

PRISM

Nikki Soarde

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Armani: GA Modefine S.A.

Chapter One

Dax rolled over and slapped the snooze button, but Shania Twain wasn't silenced so easily.

"Jesus," he muttered, as she continued to glory in her femininity. He didn't care how wonderful it was to be a woman, didn't know – didn't *want* to know.

He hit the button again. But her voice still filled the room, her sugary twang almost as irritating as her irrepressible cheerfulness.

"What does it take –"

Smack.

" –to get you –"

Splat.

" –to shut the fuck –"

Swack.

" –up!"

He rolled out of bed, crouched on the floor, reached for the plug and yanked it out of the wall.

Silence. Blissful, rapturous, blessed *silence*.

Dax dragged himself back up to sit on the edge of the bed. He dropped his head into his hands and groaned. "Tequila," he moaned. "I remember tequila." Actually, he remembered a *lot* of tequila. He also remembered an enormous platter of very spicy nachos, loud music and...karaoke. Did he really sing along to Robert Palmer's *Addicted to Love*?

Suddenly he lifted his head and sniffed the air. Coffee.

Naked and running solely on caffeine fumes he trudged down the hall into the kitchen. He grabbed a mug from the cupboard, doped it up with sugar and had downed his first scalding sip by the time he felt the presence behind him. Very slowly he turned around.

"Hangover?" asked Clay, his voice as silky and lustrous as the amber tie knotted loosely at his throat.

Another dose of caffeine fortified Dax to face Clay's laser-blue gaze. Those eyes had blinded lesser men. And more than a few women.

Dax gulped down another mouthful and raised his gaze. "This isn't a hangover."

Clay crossed his arms over his chest and leaned his rangy frame against the doorjamb.

Damn, he looked good. But then again, Clay always looked good. Whether, like today, he sported pleated chinos and a draped rayon button-up or ass-hugging jeans and a skintight muscle shirt, Clay always looked put together. With that spiked blond hair, gold earring and half-day's worth of stubble, the guy screamed out *style*. He fuckin' dripped with it. If he were anybody else, Dax would have resented the hell out of him for it.

"No?" asked Clay. "If it's not a hangover, then what is it?"

"It's a manifestation of God's wrath, visited directly on my skull."

"You don't believe in God."

Dax took another sip, savoring the heat as it drained down his throat. "Call in the priests. I'm about to recant."

Clay rolled his eyes, but didn't smile. Something was wrong.

But then Clay held out his hand and opened his fingers. "How about drugs? Do you believe in drugs?"

Dax hesitated. "Drugs?"

"Uh-huh."

"Good drugs?"

"The best."

"Tylenol?"

"With codeine."

Dax snatched them up and popped them in his mouth. "You're an angel."

"Huh." Clay turned away. "If I'm an angel, what does that make you?"

Dax swallowed the pills with the last of the coffee, tossed the mug in the sink and followed his partner into the living room.

As usual, the place was a mess. Newspapers and textbooks littered the coffee table, and a half-eaten bowl of popcorn sat on top of the television. Several stray socks had huddled beneath the state-of-the-art stereo and a stack of unpaid bills waited patiently on the armchair. The futon, at least, was free of clutter, but only because all the crap got kicked off of it whenever one of them decided to nap there.

Dax leaned against the back of the futon for support. "Huh? What the hell does that mean?"

Clay stood before the CD rack, hands jammed in his pockets, scanning titles. "You were drunk last night."

"Yeah? So? I seem to recall that happening before." He brushed a few strands of his long chestnut mane out of his eyes. "On occasion."

"Yeah, well you were *really* drunk."

Already feeling more himself, Dax hopped over the back of the futon and sat down. He leaned forward, bracing his elbows on his knees. "I seem to recall spending half of my time at college being 'really' drunk. You didn't mind then."

"That's because I was 'really drunk', too. I didn't know the difference."

"Aha." Dax leaned back and spread his arms wide. "There's the problem. You didn't drink *enough* last night. If you had, then maybe you would have had some fun."

Clay pulled out a CD, examined it, stuck it back in the slot. "Somebody needed to stay sober so they could drive you home and carry you into bed."

"You didn't carry me," said Dax, feeling defensive, "and since when is this a problem, anyway? I lost count of the times I had to clean you up and put *you* to bed."

Suddenly Clay whirled on him. "I was fucking *bored* last night, okay? The crowd was dull, the service was slow, the food was bad, and—" He growled something unintelligible and stalked over to the sliding glass doors. He unlocked the door and tugged it open a few inches, allowing a fragrant spring breeze to flirt with his hair.

Dax was feeling disoriented. This wasn't like Clay at all. "And what? What else?"

"Come on, Dax. *Karaoke*? I mean, how desperate is that?"

"I just wanted to try something different. If you didn't want to go, you should have said so."

"I did. But you were already too drunk to listen to me. Too drunk to care."

"You're just mad because I dragged you onstage with me."

"I don't even want to *talk* about that."

Dax sprang from the futon. "So, what? I embarrass you now?"

"Only when you imitate Robert Palmer and dance like...like...Ginger Rogers."

Dax's mouth hung open. *Ginger Rogers*? Before he could come up with a response, Clay added, "And for God's sake put some clothes on."

Dax glared at him for a moment before swaggering over to the balcony doors of their third-floor apartment. He leaned against the glass, facing Clay. "My being naked never bothered you before, either."

Clay tossed a nervous glance outside, at the three-story walk-up on the other side of the street. "Maybe not, but the neighbors might have a problem with it."

"I don't know. I think I look pretty good."

Clay's eyes roamed over him, the attempt quick but thorough, and not nearly as discreet as he probably thought. He swallowed thickly, his gaze resting in the general area of Dax's groin. "You know you do."

Dax smiled. Hours of squash, cycling and swimming kept him toned and fit, and he refused to be ashamed of what he'd worked so hard to attain. "Well, then, let 'em enjoy the view."

Dax glanced at the front of Clay's chinos and added, "*You* certainly are."

Clay's gaze snapped to his. "Don't change the subject. If the neighbors see you, they—"

"Oh for God's sake, who the hell cares about the neighbors?"

"We care."

Dax stepped closer. "Do we?"

Clay didn't retreat. "Of course we do. It took us a year to get the landlords to accept our...arrangement."

"Fuck the landlords."

"You don't mean that."

Dax grabbed Clay by the tie and dragged him back into the living room. "Okay, okay, you've got a point."

They stood there, in the middle of the living room, nose to nose, chest to chest, breath mingling, blood pumping.

Dax released Clay's tie and allowed his hands to drift. Through the light fabric of Clay's shirt, Dax traced the outline of Clay's pecs, skimmed the ridges of his abs. Unlike Dax, Clay preferred to get his exercise indoors on treadmills and Nautilus equipment. He worked out four times a week and it showed.

His hands resting on Clay's belt, Dax whispered, "I don't wanna fuck the *landlords*. You know full well who I wanna fuck."

"Is that your answer to everything, Dax?" His body remained stiff, but the objection was halfhearted, and he didn't move away.

"It works for me."

"Maybe I don't want to."

Dax's hand roamed lower, until he brushed across Clay's fly. He pressed his palm against the enticing bulge and grinned. "Oh yeah? Tell me another one."

Clay leaned forward and Dax caught a whiff of exotic spices and heavy musk. "I'm due down at the dealership, Dax."

"Not for three hours, you're not. That's lots of time."

Clay's hands were on him now. Strong fingers gripped Dax's waist, and pulled him closer. The silky fabric of Clay's shirt brushed Dax's chest, cotton chinos rubbed against his cock. His already substantial erection hardened still more.

Clay's whiskers grazed Dax's ear. "You know," he said, his breath as hot as the blood that pumped through Dax's veins. Into his cock. "I lied before. You didn't dance like Ginger Rogers."

Dax sneaked his hand beneath the waistband of Clay's pants and felt the other man's fingers dig more deeply into his skin. Dax touched the base of Clay's penis and Clay groaned.

"I knew it," said Dax, as he stroked and teased. "I knew you were making it up."

Clay's breathing accelerated, his chest heaving rapidly as Dax drew a line with his tongue down Clay's throat.

"Actually I was being kind," said Clay, his voice surprisingly even. "You looked more like an epileptic monkey."

"What?" Dax's head snapped up and he tugged his hand free, but before he could land a punch Clay had slammed him back onto the futon, and pinned his wrists down.

"Hey!" protested Dax, too surprised to put up a decent fight. "You can't say something like that to me and get away with it."

Clay wagged his eyebrows. "Watch me." And then he bent his head and took Dax's cock deeply into his mouth.

Dax's head fell back against the futon. "Oh Jesus." He writhed and groaned but Clay's grip on his wrists only tightened. Physically the two men were a pretty even match, a trait that came in handy for the occasional wrestling match. Or sex game. If Dax had really wanted to, he probably could have dislodged Clay's hands and freed himself. But why the hell would he want to?

Clay didn't bother with niceties. His mouth was rough, hard, his tongue eager. Sweat broke out on Dax's chest, trickled down his belly. Apparently Clay noticed. Suddenly, he broke off to lave Dax's stomach with his tongue. He lapped up the beads of sweat that had pooled in Dax's navel, and then dragged his tongue back over the flat plane of Dax's belly toward his cock. The action was slow and torturous, the anticipation agonizingly sweet.

"Jesus, man," groaned Dax as his stomach muscles twitched and quivered. "Get on with it already."

"Patience," said Clay, "you're always in such a rush." His tongue reached the base of Dax's penis and drew a languid line along its length.

He reached the tip, licked away the bead of cum and then, very slowly, took him deep again. He sucked slowly at first, and Dax relaxed, giving himself over to the sensations. But the respite was brief.

Within moments Clay had resumed his hard, rapid strokes, and Dax's fists were clenched as he fought a climax that threatened to come too soon.

Abruptly Clay released his wrists, reached around, dug his fingers into Dax's ass and that was all it took. Dax came, arching his back and pumping himself dry as the ecstasy poured through him, and out through his loins. Clay's grip on his buttocks never relaxed. He held Dax firmly, taking him far back in his throat until, drained and spent, Dax collapsed back onto the futon.

Clay sat back on his haunches and watched him. His blue eyes danced with mischief and unsated desire. He swiped his sleeve across his mouth and grinned. "You taste like tequila."

"Tequila. Right. Of course I do." Dax sucked in a deep breath and studied his lover. "You can't wear that shirt to work now."

Clay glanced down at himself and shrugged. "Oh well. What's another cleaning bill? I—"

Dax leaned forward, grabbed the shirt in both hands and wrenched it apart, sending buttons flying and exposing the flesh that he so desperately needed to see.

“Hey!” shouted Clay. “This thing’s designer. Do you know how much it cost? I—”

Dax leaned forward, grabbed Clay by the legs and arms and swung him up in a fireman’s hold. He headed down the hall toward the bedroom.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing?” shouted Clay, the irritation in his voice overshadowed by laughter.

“What does it look like I’m doing?”

“But why not in the living room?” Clay’s hands found Dax’s ass and squeezed.

“I’ve got an idea.”

“An idea?”

They reached the bedroom and Dax threw the other man onto the bed. Clay just lay there, panting, his broad chest glistening with sweat, his cock straining at his fly.

Dax crawled onto the bed, sat between Clay’s legs and grabbed his tie. He wrapped it once around his palm and pulled until Clay was sitting up and their mouths were but a breath apart.

“How many ties do you own?” asked Dax, his eyes focused on Clay’s.

“I dunno. Fifteen, maybe?”

“That’s what I thought.”

“Why?”

Dax waggled his eyebrows. “I think it’s time we put them to good use.”

“What does that mean?”

“Pick out four you think you can part with and I’ll show you.”

* * * * *

Clay sat bolt upright in bed and cast a worried glance at the clock. A discarded tie covered the digital display and Clay had to fling it aside to see the time.

He breathed a sigh of relief, and flopped back on the pillows. He hadn’t slept as long as he thought, and still had an hour before he was due down at the Audi dealership. He was just mulling over the clients he was scheduled to see that afternoon when a loud snort from the other side of the bed demanded his attention.

He propped himself up on his elbow and looked down at the man beside him. He smiled and shook his head. Dax slept like he did everything—with gusto. His long wavy hair was fanned out across the pillow, his arms and legs flung wide. He had a knack for taking up almost three-quarters of the available space on the bed, and his snores could rattle the windows at fifty paces. He worked hard, and played harder, his rugged physique and deeply bronzed skin, attesting to just how much time and energy he devoted to his passions. He gave his all in every situation, and he never turned his back on trouble. Or on a friend.

Barring the occasional forgivable one-night stand, and one catastrophic stab at the suburban, white picket fence myth, Dax and Clay had been together almost since graduation and Clay had never once regretted his decision. They were good together. They were good friends, and God knew the sex was great.

So what was going wrong?

Clay knew he'd overreacted the night before, but he didn't know why. He also didn't know why they'd been arguing more lately, picking fights over everything from which brand of coffee they should buy, to escalating long-distance bills.

He lay back on the pillow and stared at the ceiling as he considered the events of the past few months. Had something changed and they just couldn't see it? If so, how did they figure out what *it* was, and when they did, what did they do about it?

But the more he thought about it, the more certain he was that *nothing* had changed.

Everything in their relationship was exactly the same as it had been a year ago. Two years ago. *Five* years ago.

And then it hit him. At last he knew exactly what was wrong. How could they have missed it? How could they have been so blind?

He closed his eyes and groaned. Now, if only he could figure out what to do about it.

Chapter Two

Sidney stared out the airplane window and watched the approaching Toronto skyline. The CN tower speared the sky like a giant needle and the waters of Lake Ontario glittered in the early afternoon sun. It had been three years since she'd been here, three years since she'd seen the faces of her family and friends. Three years was too long to be away from home.

"Ms. Poirot?"

"Yes?" answered Sidney, turning to face the stewardess who crouched beside her. She was a cute little thing, with curly blonde hair and guileless blue eyes. She seemed so innocent, so young.

Sidney shuddered. Just when did someone in their twenties start looking *young*?

"We're on approach," said the girl with a solicitous smile, "and I need you to do up your seat belt."

"Right." Sidney reached for the belt and snapped it together. "Of course."

The girl nodded toward the empty seat beside Sidney. "Your husband has been in the washroom for quite a while. Do you think I should check on him?"

Sidney blinked. "Husband?" And then she realized the mistake and laughed. "Oh God, no. That man's not my husband. I don't even know his name. We just got to talking and realized we had some business interests in common."

The stewardess straightened and Sidney followed her glance toward the first-class washroom stall.

"I think he'll be fine," offered Sidney. "He just had a little too much to drink."

The stewardess nodded. "I see. Well, I'll check on him anyway." She turned to go and then seemed to think better of it. "Is there anything I can get you before we land, Ms. Poirot? A glass of water, perhaps? It's been a long flight and we left Paris very early."

"No, thank you," said Sidney, turning back to the window. "I'm fine." And then she shook her head in self-deprecation.

Who was she kidding? She wasn't fine. Hadn't been fine for almost two years now. She'd descended into hell two years ago, and had been struggling to fight her way out of it ever since. Her husband had betrayed her, had lied to her and used her, and it had taken her too long to figure out the full scope of his offenses. She'd wanted to believe in him, had wanted to believe in their marriage vows and the sanctity of that trust, but in the end all her illusions had been shattered.

The divorce had been final three months ago, and it had taken her almost that long to figure out that it wasn't enough. She'd hoped that the finality of the divorce would

help her put the whole revolting experience behind her, help her get on with her life. But in the end she'd realized it *wasn't* enough. She needed love and support, needed someone to talk to and laugh with. She needed to share her experiences, and she needed to forget about them and have fun. And thanks to a frantic work schedule and antisocial husband, she hadn't made many new friends in the city she had tried to call home. She'd decided to come back to Toronto. Permanently.

