of a boy, but with the practiced education of a man. Nathan wanted me to excite in him. It wouldn't be just a blowjob. I'd never seen his cock in the full light. Only shadowed, secret. And he wanted me to. All men do, of course, but the look in Nathan's eyes suggested a need.

I'd fulfill it, gladly.

But first, he'd have to see *me*.

See everything. For the first time. He'd said he'd never been with anyone like me, but those words had been uninformed.

I rose too quickly and oh so intentionally, my calves slamming deliciously into the precision edge of the coffee table. He noticed that I winced but didn't smile as Reginald would, taking pleasure in my pain, but rather continued to take me in, eyes devouring my flesh.

There was concern there and I told myself he had a right to his own emotions.

But they were just that. His.

I worked out of the dress quickly, dropping it into a soft pile at my ankles. The front of my panties was dark with my excitement and I removed them, too, rolling them against my battered thighs, down the contusions on my shins, and stepped out of them.

Naked. Vulnerable.

A map of my own compulsions.

He followed the curves of my flesh and took in the full extent of my bruising. Hills and valleys in shades of violet and puce, dark pathways, like a vast labyrinth of elaborate tattoos. Even into the mound of my sex, the thin patch of pubic hair damp with my excitement, a knob-sized bruise extending past the shimmering coils, purple and rounded arcs, parenthetical.

Too obvious a metaphor, but there nonetheless.

Nathan's gaze, wet with hints to his own sadness, traveled the scrapes and shattered vessels.

I worried that the image of my fetish would disgust him, change his opinion, or worse, set him off on a course of nurturing care. Would he want to dress my wounds? Wipe away my tears? Rock me like a child with a skinned knee?

His straining cock settled my concerns.

"Still interested?" I asked, reaching between my legs, brushing against the deep bruise there, lingering and then slipping my fingers between my swollen folds.

This time Nathan was silent, but he reached out, pulling my hand away from my pussy and toward his mouth. He wrapped his lips around each slick finger, sucking the juices. He licked his lips and shuddered.

Nathan reached down over the porcelain-white folds of his cotton boxers. The head of his cock thrust above the crenellated banding. I watched him, chewed at my lips with want as he reached inside the fly and dragged out his pendulous sack, heavy from need. Nathan fondled them and watched for my reaction with a grin.

I chuckled at his reminder of my previous fascination. Sometimes it's best not to act on every whim.

He laughed too and the mood lightened, became more playful.

He fished his cock out next and let it spring back, thudding against his belly, tawny hair curled slightly around the open seams of his boxers. I couldn't take my eyes off it. Just as he had lingered over the mysteries of my skin, I studied his engorged sex, its pulsing veins and the curving ridge of its head, and imagined it rocking across that fleshy mound deep inside me, making me come again and again.

"I'm going to need a better look." I winked.

He sighed heavily, nodded.

I sank to my knees and helped him slip off his boxers, pulling the band up from underneath his prick, letting it fall between the seams of the fly before shimmying the cotton from Nathan's muscular hips.

I glanced up at him. His full lips twitched with anticipation. His fingers teasing, twisting his nipples, already stretched into ovals against his heaving, lightly downed pecs.

My hand braced against his quivering abdomen as I circled his dick with the other, thrilling in the weight of it. Already Nathan's passion beaded from the slit of his thick cock. I stroked it, languishing in the feeling. His hot, silky skin slipping ever so gently over his swollen shaft, gathering in a pink roll just under the head.

Nathan moaned, a deep guttural sound that brought a smile to my lips. He sounded nearly feral, an animal barely contained beneath the skin of this gorgeous man.

As I began to jerk him off, he shifted his hips, thrusting in my palm. The edge of the couch cushion curled under his white-knuckled grip.

I bent down and lapped at the fluid, swirling my tongue around the glans, paying close attention to his sensitive, slick frenulum, flicking it with light taps from the tip of my tongue.

He nearly howled.

And I couldn't resist. I was on him, sucking his cock as deeply as I could, the flat of my tongue broad against the underside, bobbing, twisting one hand gently around the base, fondling his balls with the other.

Nathan's hand stroked my hair as I went down on him, never forcing me to swallow more than was comfortable, gentle as ever. That's the thing with him, he was willing to take whatever I gave and be happy for it.

I'd never felt so comfortable with another human being.

I wanted more. I wanted all of him.