As the city grew closer she considered all those she'd left behind and wondered who would still be here waiting for her. She thought of her sister, married now with four children and a life that Sidney could barely dream of, let alone identify with. She thought of her parents who had grown old and now battled physical infirmities. And then she thought of all the people she'd met in college. Her years at the University of Toronto had been some of the best days of her life, and she had sworn to keep in contact with many of those she'd come to call friends. Of course, she hadn't kept that promise. Who did?

Her seatmate staggered back down the aisle and flopped into his seat. She tossed a wary glance his way to assure herself that he wasn't going to throw up or do something equally offensive.

And then, as her gaze roamed over his mussed up hair and disheveled Armani suit, it hit her.

She knew exactly who she should call. She smiled.

She would look him up immediately. Or maybe she'd wait until she checked into her hotel, showered, did her hair, and fortified herself with a snifter or two of forty-year-old cognac.

This man was not someone to be taken lightly.

* * * * *

Clay tapped his pen on the blotter and stared outside at the sun-washed landscape. The two French lilac bushes that grew on either side of his window framed the view with pale lavender and virginal white. The car dealership was perched on a hilltop, affording him a breathtaking view of the town of Orangeville on one side, and the hills of Caledon on the other. The velvety green carpet rolled away into the distance, dotted with stands of birch and maple trees, pristine white fences and glittering blue ponds.

A flash of brown caught his eye, and he managed to make out a thoroughbred streaking across his paddock, a study in grace, strength and beauty. Not only were Orangeville and Caledon favorite bedroom communities for the megalopolis of Toronto, but they provided an ideal location for the breeding and raising of horses. Clay sighed. Too bad he was allergic to the things.

"Hey, boss," said a voice from the doorway.

"Yeah, Rick?" he asked, tamping down his irritation. Richard was one of Clay's most successful salesmen, but Clay wished the guy would refrain from calling him

“boss”. Technically, of course it was true. As sales manager, Clay was in fact his boss, but Clay thought that title should be reserved for the owner.

“You finished with the Watsons?”

Clay frowned, and glanced around his office. “Do you *see* them here?”

“Did they drop a wad?”

Clay’s grip on the pen tightened. Good salesman or not, Rick was young and in need of a few lessons in etiquette. What if a customer were outside the door and heard him talk like that? Clay opened his mouth to speak but the ring of his telephone interrupted the reprimand.

He held up his hand. “Hang on a second, Rick. After I take this, I’d like to talk to you.”

He picked up the phone. “Clay Masters, Sales Manager.”

The other end was silent for a moment, and then a very tentative female voice asked, “Clay? Jeez, I can’t believe I actually found you.”

Clay blinked. That voice. There was something familiar about it, but... “Uh...I’m afraid you have me at a disadvantage. Should I know you?”

“Oh, I’m sorry...” She laughed then, a light breathy laugh that tripped over the phone line and tipped his tummy on its side. He knew that laugh. “Sidney? Sidney Jennings?”

The laughter stopped. “It’s not Jennings anymore, it’s—” She hesitated. “Wow. You’re good. How did you know?”

He leaned back in his chair and smiled. “It was that laugh of yours. I never met anyone else who laughed like you.”

“That’s right,” she said softly. “I’d almost forgotten. You used to say I sounded like the creek behind your parents’ house.”

“Uh-huh.” He tapped the pen on the blotter again. “Your laugh. Like water bubbling over stones. It was one of your best features.”

“Oh Clay, you always did have a way of making me feel special.”

Suddenly Clay noticed Rick waving frantically from the doorway. Clay shook his head and waved the man away. He hadn’t heard from Sidney for years and a call from a long-lost friend definitely deserved his full attention. He could deal with Rick any time.

“You were special, Sid. Still are, as a matter of fact. Didn’t I hear that you made it big with one of the cosmetic firms over in France?”

“My, my, you have good sources.”

“Just keep my ear to the ground, that’s all. I like to keep up.”

“Mmm. I wish I could say the same. I had no idea where you were, and I was just lucky enough to catch your mother on her way out the door. She told me where to find you.”

"I didn't go far, did I? I wasn't as brave as you, venturing out into the big exciting world."

"I don't know, Clay." Her sigh was laced with pain. "Sometimes home is the best place to be, after all."

Clay hesitated to break the silence that followed. "So, what's up, Sid? What brings you back to the land of hockey and snowmobiles?"

"It's a long story."

"I've got the rest of my life."

She laughed again, and he was glad. "Well, it's too long to discuss over the phone. How about we meet for coffee or something?"

"I've got a better idea. How about I take you out to dinner? Are you staying in Toronto?"

"Yeah, I have a hotel here."

"Good. I could take you out to Il Fournello. They have the best—"

"Actually, I'd kind of like to get out of the city. Why don't I come up there? I don't need anything fancy. Burgers down at Sammy's would do me just fine."

He smiled. He would have loved to treat her to something special, but knew better than to argue. This was one woman who knew what she wanted and didn't make any bones about saying so. "Okay. It's a date. I could meet you there, say at seven?"

"Great."

"Good, I—"

"Oh, and Clay?"

He glanced at his calendar and realized he had another appointment in five minutes. "Yeah, Sid?"

"Did you happen to keep in contact with Dax?"

Clay swallowed. "Uh...Dax?"

"Yeah. You know...Dax Redmond. I seem to recall some pretty wild nights with you two. You guys were pretty tight, and I was hoping maybe you stayed in touch."

Clay tossed a glance at Dax's picture perched discreetly on a shelf in the corner. The dealership staff knew of their living arrangement, but he didn't like to advertise it too overtly to the customers. "Uh...yeah. I think I could find him. Maybe he could even join us...if you like."

"Oh, that would be wonderful. The two of you together were a blast, and I could really use a lift."

"You've got it."

They said their goodbyes and Clay hung up the phone, but for several moments he didn't move. He just stared at the phone and remembered.

Sidney Jennings. Tall, raven-haired, exotic, with legs to her throat, eyes the size of silver dollars and a keen mind for business. She was beautiful, self-assured and

ambitious. And damn if she couldn't party harder than anyone Clay had ever met. Including Dax.

He could already imagine Dax's reaction to the news. A huge smile would spread across his face and his jaw would drop open. And then he would say one little word.

And that word was "Wow"!

Chapter Three

Sidney took a deep breath and pulled open the door to Sammy's Burger Joint. She'd only ever been here once, and it had been almost ten years ago, but she remembered it vividly. It hadn't changed a bit. Chrome and stainless steel, Formica, red vinyl and a little juke box at every table. It smelled of barbecue sauce and hot grease, and the waitresses wore pink uniforms with white aprons. It was the quintessential '50s diner, and was so far removed from anything French, it refreshed her soul.

She stepped inside and scanned the restaurant. Her tummy was hopping and her palms were sweating and she had no idea why. It was just Clay, after all. Clay and Dax were the closest to brothers she'd ever had. She cringed. She'd never even kissed either of them, but for some reason thinking of them as relatives seemed somehow...incestuous.

She stuffed her clammy hands into her jean pockets and spotted a dark chestnut head peeking out from above a booth way in the back. Smiling, she wove her way through the restaurant.

Dax saw her and his face lit up.

"Sidney!" He sprang from the table and enclosed her in a hug that should have, by all rights, crushed at least three of her ribs.

She wrapped her arms around him and hugged him back, savoring the feel of sinew and muscle beneath a layer of well-worn cotton. He smelled like the outdoors, like wind and sun and rain. She caught sight of Clay who had slid out of the booth and now stood beside them.

He looked down at her and shook his head. He tapped his friend on the shoulder. "Jesus, Dax, let the poor thing breathe."

Dax relaxed his embrace but kept one arm wrapped firmly around her waist. "Are you kidding? Sidney here's a regular amazon. I bet she could take us both with one arm tied behind her back." He frowned down at her. "Right? I wasn't hurting you, was I?"

She shook her head. "No, not at all. I needed a really good hug." On the last word her voice cracked and she was mortified to realize she was fighting tears.

"Hey," whispered Clay, reaching for her. "What's wrong?" Then he put an arm around her shoulders, and that was all it took.

The dam burst and tears flooded her eyes. A moment later she found herself compressed between two warm, firm bodies, sobbing against Clay's shoulder while Dax stroked her back and whispered soothing words in her ear.

She continued to cry, long and hard, far past what she'd imagined herself capable of. Or perhaps she just hadn't realized just how deeply her husband had cut her, how lonely she had actually been.

The more she tried to stop it the harder she cried. She was beginning to think the well would never run dry when she heard Clay say over her head. "See? See what you did?"

"What? What the hell do I have to do with this?"

"Are you kidding? Every woman you've ever touched has ended up in tears at some point."

"You are so full of it, Clay."

"Face it, buddy. You're cursed."

"You bet I'm cursed. Cursed to have to put up with someone like you for a friend."

"Oh yeah. Here we go..."

In unison they said, "With friends like you, who the fuck needs *enemies*?"

Sidney laughed, and gave them both a mighty shove. They moved back, but not far.

"See?" said Dax, his grin a poor mask for the concern that haunted his eyes. "I told you she was an Amazon."

"You guys..." She shook her head and was startled to feel Clay's thumbs on her cheeks, brushing away the last of her tears.

"Better?" he asked.

Feeling more than a little self-conscious she pushed his hand away and tried her best to smile. "Yeah, yeah. Other than the fact that I'm so hungry I could eat a whole cow, I'm fine."

Dax clapped his hands and rubbed them together. "Good. That's what I like to hear. So what do you say? Enriched white bread, greasy red meat and cheap beer all around?"

Feeling better than she had in months, Sidney smiled. "Sounds better than caviar and champagne to me."

The two men nodded agreement as they motioned for her to snuggle back in the corner of the booth and waved down a pink-frocked waitress.

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Dax sat back in his bench and watched her. She was smiling and laughing now, no doubt thanks to his and Clay's banter and antics. They'd very deliberately not asked her about the outburst, focusing instead on more happy topics. They'd reminisced about college days—everything from pub crawls and dorm raids to absent-minded professors and disastrous lab experiments.

Clay dropped his head on the table and moaned. "Oh God, please. Please don't bring that up again. The explosion blew out half the windows and they had to replace two microscopes."

"Look at the bright side," teased Sidney, laying a comforting hand on his shoulder. "They didn't sue."

"They threw me out of the course!" He turned his head to face her. "It was all very humiliating."

Dax drained the last of his beer. "Humiliating perhaps, but it ended up being the best thing that ever happened to you."

Clay sat up and glared at him. "Oh? How the hell do you figure that?"

"If it hadn't been for that fiasco you never would have switched to business."

"Mmm."

Sidney squeezed his shoulder. "Come on, Clay, admit it. You're much better with debits and credits than you are with flasks and microscopes."

"Maybe, but still..."

Sidney leaned closer, put her head on his shoulder and batted her long, dark eyelashes at him. "And if you hadn't switched to business I never would have met you."

"Okay," he conceded. "You got me." Then he turned and planted a kiss on her forehead.

Dax smiled. Those two had always been closer. Clay and Sid had met first through a shared economics course, and Dax had stumbled into the group later – quite literally. He'd been late for class and in his mad dash across campus, had mowed the other two down, knocking textbooks to the ground and scattering notes to the wind. The rest, as they say, was history.

"Or you," said Sidney, her gaze now trained on Dax.

"Yeah. Or me."

Sidney leaned forward, reached across the table and grasped Dax's hands. That little touch sent tiny shivers skittering up his arm. "So, Dax. I know what Clay ended up doing, but what about you? Are you teaching rock climbing? Or maybe a guide for white-water rafting tours?"

Dax smiled. He understood why she would make those kinds of assumptions. In university he'd been a goof-off where academics were concerned. He'd been studying kinesiology, but while it applied very directly to the things he loved to do, he'd had a hard time sitting down and actually reading the texts.

"Actually," he said slowly, "I'm working at the Royal Ontario Museum designing displays while I work toward my PhD in anthropology."

Sidney's eyes couldn't possibly have gotten any bigger. She just stared at him, eyes wide and unblinking and as dark and hypnotic as the midnight sky. Dax felt himself being drawn to her in a way that he hadn't thought possible. He'd always thought she

was one of the most beautiful women he knew, but had never really felt attracted to her in any sexual sense of the word. The new sensation surprised him, threw him off balance and he had to fight to ignore it.

He reached out and touched a finger to her chin. "Close your mouth, Sid. I don't want the poor waitress to have to wipe up your drool."

She shook her head and sat back. "Wow, Dax. I mean..." She laughed. "Wow. I don't think you could ever tell me anything that would surprise me more."

Dax and Clay's eyes met before returning their attention to Sid.

"So, what about you, Sid?" asked Clay, his voice soft and compelling. "What happened in Paris that has you so tied up in knots?"

Sid stared at her beer, lifted it to her lips and then set it back on the table. "My husband screwed me over."

"You mean he screwed *around*?" asked Clay.

"No. I mean he screwed me over. Emotionally, intellectually, financially, you name it, he did it. He did everything *except* screw around." She laughed but it was edgy, nervous. "Hell, at least *that* I would have known how to deal with."

Dax and Clay remained silent, waiting for her to finish the story in her own time.

She took a large swallow of beer and, her eyes trained on the bottle, continued. "In case you didn't know, we worked together for L'Oreal. We'd both moved up in the company quite rapidly. I was in product development and marketing and he was into distribution and finances. We'd gotten to know the business so well, we started talking about starting up our own company. We started to save with that in mind, and soon we had several investors lined up. We left L'Oreal on good terms and set the whole thing in motion. The investors signed the contracts, added their money to what Ned and I had already saved and the morning before we were scheduled to finalize everything and begin production of our first product line..." she met Dax's gaze, "he disappeared."

Dax blinked. "What?"

"He took off. He withdrew our money, emptied the bank account and left."

"Jesus," muttered Clay. "Did they catch him?"

She nodded. "Yeah. He was a smart businessman, but a stupid crook. They caught up with him in Venezuela a month later. Luckily he hadn't spent much of the money, and we were able to pay the investors back in full, as well as recoup much of my savings. But I had lost interest in starting up a business." She shrugged. "And of course the marriage."

"Did he go to prison?" asked Clay.

"He'll be out in two years."

"Shit."

"Yeah," she muttered. "Shit."

Dax leaned forward. "I know people," he whispered. "You know...on the *inside*."

Clay leaned in and joined the conspiracy. "Yeah. You know..." he shot a covert glance at the table next to them, "*people.*"

Dax waggled his eyebrows. "We could have somebody take care of him for you."

"Yeah," mimicked Clay. "Take *care* of him."

Sidney laughed and the mood instantly lightened. "You guys are so full of shit."

"Maybe," said Dax through a grin. "But we're cute as hell."

Sid looked at him, and then shifted her gaze to Clay. "Yeah. I've gotta agree with you there. You two look great." Her gaze shifted back to Dax. "Really, really great."

Dax preened. "You hear that, Clay? She wants me."

"Actually," said Clay. "I think she wants *me.*"

Sid grinned. "I want both of you. Always have, you know. Always will." She grabbed the check. "But I guess I'll just have to satisfy myself with buying you dinner."

"Hey!" Clay tried to snatch the check out of her fingers, but she held it close.

"My treat," she insisted. "The least a maid in distress can do is feed her white knights."

"Well," said Dax. "When you put it that way..."

A few moments later the trio stepped out into a balmy spring evening. A thousand stars glittered in the sky and a soft breeze toyed with their hair. Sidney looked so beautiful, her face lit by moonlight and her eyes brimming with something that Dax hoped was happiness.

They walked her to her rental car and for a moment the conversation lagged.

"Are you okay to drive back to Toronto?" asked Dax. "Because if not—"

"Can I stay with one of you?" Sid clapped her hands across her mouth and took a step back. "Oh shit. I can't believe I just came out with that. I'm so sorry."

"Sid—"

"It's just that when I walked into that hotel room it felt so cold and empty and I am so tired of being alone. Even when we were married I felt alone, you know? Somehow over the years he just got so cold and distant, and I didn't know what to do about it. I just gave up and after a while we even stopped having sex and—" Tears brimmed in her eyes again. "Oh God. I can't believe I told you guys that."

"Sid, it's okay," said Clay, reaching for her.

She took a step back. "No, it's not. I shouldn't have asked."

"Yes you should have." Clay glanced at Dax. "It's just..."

Dax finished for him. "We're just not sure...uh...who you should stay with."

"I should go back to the hotel."

"No," insisted Clay, his voice more forceful than Dax had ever heard it. "No, you shouldn't. We'd just like a minute to talk it over, okay?"

She took a deep breath, glanced from Clay to Dax and nodded. "O...okay. I...I should go back in and use the bathroom anyway. I've got a bladder the size of a walnut, you know. So..." She nodded again. "Yeah. I'll be right back." And with that she struck off across the parking lot. Only when the restaurant door had closed did the two men relax.

"Christ," said Clay.

"Ditto."

"So what do you think?"

"I think she needs us."

"I know *that*, you jerk. And I want to help but..." Clay leaned back against her car, drummed his fingers on the hood. "But if she stays with us she's gonna have to know the truth. And I'm afraid...with all she's been through...if we tell her this now it'll be too much for her."

"Come on, Clay. You've always treated her like china, and that woman is made of steel. She's stronger than you think."

"And she's more vulnerable than *you* think."

"She can handle it."

Clay glanced toward the restaurant. "Maybe she can." He looked back at Dax. "But can we?"

Dax licked his lips. "What do you mean?"

"You know exactly what I mean. She wasn't kidding when she said she wants us." He leaned in close and whispered, "And the thing is we want her too."

Dax closed his eyes and leaned against the car beside his lover. "I know. I felt it, but I wasn't sure if you did."

"Oh yeah. I did."

"Oh."

Suddenly Clay shifted closer, his body brushing up against Dax's in a way that had Dax's heart hammering inside his chest. His lips very close to Dax's ear, he whispered, "The thing is, I'm wondering if this is such a bad thing."

Dax hooked a thumb inside the waistband of Clay's jeans, breathed in his cologne. "What do you mean?"

"We're bored, Dax. We need some shaking up. Don't tell me you haven't noticed it, haven't felt it."

He hadn't. Not really. But now, hearing Clay say it, he knew it was true. "Yeah," he admitted. "Yeah, I guess I did."

Clay pulled back a little, just far enough to meet Dax's gaze. "And maybe this is exactly the kind of shaking up we need."

"Are you suggesting what I think you're suggesting?"

"You know I am."

“What if it’s not what *she* needs?”

“I think it is.”

“But what if it’s *not*?”

“All we can do is ask.”

“But first we have to tell her.”

Something flickered in Clay’s eyes. “I think I have a way around that.” And then he kissed him.

* * * * *

Sidney stepped out of the restaurant and started across the lot. She could see Dax and Clay standing together. They were leaning against her car, deeply absorbed in conversation. They stood close, very close. Almost too close. There was something about them. Something about the way –

She stopped. She stopped dead in her tracks and watched in stunned silence as Clay moved in closer to Dax and did the unthinkable. He kissed him.

He leaned in and covered Dax’s mouth with his own. He kissed him hard. Deep. Open-mouthed, their lips melded together broke apart, came together again. Tongues warred and teeth clashed. Clay held him firmly by the shoulders, and Dax’s hands had fisted in Clay’s T-shirt.

It was a provocative sight. To see two men, silhouetted in moonlight – two broad-shouldered, narrow-waisted men in tight-ass jeans and muscle shirts, locked in such a passionate exchange was – She stumbled backward. This was *Clay* and *Dax*! These were her friends. Two men she had known for years, had shared so much with and now...now *this*?

She took a step forward and screamed, “You bastards!” And then, her cheeks damp with tears once again – she turned and fled.

* * * * *

“Shit.”

Dax slammed a hand against Clay’s chest. “Nice going, genius.”

“*You’re* the one who said she was made of steel.”

“Made of steel, you jerk. Not solid fucking stone.”

“I just thought –” He growled. “Shouldn’t we go after her?”

“Way ahead of you, buddy.” And with that Dax sprinted off down the street.

Clay waited only a heartbeat before taking off after them.

Chapter Four

Sidney ran until her lungs burned. She ran past quaint boutiques and antique shops, darted beneath wrought iron streetlamps and swerved around strolling pedestrians. Her thighs began to tighten and a cramp took root in her side, but still she pushed on. Rage was a powerful motivator.

“Sid! For God’s sake, stop!” It was Dax and she had no doubt he was gaining on her. She pushed harder.

Her legs pumped like slender pistons, but she knew it was no use. Dax used to run marathons in college. She heard his feet pounding the pavement behind her and knew she didn’t have a prayer. She needed a plan. A goal.

Suddenly she veered off the sidewalk and sprinted through a dimly lit parking lot. If she remembered correctly – *yes*. She crossed a neatly manicured backyard and, with Dax hot on her heels, vaulted over a four-foot cedar fence. She landed on the other side, turned, took a step, stumbled over something in the dark and fell headlong into water.

A pool? she thought, her mind strangely calm despite the situation. *When did Clay’s mom put in a pool?*

Stunned by the presence of a pool, as well as by the bracing temperature of the water it took her a moment to get her bearings. Her jeans and running shoes weighed her down and had her sinking to the bottom in record time. When her feet touched cement, however, she planted them solidly and pushed off. Her head had barely broken the surface when she felt strong hands latch around her arms and drag her toward the side.

“Let go of me!” she shouted.

Dax ignored her. He heaved her to the edge of the pool where Clay crouched, waiting to grab her. He grasped her under the arms and despite her vigorous protests and struggles, lifted her, dripping jeans and all, clean out of the pool.

He swung her up in his arms and proceeded to carry her away.

“Put me down!” she screamed.

He kept walking.

She pummeled him with her fists. “I said, put me *down!*”

He climbed a set of stairs that led to a large cedar deck and at last set her down in a lounge chair. He pointed a stern finger at her. “Stay.” And with no more explanation than that, he stalked off.

Something dripped on her head. She looked up to see Dax standing over her. The first thing she noticed was his shirt. Sopping wet, it clung to his chest in ways that she didn’t want to think about, so she shifted her attention upward. The view there was no

less disturbing. Judging from his expression she was surprised the water wasn't boiling off his skin.

She swatted at a hank of long chestnut hair that was dripping copious amounts of water onto her head.

"Get away from me," she growled. "You're getting me all wet."

Dax closed his eyes and shook his head. And then he turned and walked toward a small enclosure in the corner. He swung open the door and stepped through.

She began to shiver and a moment later felt a warm, fluffy towel being draped around her shoulders. "Thanks," she said grudgingly as she pulled it in tight.

Clay stood and looked like he was about to say something to her when a sound from the enclosure on the other side of the deck startled them both. They looked over to see Dax folding up a large plastic sheet.

"What the hell are you doing?" asked Clay.

"What does it look like I'm doing?" He hit a switch on the wall and a motor somewhere ground to life. It was then she noticed the steam.

"I hardly think this is the time."

Dax turned a bored glance on Clay. "I'm cold and wet and thanks to that mad dash through town, my nerves are shot to hell. It's the perfect time." He stripped off his shirt. "You can't tell me your mother will care."

Clay frowned. He looked at Sidney, and then he looked at Dax. And then he shrugged. He stood and moved to strip off his shirt as well.

The entire situation had left Sidney feeling off balance and disoriented. When both men started peeling off their jeans she felt the need to protest. "I can't believe this. Don't you think we should—"

Dax reached for his underwear.

"Dax David Redmond," she warned.

He stopped, turned to look at her.

"Don't. You. Dare."

The briefs slipped to his ankles. Naked and gloriously uninhibited by it, he stepped into the swirling water of the hot tub. Clay, standing right beside her, shrugged resignedly, and followed suit. The briefs fell to the ground and she watched him walk away. Muscles strained beneath smooth bronzed skin, rippling and shifting with each long stride. His shoulders were broad, his buttocks small and tight and she couldn't deny the truth.

God, he was beautiful. They both were.

She had to work at rekindling her outrage, but by the time he stepped into the water she was ready. She leapt from her chair, stepped over the towel that had fallen at her feet, marched over to the tub and glowered at them. "What the hell do you two think you're doing?"

The water bubbled around Clay as he leaned his head back on the cushions that surrounded the tub. "I believe the term is 'hot tubbing'. Isn't that right, Dax?"

"I believe so." His eyes were closed. "This is a tub and the water's hot. Sounds right to me."

"I can't believe you two are taking this so lightly. We have things to talk about."

"So talk."

"Not with me up here and you two...down there."

Clay opened his eyes and motioned to a seat across from them. "So join us."

She opened her mouth and sputtered, "I...I don't have a bathing suit."

"Neither do we."

"B-but what about your mother?"

"It's her bingo night. She'll be gone for hours."

"As long as you're stripping," said Dax, "why don't you throw your clothes in the dryer? There's one just inside the back door."

She sneered. "Should I take yours, too?"

"Nah, that's okay. I've got a couple of spare sets here."

She looked at Clay. "You mean your mother *knows*, and she didn't tell me when I called?"

"Good God," said Clay, "of course she knows. And what was she supposed to say? 'Here's Clay's work number, and by the way, he likes to fuck other men?'"

She opened her mouth to reply, realized how ridiculous she sounded and snapped it shut again. "Fine." She whirled around and stomped off toward the back door, grabbing her towel off the deck on her way by.

Two minutes later she stood beside the hot tub, wrapped in a towel, and feeling more exposed than she ever remembered. She glanced at the door to the enclosure that was still standing open. She kicked it shut with her bare foot.

Clay tapped the water. "Come on in. We won't bite."

Dax winked. "Unless you want us to."

They were baiting her, but she refused to let them see how uncomfortable she was. In one swift motion she dropped the towel and stepped into the water. She sat down on the bench and instantly felt herself relax. The intense heat seeped into her skin, through to her muscles, right down to her bones. She closed her eyes and allowed the bubbles to do the rest.

* * * * *

Clay had intended to give her several minutes to settle in, but Dax wasn't nearly so patient. "Okay, you've had a minute to get yourself together. So now tell us what the hell that whole scene was about."

Her eyes flew open. "What whole scene?"

"Calling us 'bastards'? And then taking off like a bat outta hell? I never would've pegged you as a phobe, Sidney. I thought you were bigger than that."

Clay put a hand on his shoulder and could feel the tension humming through him. "Take it easy, Dax."

Sid sat up a little straighter. "You think I ran off because I was offended by what I saw?"

"What other reason could there be?" asked Clay.

"I...I was angry because you hadn't told me! We were best friends in college, and I thought we were still friends. I can't believe—"

Incredulous, Clay held up his hands. "Hold on just a second. We haven't seen you for, what? It's been at least six years, since you called or wrote. If I recall we weren't even invited to your wedding, and yet, we were supposed to make a special effort to *notify* you when we hooked up?"

She crossed her arms over her breasts. "What do you mean by 'hooked up'? I figured you were together since college."

"Not quite," said Dax slowly, "We stayed in touch after graduation, but it took a couple of years of muddling around with other people before we figured out who we really were and what we really wanted."

Sidney's self-righteous demeanor slipped a notch. "You mean to tell me that when we were in college you two never...?"

They exchanged an uncomfortable glance and she pounced. "*Aha!* You did!"

"Once," admitted Clay. "At the time we thought it was an aberration. That was why we never told you. We thought it was a mistake."

Dax whistled. "And what a mistake it was. That was some of the best sex of my life."

Clay couldn't help but grin. "Yeah. I wish all my 'mistakes' felt that good."

When he turned back to Sidney he could swear she was squirming inside her skin. It was his turn to pounce. "Come on, Sid, 'fess up. You weren't angry because we kept something from you. You were embarrassed and upset by what you saw."

She looked down at herself and Clay found himself wishing the hot tub timer would run out. He'd caught such a fleeting glimpse before she stepped into the water, but what he'd seen had been most...illuminating. Small firm breasts, slight waist, well-defined quads. Sid had obviously taken care of herself and he wished like hell he hadn't noticed.

"No," she said, her voice tight. "Really. I wasn't embarrassed. It wasn't that at all."

Clay frowned. "Look. If it makes you uncomfortable it's okay to say so. Everybody has their own unique preferences, and we can hardly judge you for—"

"No." She almost shouted the word, and then she said more softly, "No, you don't understand."

They waited.

"I...uh..." She took a deep breath. "I didn't want to admit it to myself, let alone to you, but now that I think about it..." She squared her shoulders. "If I really, *really* think about it I have to admit that..."

"Sid?"

"When I saw you two kiss it kind of turned me on, and my own reaction shocked me so badly that I didn't know how to deal with it. That was why I ran."

Clay blinked. He looked at Sid, and then he looked at Dax. They both smiled, but Sid didn't seem to notice.

"It was so strange," she was saying. "I've never experienced anything like that before, and I've certainly never fantasized about it. So I figure it was, like you said, an...aberration. A...mistake. And I covered my confusion with anger."

Clay cast her a sidelong glance. "Would you like to make sure?"

She licked her lips. "What do you mean?"

"Would you like to check whether or not it was an aberration? Or if it was the real thing?"

She swallowed. "How would I do that?"

"We could do it again, and you could see how you...feel about it."

Color crept into her cheeks and he was sure it wasn't just from the heat of the water. "I...uh...no thanks. That's okay."

"Come on, Sid." Dax floated over to her, sat beside her on the bench. "Give it a try. You never know what kind of new adventures await you if you never step out the door."

Her gaze flitted between the two of them. "What does that mean?"

Clay followed his partner's lead and floated over to sit on the other side of her. He curbed the intense urge to touch her. "It means we've fallen into a rut, and we've been looking for something to snap us out of it."

Dax moved in closer. Close enough that his breath must have washed over her skin. "We're thinking you might be just what we're looking for."

"We like you, Sid," said Clay. "In fact I think I could say that we love you. And we're both very attracted to you, so—"

"I didn't think that was supposed to happen," said Sid. "You know...being attracted to women."

"There's a whole spectrum of sexuality. Surely you know that."

"I suppose."

Dax shrugged. "Why not just give it one more try? You know. Look through the prism and see how you like the colors." He brushed a damp strand of hair off her cheek. "Watch us and if you don't like it tell us to stop."

"But if you *like* it," added Clay, "then let us know that too."

"What, exactly, are you suggesting?"

"Do we really have to spell it out?"

She licked her upper lip, wiping away the sweat that had beaded there. "Yeah. I think maybe you should."

Clay leaned in and dropped his voice suggestively. "The three of us, Sid. Together."

"A *ménage à trois*?" Her eyes were wide, but her accent perfect. Of course.

He nodded.

"Oh."

She fell silent, looking from one to the other, the wheels in her brain obviously turning furiously as she considered the possibilities.

Clay and Dax sat back and hoped.

Chapter Five

Sidney studied the men who sat on either side of her. One blond, the other dark, one with long hair the other short and spiked, one spontaneous and hotheaded, the other cooler, more reserved. Both tall and tanned and sexy as hell. They wanted each other and – *oh God* – they wanted her.

She was on the rebound. She was coming out of a bad marriage, and she was very vulnerable. But she knew these men—knew them and trusted them. They weren't looking to hurt her, weren't asking her for any more than what she was willing to give. And they wanted to give back, too. Of that she was sure.

Dammit, it had been so long since she'd had a satisfying sexual relationship and even when she and her husband had been sexually active it had lacked passion. Their lovemaking had been tame at best, and dull at worst. This adventure promised to be anything but.