Releasing his cock, I hunched down and began to bathe his testicles with wide, lapping strokes. They rolled across my tongue, sliding gloriously. I shot a glance at his face. His eyes rolled skyward; his tongue wet his lips feverishly. Mouth wide, I took

them inside, one by one, sucking the orbs lightly before coaxing them both in, swishing my cheeks against them.

“Oh my fucking God. Oh my fucking God.” Nathan’s voice lost the strength I was used to. He sounded almost boyish. Unconstrained.

I grinned. Or whatever it was a smile looked like with a man’s balls between your teeth. I let them fall back into my hand and wiped my spittle from the underside of his taint.

I fell on his cock again, sucking. Then stopped, spit on my forefinger and pressed it daringly against the soft pucker of his ass.

“Is this okay?” I asked.

He bit his lip but didn’t answer. His expression was of a man torn, confused.

Reg always liked it like that, but I knew some men were horrified of the idea of being penetrated. Nathan didn’t strike me as the type, neither prudish nor phobic of any latent homosexual urges.

I pressed in, twisting my slick knuckle inside him as I went back to working his cock with my mouth.

“Jesus...shit!” Nathan cried out and bore down against my finger, taking the full length. I rubbed the nub of his prostate and his moans turned into a pained laughter.

Too much too soon.

I could feel his excitement rising, the rapid staccato of his breathy whimpers. The cum building furtively at his root, swelling there.

He was close. I let his cock slip out of my mouth and rose. Nathan wrapped me in a tight hug, his face buried in my most painful bruise. I bit my lip not to cry out but the flesh of my stomach gave away the sensation, jiggling against his cheek, wet and rosy with flush.

“That was insane,” he gasped, and stood, his erection catching between my legs briefly before popping up between us.

"I thought so," I agreed, giving him my most wicked grin.

"Now you," he said, and began to kneel.

Reaching out to grip his shoulder and guide him back up, I threw my arms around him. "You need to fuck me, Nathan. I can't take it anymore. I want you in me. All of you."

"All of me?" He smiled and swayed his hips.

I glanced at his balls swaying beneath his pendulous cock and giggled.

"Most of you," I corrected. "I'll leave your manhood at least partially intact by the time I'm done with you."

"That's a relief." Nathan pressed in close, nuzzled his nose against my ear. "You wanna take me to your bed or should I bend you over the kitchen table?"

"Wherever you like."

Nathan bit his lip, his eyes narrowed in thought. Then his face finally brightened, a boyish grin materializing.

He led me down the hall to the bathroom. "In here, I think." He pointed to the claw-footed cast iron tub. "Against that."

I understood his intent immediately, and along with the realization came a reverberating shudder that crept up my spine like a memory. My bruises cried out for pressure, a dull, aching wave cresting over my skin.

Need.

Nathan passed me and sauntered into the bright, friendly room. His tan ass seemed all the darker amidst the polished white tile and powder blue accents. He swept the pale blue area rugs away and lowered himself onto his knees on the hard, white tiles.

"Are you too warm?" I asked.

He scrunched up his face, confused.

"You're a little sweaty. Not that I'm complaining, it looks good on you."

Nathan shook his head, a sly smile curling onto his mouth.

"I'm just sayin'. The tile is cooler, right?"

He nodded, intentionally patronizing, and held out his hand. I slipped mine into it and he pulled me close.

"I want to bend you over the tub edge," he whispered. "Your knees on the tile." He rested his palm against my darkly contused flesh.

I glanced at the bath, considering the lip and where it would hit against the blackened welt under my breast, then back at his eyes. I couldn't pretend I didn't want to. The fear in Nathan's eyes belied his earnestness to go along with my journey.

I nodded. "If you're sure you can handle it."

"I'm sure going to try."

My heart raged in my chest even as my mind reeled. Was this the guy? The one I'd been waiting for? And if so, did I even deserve to be happy? My best guess was yeah, I deserved it just as much as the next jerk. But I'd nearly given up on it.

As I kneeled, Nathan's lips found mine once more and his hands wove into my hair. The kiss was perfect, warm, his mouth became my redemption. I was lost in it and before I realized what was happening, he was sweeping me sideways across the tile until I hung over the tub lip. Slowly, he rested my weight against the bruise. My ribs stung, a piercing sensation that traveled through me, searching for the ends of me or the source of my ecstasy. I clenched my jaw, riding the wave of pain as it barreled through, coursed through my veins and throbbed deep in the center of my sex.