If, as Dax suggested, she was willing to open the door and step outside her comfort zone.

She held her head high and said, "Okay."

Dax's eyebrows arched. "Okay?"

"Okay, I'll watch you and..." she shrugged. "I'll let you know."

Dax and Clay exchanged a glance and then, to her surprise, instead of moving around her and sitting together on the bench, they floated off their seats and met in the middle. They knelt on the floor of the tub, their bodies just inches from her knees, and just inches from each other.

She found herself wishing the bubbles would stop so she could have a better view of what lay beneath the surface and, as if it had read her mind, the timer cut out. The water calmed and she was able to see them—every inch of them. From head to shoulders to chiseled pecs, to sculpted abs to—she swallowed.

"Like what you see?" asked Dax, his eyes as mischievous as his voice.

"Just get on with it," she goaded, dragging her eyes away from the pair of impressive erections before her. They must be magnified by the water. It was the only explanation. "Gimme your best shot."

"You heard the lady," said Clay. "Get on—"

Dax framed Clay's face with his hands and sealed their mouths together. Their lips joined, but to her surprise it wasn't a wanton kiss. It was slow and thorough, languorous yet laced with passion. She caught a glimpse of tongues playing and felt an unmistakable heaviness grow in her center. It was no mistake. Seeing them together aroused her.

She noticed Clay's hand resting on Dax's chest and acted on impulse.

Without thought for the implications, she placed her hand over his and felt the pounding of Dax's heart in synchrony with Clay's own pulse. His hand was wide, heavily veined and, she knew intuitively it would be very strong.

She felt Dax's hand slip around her waist, and allowed him to draw her off the bench. Clay's arm hooked around her as well and then she realized they had stopped kissing and were looking at her, the question obvious in their eyes.

She said nothing. She cupped Clay's jaw in her palm, brushed her thumb across the day's worth of stubble and, very slowly, drew him in for a kiss. His lips met hers, warm and firm and, although they'd never done this before, strangely familiar. He didn't push, allowing her to take the initiative. But when her tongue eased past his lips he returned it with fervor. His grip on her waist tightened and he drew her closer. Close enough that his cock, hard and engorged with blood, was pressed firmly against her cleft.

Her hands slipped beneath the water and explored his chest, his ribs, his back. Muscles rippled and twitched beneath her fingers and she wondered that she'd never felt the urge to touch him like this before.

She felt Dax move in behind her. He moved in tight until his chest was pressed against her back and his cock was nested in the crease of her ass. He pushed her damp hair to one side and began nibbling on her neck. One hand cruised over her rib cage to cradle a breast. He tweaked a nipple and she sucked in her breath with pleasure and surprise.

Her head fell back, breaking off the kiss with Clay, but granting Dax better access to her throat. Clay took the opportunity to bend down and take her other breast in his mouth. Her breasts were small and his mouth seemed so large. He devoured it whole. His tongue caressed and sucked and his little moans of pleasure sent even more blood coursing to her clit.

He broke away and straightened. His eyes inches from hers he said, "It's been a while. I'd almost forgotten how good a woman's breasts can taste."

At that Dax ceased feasting on her neck long enough to give his lover a quick, hard kiss and she felt her desire build. She grabbed Dax's hand that was still resting on her breast and urged it lower. Clay noticed what was happening and covered her hand, sandwiching it between Dax's and his own.

Their fingers reached the apex of her thighs and brushed through the tiny triangle of hair. She withdrew her hand, allowing them to explore on their own, savoring the sensation of two hands, two sets of fingers toying with her sex.

"Nice," murmured Dax against her shoulder, "I've never sampled shaved pussy." Sid left a small wedge of hair at the top of her vulva, but other than that was clean-shaven.

"I have," said Clay his vivid blue eyes glazed with desire, "but it's been a helluva long time."

Fingers parted the lips of her sex and smoothed over her clit. One set of fingers eased inside her, and then another. She couldn't identify what fingers belonged to whom. Didn't need to, didn't care. She parted her legs and Clay moved between them. He withdrew his hand and cupped her thighs, parting them further, lifting them so that she floated near the surface, her legs hooked around him.

She turned her head and kissed Dax's neck, flicked out her tongue and licked him. He tasted hot and sticky, salty from sweat. He tasted wonderful.

"Would you like a taste?" she murmured.

"Of what?" asked Clay, his hands now cupping her bottom and a thumb nudging inside her.

"That shaved pussy you're so fond of."

He grinned, lifted her higher, until her bottom just broke the surface and her legs floated on either side of his shoulders. Her shoulders were still supported against Dax, but he braced a hand in the small of her back to steady her further. She lifted her head and watched as Clay, still on his knees, bent his head and sampled her. From anus to apex he licked her, his tongue pausing only briefly to dart inside her before it continued on its way, exploring the folds, fondling her clit.

Dax was watching too, his breathing rapid and ragged. The hand that wasn't supporting her was splayed across her flat belly, his fingers holding apart the lips of her sex, allowing Clay better access, and himself a better view. Clay's tongue toyed with her clit and dipped inside her, all the while he was making soft rumbling sounds in the back of his throat. The sound of a hungry man gorging on ice cream.

His pleasure accentuated her own. It built and she fought the urge to squirm in their arms. Her breathing had become ragged, and her blood bubbled, as hot and vigorous as the water that had been fizzing around her just moments ago.

When Clay reached the small triangle of pubic hair, he licked Dax's fingers, drawing one into his mouth to suck briefly before returning to his task.

Without warning Dax's fingers moved lower and ground against her clit, sending a sudden and unexpected orgasm spiraling through her. She went stiff, arching her back and digging her fingers into the muscles of Dax's thighs.

Clay gripped her ass hard and thrust his tongue inside her, sucking her, lapping her up, as the pleasure pulsed through her.

"Hey," grumbled Dax, as the orgasm faded. "No fair. I thought we were gonna share."

Clay looked at him from beneath hooded eyes. "You want a taste?"

"You know I do."

Abruptly Clay straightened and, with Sid still between them, awarded Dax a hungry kiss. Sid's face was so close to them she could smell her own scent that lingered on Clay's lips.

"Mmm," said Dax when they broke apart. He grinned down at Sid, slid his tongue across his upper lip. "You're delicious."

Impossibly, her cheeks grew hotter. She blew out a long, slow breath, wondering if her heart would ever settle back into a normal rhythm. "This isn't fair. I feel like I had all the fun."

"Don't worry about that." Dax bracketed her waist in his hands. "We're just barely getting started." And then he twirled her around so she was facing him. He moved back to sit on the bench and drew her in to straddle him. She grasped his cock and sheathed herself on him. He speared so deep she felt a nudge against her womb. She drew back, descended again, began to pump her hips.

"Damn," said Dax, his voice low and breathless.

Suddenly the motor beneath the floor, ground to life and the water began to churn. She heard a splash as Clay jumped back into the tub and moved in behind her. He laid his hands on her shoulders, his cock pressing against her back.

The water lapped at her chest, buoying her breasts. The bubbles massaged her muscles and the heat lulled her. She leaned back against Clay and murmured softly as his hands cruised down to her breasts. He cupped them, offering them to Dax who leaned over and took them into his mouth, laving and sucking each in turn until she was writhing between the two men, hungry, eager for something she couldn't quite identify.

Dax gripped her hips and took control. With her back braced against Clay, Dax thrust himself into her, pummeling her with his body repeatedly until she was gasping for breath. She felt off balance and her arms flailed, but only for a moment. Clay grasped her hands, held them tight.

She gripped him hard, using him for leverage and matching Dax thrust for thrust as the pressure built.

On the brink of another orgasm, she made a soft whimpering sound and clenched her fingers around Clay's hands.

"Dax," said Clay, the word a command that she didn't understand.

Perhaps she didn't, but Dax did. He wrapped his arms around her, drew her in tight and crushed her mouth beneath his own. He thrust deep, impaling her on his cock and ravaging her with his tongue. With Dax buried inside her she climaxed again, surrendering to Dax's assault, squeezing Clay's hands in sync with the rhythm of her orgasm.

Dax tensed, went very still, and then let out a soft, low moan before relinquishing his claim on her mouth.

"Christ," he whispered. "I've never—"

"Clay!"

They all went still, tensed at the sound of the voice that reached them from the other side of the enclosure.

Clay glanced at Dax who just mouthed, "Oh shit."

"Yeah, Mom?" replied Clay.

"Oh good," she said. "I just wanted to make sure it was you."

They heard the sound of the latch and Clay moved so fast he was little more than a blond blur. He erupted from the water and dashed for the door. He held it shut and engaged the hook before his mother realized what was happening.

The door jiggled on its hinges. "Oh," said his mother. "Is Dax in there with you?"

Clay leaned his forehead against the door, obviously exhausted by his mad dash. "Yeah, Mom. Sorry about that. It was kind of an impromptu visit."

"No problem. It's just that I brought someone home with me from bingo, and I'd rather...uh..."

Clay turned his head and grinned. "No problem, Mom. Just keep him in the kitchen. We'll get our clothes and slip out the back gate. He'll never know we were here."

"Great." Even Sid could hear the relief in her voice. "Thanks, hon." They heard the sound of footsteps, and then abruptly they stopped. "Dax?"

"Yeah, Lil?"

"Good," she called back. "Just checking."

A moment later they heard the slam of the screen door.

Sid gave Dax a questioning look. "What was that about?"

"We'll explain later," said Clay, the door to the enclosure already open a crack. "Right now we've got to make good our escape." He glanced through the crack. "The coast is clear. You two wait here while I get the clothes."

She turned back to find Dax grinning at her. "And you thought Paris was exciting."

Sid leaned her forehead against his and laughed.

Chapter Six

The trio tumbled through the door of the apartment and landed on the futon in a heap of laughter and giggles.

Clay had landed on the bottom with both Dax and Sid heaped on top of him. Sid's breasts were pressed against his chest, her still-damp T-shirt clinging to them in ways that sent a fresh wash of blood coursing to his groin. Dax lay on top of her, laughing like a goon.

"Jeez," wheezed Sid, her lips inches from his. "I've been spending too much time trapped between two hunky men. A girl could suffocate this way."

"Ah." Clay framed her face in his hands. "But what a way to go."

Sid smiled, her eyes locked to his. "I've never told you this, but I love your eyes. Drowning in them, now *that* would be the way to go."

Dax rolled off and plopped down on the futon beside Clay. "Cut it out, you two. I've had too much beer and hot tubbing to put up with this mushy stuff."

Sid tossed Dax a withering look as she sat up and straddled Clay. She ran a finger down Clay's cheek, traced his throat, and explored his pectoral muscle. "So what was that all about, boys?"

They both stared at her, confused.

"Come on. Spill the beans. What's the deal with your mother, Clay?"

Clay cleared his throat, frowned. "What do you mean? She brought a man home and didn't want to advertise her son's sexual preferences. That's all there is to it."

"No, no, that's not what I mean." She leaned forward, propping her elbows on Clay's chest. "Why did she call Dax's name? What did she mean when she said she was just 'checking'?"

A tiny knot formed in Clay's gut. He put his hands around Sid's insubstantial waist and picked her up, setting her feet firmly on the floor.

"Hey! What's wrong?" she grumbled as he stood and walked to the kitchen.

"Clay's a little touchy about this," said Dax, the laughter in his voice irritating beyond words.

Clay opened the fridge and pulled out a bottle of water. He stalked back into the living room and leaned against the patio doors. He twisted off the cap, took a long swig, all the while aware of the other two watching him.

"Can you blame me?" he said at last.

"I don't get it," said Sid. "I thought your mother was okay with...everything."

"Okay is a pretty strong word," offered Dax. "She's accepted it, but—"

"She loves me and she tries to understand, but she worries constantly that I'm going to take other lovers. You know...start hanging out in men's washrooms? Dress in drag? Get a disease?"

Sid groaned.

"It doesn't help that she caught you that time with Mike Hardy."

Clay pressed the cool water bottle against his forehead. "God, what a night that was."

Sid sat up a little straighter. "Were you and Dax together at the time?"

"Yeah," confessed Clay. "We were."

"Don't get him wrong," said Dax, tossing an impatient look at Clay. "We've both done some experimenting on the side from time to time. Always safely, of course," he added quickly, no doubt to reassure Sid. "We always take precautions outside this relationship. We may live together but we've never demanded exclusive rights."

Clay shrugged. "It's just usually worked out that way, is all. There aren't many people either of us are interested in getting intimate with. It doesn't help that the few times we have looked elsewhere, it's usually turned out badly."

"Oh?" Sid drew her legs up and sat cross-legged on the futon. Clay was pretty sure she hadn't bothered to put on her bra, and yet her breasts straining against the wet T-shirt were full and firm. Clay felt something inside him stir, but tamped it down.

"How badly?" asked Sid. "Any juicy stories for me?"

"No, no," said Clay a little too quickly. "Nothing that you'd be interested in."

Dax chuckled. "Except of course—"

"Dax!" warned Clay.

"—for the time Clay got engaged."

Clay hung his head and groaned. Dax had no sense of discretion or propriety. Count on him to let it all hang out.

Clay sensed a presence close by. Sid traced a finger down his cheek. "Engaged, Clay? To a woman?"

"Yes," he said tightly. "It was a mistake."

"Don't hold out. Tell me everything."

"I don't think—"

"Clay met her just after he and I slept together for the second time. He'd finally figured out the truth, but was heavy into denial and latched onto the first pair of breasts that ventured along."

"Jesus, Dax, do you *know* when to shut up?"

"Not generally." Dax grinned. "But you know you love me for my candor."

Clay rolled his eyes.

"It's okay," said Sid, her arms latching firmly around Clay's waist. "It's an understandable mistake. We all make them."

"Maybe. But most of us don't leave a bride crying at the altar while they run off with the best man."

She grimaced. "Oh. I see. That's...uh..."

"Very nineties," quipped Dax.

"It wasn't funny," said Clay. "It was horrible. Ugly. Despicable. I hurt her and embarrassed her, and I'll never forgive myself."

Sid shuddered visibly. "Did she throw things?"

"Yeah." Clay felt the mood lighten. He grinned at Dax. "But, ironically, not at me."

It was Dax's turn to look pained. "She took it out on me. She said it was all my fault, claimed I'd brainwashed him, stolen him from her. Blah, blah, blah. To this day she can't walk past me without sneering."

"You see her a lot?" asked Sid, eyebrows raised.

"Too much." Suddenly Dax launched himself off the futon. "Enough of this depressing Amy-shit." He swaggered over to Clay and breathed in his ear, "I think we have other things to attend to."

"That's right," said Sid, trailing a finger up Clay's arm as Dax began to massage his shoulders. "We have some unfinished business."

Clay fought down his instinctive reaction to their touch. "What do you mean?"

"She means that you didn't get sufficient attention tonight in the hot tub." His fingers dug into Clay's deltoids and Clay fought the urge to let his eyes roll back in his head. "Right, Sid? Isn't that what you meant?"

Sid caressed his chest. "Uh-huh. That's exactly what I meant."

Suddenly Clay pushed himself away from the doors and distanced himself from the other two. "I got plenty, thanks," he argued, uncertain why he was fighting this, and unsure why his mood had suddenly shifted so dramatically. "Right now I just need sleep."

Sid's eyes went wide. Was he reading disappointment there? Jeez, he just couldn't seem to get it right.

"But Clay..."

"Later," said Clay, whirling around and stalking off toward the bedroom. "Right now I'm just really tired." He opened the door and hesitated. "You can get Sid set up in the spare room, right Dax?" And with that he stepped inside, closed the door behind him and threw himself on the bed.

Maybe sleep would cure whatever it was that ailed him. He just knew, at that moment, he didn't deserve to feel good.

* * * * *

Sid gaped at Clay's retreating back, and jerked back at the slam of the door. He'd turned down sex because he was too *tired*? Obviously there was more to it. Had to be.

She whirled on Dax. "What the hell was that? What's gotten into him?"

"My fault," said Dax on a sigh. "I should know better than to bring up Amy. He didn't deal well with her at the time and he still doesn't." He walked away and disappeared into the kitchen.

Sid followed him, leaned against the wall and watched him open the refrigerator and rummage through the drawers.

"Want an apple?"

Sid glanced back toward the bedrooms. "Shouldn't we go after him? Talk to him?" She took the shiny red piece of fruit that Dax offered her. "Or something?"

Dax shook his head. "There's no talking to him when he gets like this. He's like a tough old steak. He has to simmer in his own juices, stew in his own guilt for a while before he's done. Only then is there a hope in hell of snapping him out of it." He bit into the apple. "But don't worry. I know just what to do."

Sid bit into the sweet crispy fruit. "You do?"

"Uh-huh."

"Oh? And what's that?"

"We'll let him fall asleep, and then..." He chewed and swallowed, waggled his eyebrows.

"And then what?"

"And then we'll just have to put him on a plate, stick a fork in him and see if he's done."

* * * * *

Clay tried to roll over. And then he tried again. He tugged on his left arm, and then on his right, but they seemed leaden. Immovable.

His eyes flickered and he glimpsed glimmering candlelight, caught a whiff of jasmine and vanilla. He tugged on his hands again, to no avail. And then he felt the pressure on his wrists.

His eyes flew open. "What the hell?"

"Oh," said Dax, his voice very close to Clay's ear. "Awake at last."

"You sleep like the dead, Clay." It was Sid. She spoke into his other ear all the while tracing intricate patterns through the hair on his chest. "I was beginning to wonder if you'd ever wake up."

He turned his head one way, and then the other. He was sandwiched between Dax and Sid, their naked bodies pressed up against either side of him, their hands touching and exploring, tickling and enticing. "Wh-what are you two up to?" he asked. And then

he noticed that he couldn't move his legs either. He lifted his head to see and then dropped it back onto the pillow.

"Jesus, Dax. I knew I never should have agreed to the tie thing. You're like a kid with a new toy, aren't you?"

"Mm-hmm." Dax's hand cruised over Clay's belly and brushed across his penis. He couldn't have restrained his reaction if he'd wanted to. "I've always been a fan of new toys. And you wouldn't let me tie your legs before. This is much more fun."

Sid shifted, her breasts grinding against Clay's side as she massaged his calf muscle with her foot. Her thigh rubbed up and down his leg, nudging his cock and making his entire body throb.

"Let me go," he breathed, his heart hammering inside his chest. "Take these things off and I'll cooperate. You can screw me blind, have your way with me." He smiled his most beguiling smile. "Whatever you want. Just let me go."

"I see what you mean, Dax," said Sid. She combed her fingers through Clay's hair, nibbled lightly on his ear. Her thigh rubbed over his hardening cock. "He's not good with submission."

"Submission?" Clay lifted his head and then dropped it back on the pillow when Dax gripped his cock and began to massage it. He groaned. "Dax? What did you tell her?"

"Just that you're a control freak." He played with Clay's balls, fingers inching toward his anus. "Down at the dealership you order people around all day. Here you handle the money, do all the shopping. You're Mister Responsible. Mister I-know-what's-best. You need to loosen up sometimes, lover. Let somebody else call the shots for a change."

"You're full of it, Dax."

Dax sat up and shifted his body so that he sat between Clay's splayed legs. Clay knew he'd regret buying this damn four-poster bed someday.

"Am I?" asked Dax, his long hair brushing Clay's cock. "I don't think so." He leaned down, drew his tongue along the length of Clay's erection.

Clay squirmed, the urge to sit up and do *something*, almost overwhelming.

"He's right, isn't he?" Sid ran her fingers over his lips, touched his cheek, traced his jaw. "This is killing you."

Clay tried to plead with his eyes. "You could untie me."

She laughed at him with her eyes. "I don't think so."

Dax took him in his mouth and Clay felt the sweat pop out on his forehead.

"I'm enjoying this far too much." Sid's eyes followed the movement of Dax's mouth.

"You like watching us."

She licked her lips and Clay felt an unexplainable rush of excitement. "Yeah. I guess I do." She grinned. "I won't tell your mother if you don't tell mine."

Suddenly she sat up and straddled his belly. She leaned forward, her dark eyes smoky with desire. "Care for some breast with that?" And then she offered it to him.

He accepted it greedily, suckling and nibbling on her nipple even as Dax's mouth ravished his cock. Sid made soft little mewling sounds of pleasure, and her pussy ground against his belly. The combination of sensations was exhilarating, intoxicating, the sense of helplessness adding to the mix, sending him to the brink of madness.

"God," he groaned when Sid's breasts were momentarily denied him, and the motions of Dax's mouth slowed. "Will somebody please *finish* this?"

"What are you asking for, Clay?" Sid's tongue flicked over his lips as Dax caressed his buttocks. "Say what you mean."

"I want..."

Dax laved his balls, inserted two fingers into Clay's ass. Deep.

"You want what?" asked Sid, her tongue darting out to play with his. She sounded like a dream, tasted like midnight, smelled like sex. She reached up and laced her fingers with his immobile ones. "Tell me, Clay. Tell me what to do."

"Please..." He breathed.

She kissed him hard. Drew away. "Please what?"

"Please *fuck me!*"

The next moment she sheathed herself on his cock, her pussy wet and warm and sweet. He tried to arch against her, but she pressed her hands against his chest. "No. Let me."

She rode him hard, and he lost himself in her. For a fleeting moment he wondered where Dax was and then, as if he'd read his mind, Dax appeared behind Sid.

His body in sync with hers, he splayed his fingers across her belly. Sid grasped his hand and urged it lower until he was toying with her clit.

Sid's movements accelerated and just when Clay thought he was about to explode she came. She ground herself against him, each contraction of her orgasm driving him higher until he thrust up with his hips and arched his back in climax.

He reared up, felt something snap and a moment later collapsed back on the pillows, dragging Sid and Dax with him.

They lay there, panting and sated, all three slick with sweat and wet with cum.

"Damn," he groaned. "I ripped the ties, didn't I?"

"Yup," said Dax. "Tore'em clean in two."

"Those ties cost me a fortune."

"I'll buy you some new ones," laughed Sid. "Hell. For sex like this, I'll buy you a dozen."

Clay kissed her. "Make it two dozen, and you've got a deal."

Chapter Seven

Sid leaned against the car door and propped her feet on Dax's lap. They were in the back seat and Clay was driving. Of course.

She leaned back and closed her eyes, reliving the events of the night before. After releasing Clay from the rest of his bonds she'd intended to move into the guest room and allow the lovers some time alone. But it hadn't quite worked out that way. They'd begun to talk and next thing she knew she'd woken up that morning, nestled in between two warm, firm male bodies. It had been at once comforting and arousing. Just thinking about it made her center grow heavy with desire once again.

She opened her eyes and turned her attention to the scenery flashing past her window. Skyscrapers and gold-tinted office buildings glinted in the afternoon sun. Seagulls rode the warm spring updrafts and airplanes sailed high above. The traffic was heavy for a Sunday, and she wondered if it was due to the uncommonly fine weather.

They'd come to Toronto to pick up her things from the hotel. They'd convinced her to check out and stay with them, at least for a few days. While they were here, Dax had a few things to look after at the museum, and figured he could give her a little tour while they were at it.

Dax laid a hand on her ankle. "Massage?" he asked, already unlacing her cross-trainers. He'd allowed his stubble to grow today, but his hair was pulled back in a neat ponytail, and he'd chosen to wear a crisp, cotton shirt. Not even the folds of material, however, could hide the physique beneath. Of course it helped that Sid now had intimate knowledge of every inch of it.

Damn, what's wrong with me? She wanted to jump the guy right here in the back seat, and the thing of it was, she had a sneaking suspicion he'd go along with it.

She tugged her seatbelt a little tighter. "Massage? Oh, I think I could be bribed. If you agree to suck on a few toes while you're at it."

Dax laughed. "I think we've created a monster, Clay. Don't you?"

"Don't bug me," growled Clay. "This Yonge Street traffic is murder."

Dax leaned over and whispered. "See what I mean? He hates driving downtown. I do this all the time, know the place like the back of my hand, but did he let me drive? Noooo!"

"You're a lunatic behind the wheel, Dax," cried Clay. "A fuckin' maniac."

Dax rolled his eyes. He eased off her shoe and sock, and began to massage the ball of her foot.

"Sometimes he sounds like my father," muttered Dax. "He used to call me a maniac, too."

His thumb dug into the arch of Sid's foot and, eyes closed, she groaned in ecstasy. "Because of your driving?" she asked.

"No. Not exactly."

Something about his voice set her on alert. She opened her eyes to study him. "Why then?"

He shrugged, his gaze trained determinedly on her foot.

Clay glanced toward the back seat. "Dax's parents didn't deal with the big announcement as well as mine did."

She sighed. "Oh."

Dax said nothing, continuing his massage.

"What happened, Dax?" Sid asked. "Was there a big scene?"

He smiled, but his eyes were sad. "No. My family doesn't do 'scenes'. At least they don't do them well. They do silence really well, though."

"Yeah," agreed Clay. "They've got the whole cold shoulder treatment down pat."

"I'm sorry, Dax. Families can be so...complicated."

"Complicated. Man, that's the understatement of the year."

He lifted her foot and nibbled on her big toe, making her giggle despite the somber mood.

He moved on to the next but she steeled herself against the tickling. "Do you ever see your parents?"

His tongue flicked at her baby toe. "Not if they can help it. But maybe that's for the best."

"You had a sister that you were close to, didn't you? She was young and kinda hip. What about her?"

"She lost her 'hipness' the second she married *Chad*." He rolled his eyes. "Mr. President of the Optimist Club couldn't be seen with a sexual deviant." He set down her foot, his heart obviously not in it. "I have a four-year-old niece that I've only seen twice."

Clay swerved around a corner, rammed into a parking spot and slammed on the brakes. "Shit! I spilled my damn coffee."

The car jolted so badly that Sid's forehead almost hit the seat in front of her. "Clay?" she yelped. "What the hell?"

He turned around, and his expression was murderous. "This is *not* a good topic to discuss while I'm driving in downtown Toronto, okay?"

Dax leaned in close and whispered. "Clay's a little protective when it comes to my family."

"Damn right I am." He turned to face the front and grabbed the wheel so tight Sid could see his knuckles whiten. "Your parents I can understand. They're old and they come from a different generation. But your sister?" He slammed an open palm against

the wheel and turned back to face Sid again. "Dammit, she knows better. She still loves him, but won't admit it. Lets her goddamn husband rule the roost and refuses to let him know she has a thought in her head."

Sid swallowed, stunned by the vehemence in Clay. "You've talked to her, haven't you?"

"Yeah." He blew out a slow breath and his eyes calmed. "A couple of years ago I met her for coffee. I ended up yelling and storming out of the restaurant. Not that it did any good for Dax, but it sure as hell made me feel better."

Something fluttered deep in Sid's chest. She laid a hand on his arm. "You're a good man, Charlie Brown." She leaned forward and planted a solid kiss on his cheek. "But I'm not used to seeing you like this. All this passion is getting me turned on."

He wagged his eyebrows, and sliced a look at Dax. "You can handle the museum yourself, can't you buddy? We could just...uh...wait here."

Dax grabbed Sid's wrist. "No deal. You're both coming and besides, Sid wants a tour. Don't you, Sid?"

She laughed. "Are you kidding? Miss a chance to see the responsible, academic, working-for-real-money side of the irrepressible Dax Redmond? No way."

Dax pressed a hand to his chest and sniffled. "I think she loves me, Clay."

Clay rolled his eyes. "You see what I have to put up with?" He opened his door. "Now, can we get *on* with this?"

* * * * *

Sid stood in the foyer of the Royal Ontario Museum and marveled. Clay had disappeared into the bathroom to try and rinse the spilled coffee out of his jeans, and Dax had been snagged by a colleague for a mini-meeting. So, for the moment, she'd been left to drink in her surroundings on her own.

She'd been here before but it had been years ago, and she'd been far too young to appreciate its magnificence. Polished marble flooring stretched out before her and ceilings soared. Every footstep, every cough, every whisper echoed, lending an air of grandeur, as if she were standing inside an enormous granite cathedral.

The museum was closing for the day and the thinning stream of people bustled and jostled around her as they made their way to the doors. The ROM's eclectic mix of displays—everything from Egyptian mummies and Roman armor to a simulated bat cave and dinosaur bones—-attracted thousands of visitors every year. And Dax was a part of it.

She turned to see him nearby, huddled in conversation with a woman holding a clipboard. Their voices were low, but their expressions earnest. Judging from Dax's demeanor, they must be talking about something very important. Perhaps a new exhibit, or a special shipment of ancient documents. He looked so together, so professional, so...un-Dax-like.

She turned her attention back to the foyer and was studying the two enormous totem poles that were centerpieces for a pair of matching spiral staircases when she heard Dax exclaim, "For God's sake, give it up! It's none of your business."

Her curiosity piqued she moved a little closer.

Dax and the woman were so absorbed they didn't appear to notice.

"Maybe not, but I just can't sit by and let you use him."

"Use him?" asked Dax, his voice laced with outrage. "What the hell does that mean?"

"You know perfectly well what that means. You needed a lucrative partner, someone who made enough money to put you through school. But the moment you've got your fancy degree you'll drop him like a hot potato." She leaned in so close to Dax that Sid had to strain to hear. "And I just hope I'll be there to pick up the pieces."

Dax held up his hands like a shield and took a step back. "You're nuts, Amy."

Amy? The fiancée!

Amy lifted her chin. "I notice you're not denying it."

"It's not worth my time, or energy." He took another step back. "And neither are you."

"Admit it, Dax, if it wasn't for Clay you wouldn't be where you are right now. You'd probably be on skid row somewhere, begging for change and —"

"Excuse me." Sid laid a hand on Dax's arm. "I think Clay could use some help with that coffee stain. You know how hopeless he is with that sort of thing."

Dax's jaw worked. "Sidney, this is none of your —"

"Dax." She skewered him with her gaze. Her protective instincts were charged and her temper on slow burn. She had no intention of taking any shit from anybody at that moment. And that included Dax.

He glared at her for a moment, shifted his gaze to Amy and then back to Sid. "Okay." And then he stalked off toward the washroom.

"And you are?" asked Amy when the washroom door had banged shut. She had the clipboard clutched to her chest.

"My name's Sidney." She held out a hand but it was ignored. She retracted it. "Sidney Poirot."

"And that's supposed to mean something to me?"

"I'm a friend of Dax and Clay's."

Amy's bored expression was a poor mask for the irritation she felt beneath. She shrugged. "And?"

"And I don't like people talking to my friends that way."

"I only speak the truth. And I'm only looking out for Clay. If it wasn't for Dax —"

"If it wasn't for Dax, Clay would have wasted five years of his life trying to be something he wasn't, and trying to make a life with someone he didn't love."

“He loved me,” she hissed. “But Dax brainwashed him.”

Sid’s eyebrows arched. Had she really heard that right? “Brainwashed? Are you implying that Dax kidnapped Clay, held him in a tiny room, denied him the basic essentials of life and tortured him, all the while flaunting pictures of naked men in his face to entice him over to the *Dark* side?”

Amy gritted her teeth. “No, of course not. But—”

“But nothing, my dear. Sexual preferences can’t be programmed like that, and neither can love and commitment. He’s with Dax because that’s where he belongs, it’s as simple as that.”

“Dax is using him.”