"Is that too much?" Nathan breathed, suddenly behind me, hunched over me like a shell. "Do you want a towel? Something to buffer it?"

I shook my head and lifted my hand to reach back for him. My weight shifted and the pain drove the wind from my lungs.

"Okay," he said. "That's it, this was a stupid idea. It's too much."

"No," I scolded. "I can determine my limits. You don't need to worry about that. I trust that you'll back off if I need you to. Just do it."



"Do it?"

"Yeah." I nodded. "Do. It."

Nathan leapt up and went to the sink. He rinsed his cock off, scrubbing away at the trim patch of pubic hair nestled tight against his flesh. He stroked himself, twisting his fist from the root to the head. Our gazes locked and I watched him roll on another condom.

"Do you have any lube?" he asked.

I shook my head. "You're not going to need it."

He was on top of me in a matter of seconds, shaking his cock into the opening of my cunt, grinding it toward that fleshy knob inside, my most sensitive spot. My inner bruise. I cried out when he relaxed against my back, pressing me deeper into my injury. The weight on my knees jabbed like a hundred needles traveling up my thighs, into my world wrought with pain and sex and his cock and my need.

"Oh my God!" I shouted and realized tears were streaming down my cheeks, twisting like rain against a spring window. I could taste them on the corners of my lips, salty and sad and happy. Everything.

With each thrust Nathan filled me so fully, so completely. I felt whole.

I felt a connection for once. This man.

His cock.

It was meant to be.

Nathan's hand slipped around my hip, nestled not against my clit but against the knot of bruises above my snatch. He held me by it, digging in, even as he pounded away at me fiercely, bringing me close to coming, so close I could barely feel the pain.

Only him, only us.

And then I shattered.

Screamed.

The pleasure quaked through me, rippling under my flesh. My breath ceased, the pain flew outward. I could see it, an aurora borealis of our fucking hung in my plane of vision.

Nathan's cries joined mine. He shuddered against me, slipped his hand down to my clit now, rubbed it, brought me back to life, back to the panting, the aching. A pleasure so intense I thought the tub would crack under the strain of it, or I would.

I came again and again, the pleasure gushing in me, out of me, over his prick. A flood. A fire. An accident of massive proportion.

A bruise.

A moment later we rested in the cool basin of the tub. Nathan turned on the shower and warm water trickled over our spent forms, entwined.

His flesh tan and taut. Mine purple and blue and utterly relaxed.

He whispered, "Was that too much? Did I hurt you...your bruises? Did I go too far?"

I pulled him close. "You were perfect. It was perfect."

\* \* \* \* \*

It's been a year with Nathan and though it's never entirely roses and rainbows, I'm happy for the first time. Like every couple, we have our ups and downs. I try to keep the bruising to a minimum. It got easier the closer we got, the more our trust grew. I felt whole without them most of the time, but we work at it. I catch myself.

Not for his sake, though he certainly appreciates it.

Christmas is on us again.

Nathan filled my stocking with coal. Partly as a joke. I reached over and brushed the back of my hand across the bristle of his morning stubble, pulled the stocking off the mantle, clenched it tight in my fist and pretended to slam it down hard against my inner thigh, like the last bruise of the year.

"You know I think about it every now and again," he said.

“Oh yeah, and what do you come up with?”

“I think you built a wall to hide your emotions behind. The bruises are like windows, cracks so that you could access your heart.”

I thought about it and said, finally, “You’re pretty smart for a Cap’n Crunch fiend.”

“Yeah, I’m the weirdo.”

## About the Author

Amanda Feral is not a happy homemaker. Nor does she spend her afternoons trapped in a cubicle waiting for five o'clock to roll around. She lives in a flat with a view of a grim boulevard peopled with society's discontent and their dark crimes. She's an observer of perversion and horrors, the heartbreak of passion and interrupted longing. She spends her time longing for a taste of these people's sordid adventures, but instead merely jots down various scenarios and tortures for fictional characters. One day she'll leave her favorite spot. Explore. Engage the tribe of heathens she longs to be a part of.

Amanda has suggested that she may be the inspiration for a certain series of books about a caustically funny and quite dead socialite. Then again, she is a writer, and they're known to lie.

Amanda welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her [author bio page](#) at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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