Sidney’s fists clenched but she managed not to deliver the upper cut that was sizzling down her arm. She spoke very slowly. “Dax Redmond is intelligent and exciting and spontaneous, not to mention one of the most gorgeous hunks of male flesh you or I have ever laid eyes on. Clay is damn lucky to have him.”

Amy was virtually vibrating with rage. “He can’t give Clay what I can give him.”

“He can give Clay everything you could have given him and more!” Her voice had edged up a notch, but she couldn’t have restrained it if she’d wanted to.

“He can’t give him *children!*”

Sidney stared at her, the word echoing in her mind. Part of her wanted to laugh at the ludicrousness of it all. Instead she leaned close and said in a theater whisper that echoed through the hall, “Neither can you if he’s not fucking you.” She stepped back. “Can you?” She whirled and walked away.

“You bitch!” screamed Amy.

Sidney kept walking.

“You’re a stupid bitch.” Sidney heard the clipboard clatter to the floor, but she didn’t turn around. “And just who are you to preach to me, anyway? What the hell do you know about Clay? Or Dax for that matter?” An angry sob escaped her throat. “What the hell do you know about anything?”

At that Sidney hesitated. She considered her response, figured it was a mistake, and decided to say it anyway.

She turned around and walked back to face the jilted fiancée. “What do I know? What do I *know*? I know that Clay has a tiny mole at the base of his penis and Dax likes to have his nipples sucked.” She moved closer, close enough to see the silver fillings in Amy’s gaping mouth. “I’ve been with both of them, *Amy*, and I know things about them you can only dream of.”

She turned to walk away, but thanks to the amazing acoustics in the cavernous foyer she heard Amy whisper the word “Slut.”

She kept right on walking.

She reached the hallway that led to the washrooms. “Come on out,” she called. “I know you’re in there.”

Two heads peeked out from around the door.

Clay looked miserable, but Dax was grinning from ear to ear.

"Remind me never to cross this one," said Dax as he tugged Clay out into the open. "I value my testicles too much."

Sid took her place between them and hooked her arms through theirs. They struck off toward the elevators. "So do I, Dax," she quipped. "So do I."

* * * * *

The elevator moved and Sidney's tummy lifted.

"You introduced them didn't you?" she asked when the silence stretched.

Dax's sigh was heavy. "Not exactly."

"You started working here and that's how Clay and Amy met, right?"

"Close enough." He shrugged. "And now I can't get away from her."

"I've tried talking to her," offered Clay, "but she just won't listen." His gaze flitted to Dax. "It's worse than you told me, isn't it?"

Another shrug. But then he grinned and nudged Sidney in the ribs. "Nothing me and the Terminatrix here can't handle."

Sidney was laughing when they stepped off the elevators. "So, what are we seeing?" she asked Dax as they headed down a long narrow hallway. "Your office?"

Dax had been so eager to show her where he worked, but she'd been hard-pressed to share his excitement. What could be so fascinating about an office, after all? She'd seen more than her share of filing cabinets and computer monitors. She'd much rather take a leisurely stroll through the now-vacant museum.

Dax slid his key-card through the slot beside a small, nondescript door. The lock clicked. "It's not just any office," he said, his hand wrapped around the knob. "This one is special."

"Special." Sidney smiled indulgently. "Okay."

Dax pushed the door open and motioned her through. She took two steps and stopped dead. Eyes wide and mouth gaping she stood there and stared. "Wow," was all she could manage to say.

Clay strolled past her. "I think that's a compliment, Dax."

"High praise, indeed." Dax was still standing beside her, but she couldn't drag her gaze away to look at him.

The room was enormous. Ceilings soared, and twenty feet above her head a skylight let in the slanted rays of a dwindling sun. But that wasn't what had caught her attention. "It's...it's beautiful. It's a full-fledged Indian village." Her eyes raked over vividly decorated tepees, fire pits, animal skins and filleted fish hanging on racks to dry. At last she turned to look at him, and his face glowed. "Did *you* do this?"

He nodded, grinned sheepishly. "I may have misled you. I don't really *have* an office. I do most of my research and design work at home, so that's really more of an office than this is. This is my studio, and the village is my latest display."

"B-but it's so *big!*"

Clay stopped in the center of the room, beside an enormous pile of animal skins. He ran his hand through thick, lustrous fur. "It's a special display that's going to be set up on the CNE grounds in August."

The Canadian National Exhibition was one of the largest 'fall fairs' in the country. It ran for two weeks and was one of Toronto's biggest and most well known tourist attractions.

Dax moved in to stand beside Clay. "We've set it up in cooperation with the western Sioux Nation. They'll be providing the period costumes and the inhabitants of the village."

"It'll be a completely interactive display." Clay dropped a hand around Dax's shoulders and squeezed. "And it was all Dax's brainchild."

Sid's heart was in her throat. "Dax, I... I don't know what to say. I didn't think you could surprise me again, but you did."

Dax turned to survey his creation. "I like learning about different cultures and periods in history, but *this* is what I love. The nitty-gritty of putting it together, the sawing and hammering and cutting and—" He stopped when Sid put her hand on his arm.

He smiled down at her. "I like the physical part of it, but I found out that I also love the creating. I mean, I'm just *copying* things that existed centuries ago, but it still feels like it's mine. Like it's part of me."

She studied him for a moment, considering the wide hazel eyes that smoked with passion and intelligence. She inspected the angular jaw shadowed by stubble, dropped her gaze to the tanned bit of chest that peeked out of the opening at the top of his shirt.

She blew out a slow breath and slid a half-lidded glance at Clay whose arm was still draped around Dax's shoulders. "Good God, he's amazing. How do you keep your hands off him?"

Clay chuckled. "I don't most of the time. I want him almost constantly."

"How about now?" She licked her lips, both unnerved and intrigued by the images that flitted through her mind. "Do you want him now?"

Clay stared at her, obviously trying to decipher what she meant, what she wanted, where she was leading.

Her breathing hastened under his watchful gaze, her heart quickened. She read the desire in his eyes, felt the energy build—an electrical storm that threatened to strike down all three of them.

The hair on the backs of her arms lifted, and slowly—very slowly—Clay turned his head and sealed his mouth to Dax's.

The kiss was deep, thorough, with soft little groans of pleasure that echoed through the cavernous space. Dax's hands fisted in Clay's shirt and Clay began working the hem of Dax's out of the waistband of his jeans.

Sid stepped in behind Dax, laid her head against his back and slid her arms around his waist. Her hands skimmed over taut abs, continuing until she reached the snap at the waist of his jeans. She popped it open and he sucked in his stomach in surprise.

She found Clay's hand, grasped him by the wrist and guided him beneath the soft cotton of Dax's briefs. Dax's soft groan of pleasure told her that Clay was fulfilling his duties and she took the opportunity to complete her own task. She slid her hands beneath the denim, beneath the briefs, caressing smooth, hot skin as she eased his clothing down over his hips and thighs. His jeans dropped to the floor and she couldn't resist cupping and stroking a set of firm, well-rounded buttocks.

Dax's hands came around to grip her arms and urge her to do more but she nipped at his fingers. "Just wait," she chided. "We'll get to that."

She grabbed the hem of his shirt and whipped it over his head, leaving him naked and vulnerable between her and Clay.

Clay had broken off the kiss and was now trailing hungry kisses and provocative licks of his tongue down Dax's chest. He found a nipple, and was sucking hard as Sidney moved around to take up a position behind him. When Clay felt her hands at his belt he stopped and stood straight.

She worked at the clasp. "I could use some help here, Dax."

Dax chuckled and while she worked at the denim he took care of Clay's T-shirt. She worked at the jeans, her hands running over another perfectly proportioned ass, another set of muscular thighs. She took a moment to admire and couldn't help herself. She fell to her knees and kissed one dimpled cheek.

Her lips still pressed against his skin she murmured, "If you ever tell another soul that I kissed your ass, Clay Masters, you're a dead man."

"I'll try and keep a lid on it," said Clay, his voice husky and laced with laughter. "But tell me...is it worth it?"

She moved to the other cheek, pressed her open mouth against it and tasted salt and sex. "Mmm." She dug her fingers into his hips, her tongue drawing lazy circles on his skin. "Gimme a minute. I'll let you know."

Her eyes were closed, and she was so absorbed in what she was doing that she wasn't paying attention to anything else, so was startled when Clay exclaimed, "Dax? What the hell?"

A moment later Clay was wrenched rudely away from her lips and out of her grasp.

Her eyes flew open to see Clay fall away from her and land beside Dax in an expansive carpet of animal pelts. Dax had taken liberties and spread out the stack of skins to make an enormous bed of fur.

The two men lay side by side, arms and legs splayed, cocks erect—naked and irresistible.

They grinned up at her and Dax arched an eyebrow. "She's still got all her clothes on, Clay. What are we going to do about that?"

"I've got an idea or two." Clay moved to get up but she held up a hand in protest. "Allow me."

Apparently intrigued, Clay lay back and stacked his hands behind his head. "Proceed."

Feeling the heat rise to her cheeks at the intense scrutiny of the two lovers, she reached for the top button of her shirt. She popped it open, moved lower and reached for the next.

As they watched her, she could see the desire smolder in their eyes. Dax rolled on his side and laid a hand on Clay's stomach.

Her eyes riveted to the two men, Sidney opened the next button, and felt her blood quicken as Dax's hand moved lower.

Clay hadn't moved, his eyes still trained on Sidney, his pulse however, visible as it pounded at the base of his throat.

Sidney opened the last button and as her shirt fell to the floor Dax wrapped his hand around Clay's cock and began a slow massage. Clay's eyes fluttered but remained open. Every muscle in his body stood out in relief beneath his skin.

Sid opened the clasp on her jeans and lowered the zipper. Leaving her thong in place, she pushed the denim over her hips and watched with mounting excitement as Clay began to stroke Dax's cock, fondle his balls.

She stepped out of the jeans and kicked the puddled denim aside.

"Your bra," breathed Clay as the speed of Dax's caresses increased. "Take off your bra."

She reached for the clasp of her front-close, barely there, black demi bra, grasped the two sides as if she intended to open it, but then she stopped. Tracing a delicate finger along the crest of her cleavage she said, "You guys are boring me. Can't you do better than that?"

"Boring?" asked Clay, his expression incredulous. "If you think—"

Dax had sat up and grabbed him by the wrists. He tugged him up off the furs until they were on their knees facing each other. Dax cupped Clay's sex and smiled suggestively. "Turn around."

Clay tossed a covert glance at Sidney. "Only if she takes off that damn bra."

Intrigued by the implications, Sidney unsnapped the clasp and let the insubstantial piece of lingerie fall to the floor. She cupped her own breasts in her hands and tweaked her nipples until they hardened to rosy points. She felt the wetness seep between her thighs and wondered at herself. She didn't know if she'd ever been this aroused, and she hadn't even touched them. Yet.

Chest heaving, Clay turned around, allowing Dax to draw him in tight against his chest. Dax's hands that were splayed across Clay's belly moved lower to toy with his sex while he nested his cock in the cleft of Clay's ass. Dax moved his hips back and forth, running his cock up and down the crease.

In order to see better and feel more connected to the duo, she moved closer, stopping inches in front of Clay. Her toes sank deeply into the plush fur, and she wondered how it would feel to wrap herself up in such decadence.

Dax turned his gaze on her, and licked his lips. His eyelids heavy with desire, he said, "Touch yourself."

Obediently she slid her hand over her belly and dipped inside the front of her thong. She parted the lips of her sex and massaged her clit, lubricating herself with moisture.

She made no protest when Clay hooked his fingers in the waistband of her panties and tugged them down.

"Jesus," groaned Dax, sinking his teeth into Clay's shoulder.

Clay remained silent. He watched her, his face inches from the apex of her thighs. She felt his gaze, felt every brush of his eyes like little licks of heat across her skin.

Suddenly he reached up, grabbed her ass and pulled her to him, burying his face in her pussy, licking and suckling her clit, and dipping his tongue inside her.

She sank her fingers into his hair, writhed in his grasp. "God," she groaned as an orgasm hovered just out of reach. "Please!"

Clay thrust two fingers inside her and abruptly she came, the orgasm bursting across her senses like a bolt of lightning. She pressed herself against his mouth, reveling in the pressure of his tongue against her clit, and pulsing around his fingers as the pleasure rippled over her.

"Christ, Clay," murmured Dax. "I can't wait any longer."

"Lay down," said Clay, his voice muffled by her body.

Breathing hard, and slick with sweat she dragged herself away from his mouth and fell back, landing in a thick stack of furs. Softness enveloped her, as sumptuous and decadent as the two men who hovered over her.

Her body slightly elevated by the skins. Clay leaned over, stiff-armed, bracketing her body with his hands.

He bent his head and kissed her then. She tasted herself on his lips, on the tip of his tongue. He deepened the kiss and then, abruptly, his body jolted.

He groaned softly, pulled away and Sid knew that Dax had penetrated him.

She watched in fascination as Dax moved his hips, thrusting repeatedly into his lover's body. Clay's face grew flushed, his eyes heavy.

Sid bent her knees and parted her thighs.

It was all the invitation Clay needed. His thrust was so deep and so hard and so unexpected she cried out in stunned surprise. But shock soon melted into pleasure as he cupped her ass, lifted her higher and continued pummeling her body.

Dax's rhythm increased, and Clay's quickened to match it. His fingers gripped her ass tighter and inched inside the crease.

Her breath became ragged and when his fingers touched the rim of her anus she nodded. He inserted a finger inside her, and then another.

He thrust deep, and the added pressure was more than she could take. She arched her back as a fresh orgasm racked her body. She came around him, the pulses strong and rapid, and seemingly endless.

Clay groaned and stiffened, pumping himself into her, and like a set of sexual dominoes, Dax came as well. He let out a loud moan of ecstasy and a moment later the three of them landed in a jumbled heap on the bed of furs.

Sid had barely caught her breath when she noticed Dax kneeling between her thighs.

"Dax?" she asked, unable to believe any of them still had energy to move. "What are you—" Her head fell back and all words were stolen from her throat when Dax gripped her knees, pushed them apart and proceeded to feast on her pussy.

"Oh God," she groaned. "I can't—" And then Clay kissed her mouth, thrust his tongue inside her, and she wondered that the human body could survive this kind of excessive stimulation.

She moved her hands to his chest with the intent of pushing him away, but instead found her fingernails digging into his flesh as if to hold him there, draw him closer. Afraid of drawing blood, she let go and wrapped her arms around him, clutching at his back as Dax continued his oral assault on her sex.

"Mmm," he murmured from between her thighs. "This shaved pussy thing is getting me hard again."

Clay withdrew his tongue from her mouth, and pierced her with his laser-blue gaze. "What are we going to do about that?" He palmed her breast, tweaked a nipple.

Sid let out an exhausted laugh. "Since when is Dax's testosterone overload *my* problem?"

Dax lifted his head as if to respond, but the sound of the electronic door lock clicking open ceased all communication beyond a collective, "Oh *shit!*"

They scrambled to cover themselves with the furs, but when Amy stepped inside there was still a disconcerting amount of bare flesh available for her visual inspection. She stopped just inside the door. And stared.

Clay reached down and pulled up one last fur to cover the remaining key parts.

"Hi Amy," ventured Sid, now snuggled between Dax and Clay and a luxurious coyote pelt. "There's a vacant spot. Would you care to join us?"

Amy opened her mouth as if to speak, and then appeared to think better of it. She whirled around and stalked out, slamming the door behind her.

"Good grief," said Sid. "What is it with you two and uninvited interruptions."

Clay groaned. "Damn it. I should probably go after her."

"No," argued Dax. "I should. I'm the one who works here."

Sid snorted. "You'll do nothing of the sort. Either of you. Maybe this was just what she needed to wake her up and make her realize she has no place with Clay."

Dax leaned back, stacking his hands behind his head. "I don't know, Clay. Beautiful, vivacious, feisty, smart and damn good in..." He looked around. "Uh...in bed. I think this one might just be a keeper."

"Yeah." Clay nodded, scrutinizing Sid until she felt the heat rise to her cheeks. "A keeper. Definitely."

She licked her lips. A keeper? What exactly does that mean? Where was all this going, anyway? What did –

"So..." said Dax, interrupting her thoughts. A hand sneaked beneath the fur to touch her breast. Goose bumps skittered across her skin and she shivered despite the warmth of the furs. "What were you going to do about my...problem?"

"Problem?" she said, sitting up and reaching for the beaver pelt that covered Dax's groin. She ripped it away to reveal a renewed, and impressive-as-ever erection. "Oh...*that* problem." She crawled over his thigh and settled herself between his legs.

"You know." She touched the tip of his cock with a provocative finger and toyed with the bead of cum. "When you said this was a completely interactive display, you really weren't kidding, were you?"

Dax grabbed her hand and breathed, "I need to clean up first."

"In a minute."

He made no protest when she bent over and sealed her mouth to his, swallowing his laughter and forgetting everything but the feel of warm male flesh against her body and hot blood pumping through her veins.

* * * * *

"More pasta?" asked Clay, offering the bowl of tiny bow ties and sautéed vegetables to Sidney.

She continued staring at her plate and playing with the same hunk of eggplant she'd had on her fork for the last five minutes.

"Sid?" asked Dax. "You okay?"

She looked up, apparently startled to find that she wasn't alone. "Huh?" She looked from Dax to Clay to the bowl he was holding out to her. "Oh. Yeah. I'm fine." She pushed her plate away. "Just full, that's all." She patted her tummy. "That was amazing, Clay. I had no idea you were such a talented cook."

Clay and Dax exchanged a puzzled glance. Sid was clearly *not* fine. Ever since they'd left the museum she'd been sullen and distracted. She'd turned down a group shower and had spent the time before supper gazing out the window. When asked about it, she had evaded the question by offering to help cut up vegetables for the pasta.

Clay sat back and crossed his arms. "Come on, Sid, out with it."

She tossed him an innocent look. "Out with what?"

"You've barely spoken since we left Toronto, and now you barely touched your dinner, despite the fact that I know it's irresistible."

"Definitely," agreed Dax, stuffing a hunk of roasted pepper into his mouth. "Irresistible."

Clay shot him a reproofing look, but Dax was completely unrepentant. "Just trying to keep the mood light. I hate serious shit at the dinner table."

Clay rolled his eyes and turned his attention back to Sidney. "So what is it? What's bothering you?"

She pushed her chair back and stood, walked to the patio doors and looked out over the street dotted with carriage lamps and strolling lovers. "I...I don't know how to put this."

"Did we hurt you?" asked Dax. "Scare you? If this is all too much then—"

"No," she said hastily. "It's nothing like that. I've enjoyed every moment with you—with both of you." She turned back to the window and murmured, "Maybe too much."

The ring of the telephone cut off Clay's response.

"I'll get it," offered Dax. He got up from the table and headed to the kitchen to find the cordless phone.

Clay stood and walked over to join Sidney by the doors. He laid a hand on her shoulder. "You can talk to us, Sid. Jesus, considering what we've shared, you should be able to tell us anything."

She shook her head and before she could say anything they both jumped at the loud whoop that issued from the kitchen. "You're kidding!" exclaimed Dax. "When?"

At last Dax appeared in the doorway, the phone still pressed to his ear and his face glowing.

"What's going on?" asked Sid.

"Damned if I know."

Dax was nodding his head and grinning, muttering a series of mm-hmms and uh-huhs in counterpoint to whoever was on the other end of the phone.

"Okay. We'll talk about it and get back to you."

He blinked. "That soon?"

He nodded. "Okay. The morning." He hung up and turned his beaming face on Clay.

"Well?" asked Clay when he didn't offer anything. "What the hell is it?"

"It's the Foster place. It just went up for sale."

Clay leaned back against the door for support. "You're kidding."

"Funny. Isn't that what I said?"

Clay strode forward and grabbed Dax by the shirt. "If you're fucking with me, I swear—"

"Hold it, you two!" Sid grabbed them both by their shirts. "What's going on? What's this all about?"

Clay took a deep, calming breath. "It's the house we've been wanting to buy for two years now. It's unoccupied, but has been tied up in legal red tape ever since the owner died."

"I guess somebody finally cut the tape," said Dax. "But there's a catch."

Clay felt his chest tighten. "Catch?"

"We have to make an offer before nine o'clock tomorrow morning or it goes on to a real estate agent and onto the open market. They're only giving us this heads-up because we've been so...interested."

Clay laughed. "What he means is we've been pests, nagging the lawyers every couple of weeks, wondering when things might clear up so we can buy the place."

"What's so special about it?" asked Sid.

"Christ." Dax flopped down onto the futon. "It's a century home with stonework and hardwood floors and window wells a foot wide."

Clay sat down beside him. "The structure is in good shape, but it needs a complete decorating overhaul." He nudged Dax. "And Dax is just itching to build a whole new kitchen for the place."

"It's got a little stream through the back yard," said Dax on a sigh. "And it's actually got *fish* in it."

Sid stood before them, and smiled. "Sounds perfect."

"It is."

Suddenly Dax sprang from the couch and grabbed her by the shoulders. "And there's *four* bedrooms. Plenty of room for three of us to live comfortably."

Sid looked shell-shocked. "Move in with you?" she asked. "Permanently?"

Clay was a little irritated with Dax for springing this on her so suddenly, but he couldn't deny he'd been thinking the same thing. "We're not asking you to invest or anything. We can afford it just fine. But..." He stood and kissed her on the cheek. "We'd love to have you. I think it could work out wonderfully for all of us."

"But—"

"Think about it, Sid. Where else have you got to go? Back to Toronto? Back to *Paris*? You can work in Toronto and commute from here, if that's what you want. We love you and we want you with us. What more is there?"

She took a step back, away from the two of them. "It's...it's just that..."

Dax moved forward and Clay put a hand on his arm to hold him back. "That's okay, Sid. You don't have to decide now. Take your time."

She shook her head. "No, I want to explain."

They waited and watched as she clasped her hands and wrung them together.

She swallowed and met Clay's gaze. "I kind of...met someone."

Clay blinked in confusion. "What? Where?"

"B-back in France. He's still there...uh...waiting for me." She turned and began to pace. "Nothing really...*happened* between us yet, but I liked him, you know? A...a lot. But considering all the shit with my husband I wasn't ready to commit to anything. I wanted to come home for a while. Get my bearings again."

"It's okay, Sid," said Dax, but it didn't take a clairvoyant to sense the disappointment in his voice. "We understand."

"No," she stopped, and turned her gaze on the two of them. Clay wasn't sure but he thought he saw tears brimming in her eyes. "No, you don't understand at all."

And with no more warning than that she bolted for the door, and ran out into the hall.

Dax ran after her. "Sid?" he called as she dashed down the stairs. "What's wrong?"

"I just need some air!" They heard the outer door slam shut and she was gone.

Dax turned a confused gaze on Clay. "What the hell was that all about?"

Clay walked to the patio door and watched Sid's mad dash down the street. "I'm not sure, but I do think we need to give her some time alone. Some time to think."

Dax moved in beside him and hooked an arm around his waist. "Okay, but no more than two hours. After that we go hunting for her."

She disappeared around the corner.

"Two hours. You've got it."

Chapter Eight

Dax stared down at the dark street dotted with pools of lamplight. High above stars twinkled and a half moon gilded the trees and roof tops in faded silver.

A car pulled over and parked a half-block away but other than that the street was empty.

"Dax!"

Startled, Dax whirled around. "What?"

Clay, his elbows dripping suds and a sopping dish cloth in his hand, stood there looking at once irritated and sympathetic. "I called your name three times."

"Oh." Dax looked down at the plate and dish towel in his hand. "Sorry."

"I think that plate is dry now, and there are others that need your attention."

"Yeah, yeah, I know." Dax nodded and elbowed his way past Clay, heading for the kitchen. He put the plate in the cupboard and reached for another in the drying rack. "When we get the house you need to spring for a dishwasher." They'd already spoken to their lawyer who was drawing up an offer for them to sign at seven the next morning.

"I do?" Clay's hands disappeared beneath the mountain of suds. "What about you? You're the one who always whines about doing the dishes."

"Yeah, well..." The witty retort that had formed on his brain evaporated. He let out a heavy sigh. "It's been more than an hour."

"I know." Clay's voice was hushed. "But I'm sure she's fine. Let's just give her a little more—"

A knock on the door startled them both. They exchanged a relieved glance and, without bothering to dry their hands, rushed out of the kitchen.

Dax beat him to the door and wrenched it open. "Sidney, thank God you're—" He hesitated, blinked. "Uh...oh."

Clay moved in beside him and when he spoke his voice betrayed none of the surprise he must be feeling. "Hello. Can we help you?"

The man smiled. Thin lips curled into a wide grin that revealed perfect teeth. His dark hair hung rakishly over his forehead and a small scar on his left cheek completed the effect. Dax thought the trench coat was a bit much, though, considering the balmy spring weather.

"I hope so," said the man, a thick French accent clouding his words. "I got zis address...uh...how you say?" He touched a finger to his lips. "It was the forwarding

address that Sidney Poirot gave to her sister." His smile widened as if he'd completed some Herculean task. "Oui? Is zat right? Is she here?"

Dax's heart tripped a little faster.

"Not at the moment," Clay was saying, "but we expect her back soon."

The man nodded, apparently relieved. "Good. I was not sure if I had the right place."

Ever the gracious host, Clay stepped aside. "Would you like to wait here for her?"

"Oh yes," said the man as he stepped inside. "Zat would be wonderful. Zank you."

"Make yourself at home," said Clay. "Dax will take your coat."

Dax tried to glare his outrage at Clay but, as usual, Clay ignored him.

"Zank you." The man, smiling like a lunatic, shrugged out of his coat and held it out to Dax.

Dax grumbled to himself but took the garment. He threw it across the armchair.

"Would you like a drink?" asked Clay from the kitchen. "I think we have—"

"What did you say your name was?" growled Dax.

"Red wine would be lovely, zank you." The man had already seated himself on the futon. He crossed his legs before answering Dax. "I don't believe I did." He extended a hand. "Jacques Dubonner."

Dax wanted to ignore the hand but couldn't stomach the thought of Clay's nagging about it. He shook it once and stepped back, hands stuffed in pockets. "You know Sidney from Paris?"

"Oui." He accepted the glass of wine that Clay held out to him. "We were...acquainted there. And when I had opportunity to come to Canada I thought I should...what is it you say? Look her up."

Dax nodded and turned toward the window. He had been so anxious for Sid to come home, but now he wasn't so sure. This was *the guy*. The love interest. The Frenchman. The one she was going to reject them for. Not that they had any right to lay claim on her. It had just been a quick thrill ride, a little excitement to get him and Clay out of their relationship rut. It had all just been for fun.

He shot a glance at Clay. *Hadn't it?*

Clay met his gaze for a moment before returning his attention to their guest. "I'm sure Sid will be thrilled to see you. As a matter of fact we were just talking about you tonight."

The man coughed and almost spilled his wine. "Really?" He seemed surprised. "How sweet. What, exactly, did she say about me?"

* * * * *

Sid rounded the corner and stopped. She stood beneath a carriage lamp and looked up at the third-floor balcony across the street. The lights were on, and she could see a silhouette moving back and forth across the room. She could tell by the way he carried himself that it was Dax. Was he pacing because he was worried about her?

That thought curled through her like warm, fragrant smoke.

She leaned back against the wrought iron lamppost, and allowed the evening breeze to flirt with her hair.

She'd lied to them. Again. The first time she'd lied because her reaction to them had been so intense and unexpected that it had frightened her. She'd turned and fled and lied to cover up her reaction. And this time was no different.

Their offer had appealed to her. Too much. The idea of moving in with Dax and Clay had tempted her, appealed to her in more ways than she cared to admit, and that had scared the wits out of her. So she'd made up the Frenchman to cover her tracks and give her a good reason to turn them down.

She couldn't move in with them. She just couldn't.

She couldn't move in with them because doing that meant giving up something she'd dreamed of all her life—a husband and a home and a family of her own. The great North American dream, the white picket fence stereotype. The happily-ever-after myth.

She hadn't necessarily counted on the minivan and the two-car garage in the suburbs, but she had hoped for a few basic slots in her life to be filled. And moving in with a couple of bisexual buddies just didn't seem to fit any of those slots.

Sure moving in with them didn't have to mean a lifetime commitment. It could just be for a few weeks, a few months, or however long it took for her to find her feet. But she had this sneaking suspicion that it wouldn't work out that way. She had the feeling that once she got settled with those two, she wouldn't want to "unsettle". She had a feeling she'd want to stay right where she was. And she wasn't sure she wanted to take that step.

She closed her eyes, allowed her head to rest against the cool metal. The thing was they made her happy. She'd never been so at ease, so comfortable, or felt so much...*herself* with anyone else. They were intelligent and funny and caring and exciting and...how could she turn her back on all that?

And then there was the sex...

She grinned in spite of herself. There was certainly something to be said for two or three or four orgasms a day. Not that she could keep that up indefinitely, but still it was something to consider.

As was Dax and Clay's relationship. They'd been committed to each other first, had been together for years before she'd waltzed back into their lives. How would she ultimately fit into that? Would they come to resent her for coming between them? For screwing up their perfect life?

Not that it had been perfect. They'd admitted that but—

And what about children? What if they wanted children, too? This kind of relationship didn't exactly rule out that possibility. But did she really want to raise a child in that kind of environment? And what about—

"Aaauugh!" she screamed into the night. "Okay," she said aloud, pushing herself away from the lamppost and striking off down the street. "The only way to resolve this is to talk about it." She reached the front door of the apartment building and wrenched it open. "If we're going to make this work we gotta set the ground rules now, and the most basic one is honesty."

She took the stairs two at a time.

"Right, boys?"

She reached the third-floor landing and pivoted on one foot to face the door.

"Right."

She knocked smartly and waited.

* * * * *

Clay pinned Dax with a glare and kept him at bay while he walked to the door. This situation needed to be handled coolly and calmly and Clay doubted Dax's ability to do that. In fact he was afraid that if Dax opened the door and found Sidney on the other side he might just scoop her up in his arms and make a run for it.

If she was going to stay she had to stay because she wanted to. And if she was going to leave...

He opened the door and was greeted by a pair of slender arms wrapping themselves firmly around his neck.

"I'm sorry, Clay," she said, her voice muffled by his chest. "I'm sorry I ran away again."

He hugged her back, closed his eyes for a moment and breathed in the scent of her hair. "That's okay, Sid. We understand."

"It's just that I needed to—"

"Sid." He eased himself away from her, and tried to ignore the cauldron of Dax that was simmering on the other side of the room. "Sid, there's someone here."

She sniffled, dragging her gaze up to meet his. "What? Someone?"

He brushed some dark hair off her face. "Yeah. You have a visitor. We thought maybe he was someone you might want to see." She was frowning up at him when he stepped aside to allow her to see *Jacques*.

Slowly she turned her gaze and watched as the Frenchman stood slowly and stepped forward. "Hello, Sidney. I—"

"You?" Her breathing seemed heavy and her face grew pink. "You?" She took a step forward, bracing a hand against Clay's arm, as if for support. "What in the *fuckin*g hell are you doing here?"

Jacques took a step backward. "Now, Sid, take it easy." All traces of his accent had disappeared. "I just want to talk."

She took another shaky step forward, her fingers still digging into Clay's arm. Clay noticed Dax move in a little closer, his expression as puzzled and concerned as Clay's.

"You want to *talk*?" asked Sidney, her voice edging up another notch. "Talk? How about we talk about *this*?"

What happened next was a blur. He couldn't say for sure what happened in what order, but somewhere along the line Sidney lunged for Jacques, Dax lunged for Sidney, and Clay tried to catch them both without success. Sidney screamed a few foul epithets and by the time Dax reached her, she had managed to land a solid right hook to the Frenchman's face.

Blood sprayed across Dax's chest but at least he got there in time to keep Sidney from landing a few more telling blows and earning herself an assault charge to boot.

Clay jumped in and dragged them both away from the wailing victim.

"Let me go," screamed Sidney. "Damn it, let me go!"

Clay held her firm. "Will you be good? Or will you attack him again?"

She stopped struggling. "I won't attack." She batted her eyelashes at Dax. "But if Dax would just hold him down for me—"

"Sid," warned Clay.

"She's a lunatic," screamed Jacques, holding a discarded dishtowel to his nose. "A certifiable nutcase."

"I'm crazy?" she yelled back. "You're one to talk, Ned. And what the hell are you doing out of jail, anyway?"

Clay and Dax's eyes met, and in unison their lips mouthed, "Ned?"

Clay released Sid, and so did Dax. They both took a step forward.

Ned took a step back, fear shadowing his eyes.

"What do you think?" growled Dax. "He's kinda scrawny. Shall we snap him like a wishbone?"

"Sure," said Clay, taking a step forward. "You grab one leg and I'll take the other."

They took another step toward their victim but were stopped short by a fine-boned hand placed firmly against each of their chests.

"No," said Sid, her eyes calm now, her voice even. She turned around to face the man who had betrayed and victimized her. "Thanks for the offer, guys, but this one's mine."

* * * * *

Sid studied Ned Poirot and wondered what in the hell she had ever seen in him. "Rat" was written all over his features, as clearly as if it had been spelled out in violet neon.

"Listen, Sid," he whined, his voice distorted by the towel held to his nose.

"No, you listen." Sid stepped forward and rammed a hand against his chest, sending him sprawling back onto the futon. "You sit there while we call the police. I'm sure they'll be happy to send a paddy wagon to pick you up, and then they can send you back to whatever French prison you managed to dig your way out of."

"I didn't break out," he grumbled, studying the dishtowel now spotted with blood. "They let me out."

"You're lying."

"No. I'm not." He sat up a little straighter. "My lawyer found a loophole the size of Paris, and pulled me out through it." He grinned. "Ain't it great when the legal system works the way it's supposed to?"

"You son of a bitch." Clay's firm hand on her arm was all that kept her from leaping onto her ex-husband and pummeling him to within an inch of his life.

He leaned back, apparently aware of his precarious position. "Look, can't we talk about this? I just wanted —"

"What's to talk about? You're a liar and a cheat and a thief, and I'm glad to be rid of you."

He blinked, lowered his eyes. "I wanted to apologize."

If he had slapped her she couldn't have been more stunned. "A-apologize?"

"Yeah. I never meant to hurt you, babe. I just —"

"Don't call me 'babe'," she growled.

"Right. Sorry."

Sid took a step back, away from the foul stench of bullshit. She bumped into Clay who wrapped a protective arm around her waist.

Ned frowned.

"You never meant to *hurt* me?" she continued. "Well, that's a good one, Ned. You stole my money and betrayed me, but you didn't think I'd get *hurt*?"

Ned moved to stand but Dax stepped forward and he seemed to think better of it. He remained seated.

"That didn't come out right."

Sid waited, staring at him and keenly aware of the presence of her two lovers. Protective and comforting, like a suit of armor lined with satin.

"Uh...what I meant was, that I didn't set out in the beginning to steal from you. But things happened, and I got scared and then my greed sort of got away from me." He smiled, as if it would make a difference. "I did care about you, Sid. I guess I just needed you to know that."

"Are you done?" asked Dax.

Ned cast him a wary glance. "I guess."

"Good." Dax looked at Sid. "Can I toss him off the balcony now?"

"Sure."

Dax moved forward and with a little yelp Ned scrambled to get away from him. He vaulted off the couch, but Dax cornered him between the patio doors and the stereo. He held up his hands to ward off his attacker, but Dax stopped a couple of feet away.

Sid walked over and joined Dax, slipping an arm around his waist and giving him a soft kiss on the cheek.

Ned frowned again. "What's with you and these two, anyway? It almost seems like—"

"Get out, Ned."

"But..."

"I'm through listening to you, and I'm through feeling like a victim. Maybe I should thank you for coming back and reminding me of that."

He opened his mouth, hesitated, and then blurted out. "Okay, I'll go. But before I do..." He eyed Dax, and then shifted his gaze to Clay who had moved in behind Sid.

His Adam's apple bobbed. "I just need to ask you one thing."

Sid tamped down her temper. The sooner they finished this, the sooner he'd be gone.

"Yes?"

"Uh...can I have my share of the money back? I know it was only a few thousand but— Hey!"

Dax had grabbed him by the scruff of the neck and was hauling him off toward the door.

"Bye, Ned." Sid waved as Clay opened the door for their guest. "I wish I could say it was nice knowing you."

Dax tossed him into the hall and he hit the opposite wall hard.

The door slammed.

"But I would have been better off marrying a three-horned toad."

And then she was sandwiched between two hard chests and wrapped in four strong arms.

"You okay, babe?"

"Man, you were awesome."

"Yeah. The way you decked him..."

"Like a pro."

"A real trooper."

"An Amazon. Didn't I tell you she was an Amazon?"

Sid laughed, and pressed her face against Dax's chest. "Stop it."

"Why? It's the truth."

She shook her head and looked up into a pair of smoldering hazel eyes. She felt the sting of tears. "I'm sorry."

Dax frowned. "For what?"

She pulled away from them, turned to face them both. "I lied to you." She lifted her chin. "Again."

They stood there, looking at her and waiting and looking so strong and tall and sexy. She melted inside all over again.

"Your offer scared me. It scared me and so, like an idiot, I reacted by making up the story about the guy in France. And then, like usual, I ran."

They moved closer. "Scared you? Why?"

She swallowed. "Because it appealed to me. A lot."

They both touched her. An arm around her waist, a hand on her shoulder.

"Appealed to you? As in, you're thinking about it?"

"Uh...yeah. But..." Warm breath on her ear, heat creeping across her skin. "But we have things to talk about."

"Things?" A brush of lips and whiskers on her neck. "What kinds of things?"

A tongue ran along her collarbone and she struggled to maintain her focus. "Yes. Things like money and household chores. And then there's the future..." A hand had slipped under her T-shirt and cupped her breast. She groaned.

"The future?"

Another hand slipped inside her jeans.

Her mouth had gone dry but she managed to squeak out. "Yeah. You know...how do I fit in with you two? And what about..." she made herself say it, "children."

Her T-shirt was off, and that hand eased aside the cup of her bra at the same time as the other one slipped inside her panties.

She knew she should tell them to stop. This was serious stuff, and they needed to talk about it. But...

"Children..." mumbled Dax, whose tongue had just drawn a lazy circle around her nipple.

"Something to think about." Clay toyed with her clit, and then eased a finger inside her. She felt thick and heavy and wet, and she wanted nothing more than to grind herself against his hand. But she didn't.

"Yeah." Dax's teeth raked across her nipple and she whimpered. "Definitely worth thinking about."

"Guys..." She meant it as a protest, but it came out as more of a plea.

And then Clay's mouth was next to her ear, and he whispered, "We'll talk about all that, Sid. We'll talk about everything, and we'll figure it all out. But right now all that matters is that we love you."

With breath that seemed to burn her lungs she whispered, "You do?"

Dax popped the button on her jeans and proceeded to strip them off her. "Yeah. We do."

She closed her eyes and leaned back against Clay's arm that was now braced against her back. "I love you, too."

He scooped her up and carried her to the bedroom, with Dax close behind.

Clay laid her on the bed and then proceeded to remove his T-shirt, as did Dax.

"Hang on a second," she commanded.

Both men froze.

"Isn't it more fun to...undress each other?"

Dax grinned and grabbed Clay by the shirt, dragging him closer until they stood chest to chest. "My pleasure." He grasped the hem of Clay's shirt and whipped it over his head.

Sid lay back, propped herself up on a stack of pillows and watched as Dax skimmed his hands over Clay's torso, admiring and exploring. His obvious fascination with his lover's body was as arousing as having her nipples simultaneously sucked.

Dax undid the button on Clay's jeans and fresh desire coiled in her belly. He hooked his thumbs in the waistband and peeled them down, revealing the taut ass and imposing erection she'd already become so familiar with. As the jeans reached Clay's knees, Dax paused to lick Clay's cock. His tongue ran from base to tip before taking it deeply into his mouth.

"Jesus," moaned Clay.

But the torture was short-lived. It must have been a teaser because Dax finished removing Clay's jeans and then stood before his lover again.

Unexpectedly Clay grabbed Dax by the shoulders and drew him in for a quick, hungry kiss.

Sid bit her lip. For some reason seeing the two men engaged in tongue-play always heightened her sexual awareness. She gave in to the urge to gently stroke herself.

Clay broke off the kiss, and out of the corner of his eye noticed what she was doing. "Uh-oh." He whirled Dax around so that his back was to Clay and he was facing the bed. "We're falling down on the job, man."

He ripped the T-shirt over Dax's head, reached around his waist to pop the button on his jeans. "You've got a job to do."

Dax's jeans fell to his ankles and he grinned. "Damn. It's a dirty job, but I guess somebody's gotta –" He grunted, and fell to his knees.

Clay had used his knees to unlock Dax's, and drop him to the floor.

Clay's hands roamed over Dax's chest, and then around to caress his ass and do other things that Sid couldn't quite see.

Dax's eyes closed in obvious enjoyment.

"Well?" said Clay through a grin. "What about Sid?"

Dax's eyes flew open and suddenly his hands flew out and grabbed Sid by the ankles.

"Hey!" she squealed as he pulled her to him. He tugged her closer until her feet touched the floor and her knees were hooked over the edge of the mattress.

He gripped her thong and ripped it away like it was made of tissue paper.

"Hey!" she protested. "What are you—"

Her head fell back when his mouth covered her pussy. He kissed and licked, his tongue doing sinful things to her clit and then dipping inside to taste her. She sat up in order to see him better, and was greeted by Clay's lips joining with hers. Still standing behind Dax, he broke the kiss and motioned with his eyes, asking her a silent question. She noticed that he held a small bottle of oil and was quickly coating his hands and cock with the spicy-scented lubricant.

She swallowed and nodded, watching as Clay set the bottle aside and then began working his fingers in and out of Dax's ass. At last he withdrew his fingers, parted Dax's cheeks and nudged Dax's anus with his cock. Dax groaned softly and his mouth momentarily parted from her pussy. He rested his cheek against her thigh, and she sensed him pressing himself backward.

The tip of Clay's cock eased inside slowly and then abruptly Clay grabbed Dax's hips and thrust hard. Dax grunted and his fingers dug into the covers, but the thrusts continued, hard and fast. Clay was surprisingly brutal but Dax must have liked it that way because soon his mouth rejoined with her pussy and his hands gripped her wrists, urging her to touch his hair.

She plunged her hands into his hair, reveling in the play of his tongue, and the feel of his thick mane dripping through her fingers, as Clay's thrusts increased in tempo and force.

An orgasm hovered just out of reach but then Dax slipped two fingers inside her and she fell backward onto the bed, arching her back and pushing herself against his mouth as she pulsed around him and soaked the sheets with her climax.

Clay let out a cry, and his body stiffened as he pumped himself into Dax.

A moment later he fell onto the bed beside her. "Christ," he said, studying Dax who was grinning at them from his position at the end of the bed. "That was amazing."

Sid sat up and touched Dax's face. She bent down and kissed him, tasting a blend of herself and his own unique flavor. "Maybe so, but we're not done."

"Sorry, Dax," breathed Clay, "sometimes Sid is just a little overwhelming."

"That's okay," said Dax with a waggle of his eyebrows. "I'm feeling pretty good."

"No," she whispered, not quite believing what she was about to do. She licked her lips. "I'd like to try something...different."

Dax and Clay watched as she slowly eased herself off the bed and turned her back to Dax. She smiled coyly at Clay. "I'd like to try it."

Clay moved forward and sat on the edge, his knees on either side of her. "Have you ever had anal sex before?"

She shook her head.

"Okay, then we'll take it slow."

She drew a fingernail down his chest. "Does that mean you'll help?"

He touched a breast and grinned. "I think I could be persuaded."

"Okay," said Dax, his hand stroking her bottom. "First thing you need to do is relax."

She nodded, giving herself over to their care.

"Lean toward me," said Clay his hand skimming across her breasts and down her belly.

She leaned forward until her breasts touched his chest.

His hand eased lower until he brushed through the small triangle of curls.

She nodded and parted her thighs to allow him easier access.

As he toyed with her clit, Dax grabbed the oil and began to massage it into the area around her anus.

It felt strange, but...good. She allowed herself to enjoy it.

Clay slipped a couple of fingers inside her vagina. "You're wet," he said, and she could hear the breathlessness in his voice. "God, you're wet."

"And ready," agreed Dax as he slipped one oil-slicked finger inside her ass.

Clay continued his massage of her clit and she relaxed, floating on their attention.

Dax eased another finger inside. She tensed a little, but he kissed her shoulder and she relaxed. He began to work them in and out, a little deeper each time until her body accepted each thrust easily. "Good," he whispered, his breath fluttering across her skin. "That's good."

And then, before she realized what was happening she felt a new pressure. His cock pressed against her ass and slipped inside her. Slowly. Sweetly. The pressure strange, but intriguing. He withdrew and eased inside her again, and breathless but eager, she found herself matching his rhythm.

Clay's fingers continued their massage and then she lifted her face to his and he kissed her. His fingers worked in and out of her pussy in a powerful counterpoint to Dax's thrusts.

The pressure was intense, exquisite, verging on pain, but not quite.

The blood throbbed in her clit, and pulsed through her veins, hard and fast and fierce. Growing. Building. Stealing her breath and shutting out the rest of the world. Until...

The orgasm rippled through her like an electric current. Clay's fingers ground against her, intensifying it as his tongue ravaged her mouth.

Dax's fingers dug into her hips as he made one final thrust. He moaned as she continued to come, pulsing around him and grinding her ass against him.

"Jesus," he sighed, melting over her, the hardness of his chest against her back, sandwiching her between himself and Clay. "Sweet Jesus."

"Yeah," said Clay, his hand still pressed against her pussy. "My thoughts exactly."

Sid kissed Clay's cheek. "Wow," she said softly. "That was..."

"Yeah," chuckled Dax. "It sure was."

* * * * *

Ten minutes later Sid lay in Dax and Clay's bed, Clay pressed up against her back, and Dax nestled against her front, a blanket cocooning all three in a pocket of warmth and satisfaction.

Clay kissed her shoulder. "You mentioned something about being worried about how you would...*fit* in with our relationship."

"Yeah," said Dax, his breathing slow and soft, his voice dreamy. "I remember that. I thought it was kind of a strange thing to say."

"Me too," continued Clay, "because I think you *fit* with us just perfectly."

"You know," said Sid, breathing in their scent and soaking up their love. "I think you're right."

And at that moment she knew, without a doubt, that no matter what complications they encountered, no matter what obstacles they had to overcome, they'd be able to handle it.

Together.

The End

About the Author

Nikki lives in a small town in Ontario, Canada. In the midst of the chaos that comes with raising three small boys, working part-time as a lab tech in a hospital blood bank, and caring for her ever-adoring husband, she dreams up her stories. Nikki's work is an eclectic combination of romance, mystery, suspense and humor with characters that have plenty of room to grow. To learn more about her and her work visit her at www.nikkisoarde.com.

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