

AN URBAN ROMANCE

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By

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Don't ever run from romance, run to it.

~ Laran

CHAPTER 1

Tara Cook wanted to die. Just kill me now. Smother me with a pillow, throw me in front of a bus, please, God, just do something.

The oily-sweet man in front of her - thick with glasses like a professor, eyes so wide the whites were showing all around – was a condescending son of a bitch. His voice had that breathy sound to it that implied he knew all about what he was talking about.

Tara wanted to die. Or choke him. She had heard enough condescension from white people who tried to demonstrate they were above stereotypical bigotry by making the stupidest statements.

The oily man was Joshua Cohn, sickly wealthy and he knew it. He said, "It's so wonderful to see black people embracing the arts." His eyes showed interest, but his mouth betrayed him. The upper corner of his lips twitched as if witnessing something distasteful.

Tara wanted to throw up. There was nothing more insulting than hearing the condescension delivered as if it was a compliment. She pursed her pretty lips and tried not to roll her eyes. She kept eye contact with the man and said nothing. Oh, but she was saying it in her mind. Fuck. Off.

She was here as Elizabeth Watson's personal assistant. She wasn't here for the horrible examples of color and crap they were pushing as art. No, indeed, she wasn't here to participate in the art auction for charity at all. She knew better: charities were money scams. Eighty-five percent skimmed off every dollar to go into fat pockets. Nope, she believed in the Salvation Army – a real charity.

But she had a job to do, even if Ms. Watson had brought her and then found she didn't need her. Tara looked toward the drinks bar. She put on the best forced small smile she could and said, "Excuse me."

Joshua grimaced in that typical elitist way: mouth open and showing all his

teeth; tongue resting in sight; and lips pulled up in more of a grimace than the smile they were supposed to be.

She turned away, then rubbed her forehead and closed her eyes. Lord, save me from all of this.

"Hello..." The voice was smooth and low.

She opened her eyes to a garish display. The man was black like her, which was comforting, but wearing the most outrageous color for a shirt she could imagine. The problem was, she was wearing the almost identical color of dress. She coughed to cover a stutter and said, "Um, hi..."

He held out his hand. "I'm Marlon, the photographer."

She glanced at his hand, thinking she should not shake it, but then decided to, anyway. "Tara."

His smile was a slow spread like melting butter in a hot pan. "Tara..."

She felt a little uncomfortable under his gaze and started to turn away.

He stopped her with a delicate touch to her arm. "May I buy you a drink?"

She arched an eyebrow at him and said, "It's an open bar."

He laughed silently, his head nodding. "Well, let me get you a free one."

She sighed. Well, at least if I'm seen with him, people like Joshua will leave me alone. She searched his open face, seeing nothing threatening there. "All right."

His hand touched the small of her back lightly in escort.

She allowed it, numbed at the spot by a sudden swelling of awareness at the contact. From her back spread a fuzzy blanket of serenity.

He guided her to the bar. His smooth voice didn't change as he addressed the bartender. "Desert Rose?"

The short blonde woman with butched and spiked hair shifted her eyes to the bottles and then nodded once.

Marlon said, "Two, please."

Another nod, and the woman went to work.

Tara didn't know the drink. "Desert Rose?"

He turned his back to the counter and leaned back gently – moving his slung camera bag carefully. "Tequila and some citrus juices."

She smiled slyly. "ToKillYa, huh?"

His laugh was a low chuckle that vibrated in her chest. "It goes down good."

"I can't stand it straight."

"Who does?" His eyes looked her up and down without being invasive.

She lowered her eyes so she wouldn't have to see him stop at her breasts, if he did.

Whatever his inspection, it was gentlemanly short. "You're here to buy?"

"Actually, no. I'm Personal Assistant to Elizabeth Watson."

"Personal assistant, huh? Good job?"

She felt at ease with him, she realized. He wasn't acting overbearing or demanding. She lifted her gaze to do to him what he had done to her: she checked him out. A quick once-over told her that he was shorter than her husband Amos, but just as well-built.

He saw her looking and winked.

This is a good time to tell him. She held up her left hand. "I'm married, you know."

"I thought we were talking about your work."

The bartender set down two glasses and lightly patted the counter in confirmation.

Marlon turned and gave her a wave. "Thanks." He turned back, eyes curious and intent. "Is she a good boss?"

Still holding her hand in the air to display her wedding ring, she realized the conversation wasn't threatening. She lowered her hand and watched him as he picked up a glass. "She's alright. It's a lot of emails and phone calls. Appointments and scheduling. Rich people can't seem to sit still." She accepted the glass he offered.

He lifted the side of his half-smile a little more on an already pleasant face. "This is my second charity event for JJS Charities."

She decided to play along, feeling nothing threatening from the man, nor anything suggestive. "Good pay?"

"Very. Fifteen hundred for the night."

Her eyes went large. "And you didn't tip the bartender?"

His teeth showed in a silent laugh of genuine amusement. "I was going to at the end."

She knew photographers made good money at events, but that was about half what she made in a month. "I didn't know the pay was that good."

"Oh, mine? Sure, but I don't do events every night. Weddings are good, too, but you can only book a few of those a month."

"Only?"

"Sure. Who gets married on a Monday?"

"Oh..." She sipped her drink and liked it. "This is good."

"A beautiful drink for a beautiful lady."

Alarm bells sounded in her head. Inside her thoughts, men in jumpsuits scrambled into battle positions. Weapons were loaded with endless heavy clicks. Torpedoes slid into tubes. Red arming lights lit up. A lever was pulled and the Death Star prepared to fire. But for some reason, she didn't turn away or

otherwise excuse herself. She regarded him silently over the rim of her glass.

He was devilishly handsome. Gentle about the eyes in a suggestive way. He was cleanly kept, hair shaved down and the hair around his mouth and chin very trimmed. His belted khakis had no bulge hanging over them and his shoes were leather and polished. Even his fingernails were clean.

Is it so bad if I talk to a handsome man? If I take a compliment? She said nothing, just smiled at him over her glass. Her heart beat a little faster, but she wrote it off to shyness and her humble attitude.

She considered their meeting so far: he had not been personal in any way. No questions about where she lived, where she worked, what days she worked.

He turned personal. "So...is he a good man?" His eyes dropped to her wedding ring.

Hmm, more opportunity to set this handsome man straight. "He is. His name is Amos."

His tone didn't change except to include a hint of admiration. "A fine name." He took a sip, so cool that Tara accepted his next question. "He treats you right?"

Her words came clear and strong, even if on the conversational side of volume. "He does."

He twisted his glass once in his fingers. "Lucky man."

"And I'm a lucky woman," she said. She wanted him to understand she was no mark for some sleazy pick-up.

"What does he do for a living?" Marlon's question was delivered just as easily as the rest. His interest appeared genuine.

"He's a supervisor at SGI—"

"That's the military manufacturer?"

"Yes, it's a private company, but under contract. They make headlamp units for military vehicles."

"Nice job." He looked impressed.

"He likes it." She finished off her glass.

"May I get you another?"

She turned and pushed her glass to the middle of the counter. She hummed a little in thought. He's being nice and it feels good not to have to listen to condescension. She decided to stay put. "I guess I'll have another – if you don't think it'll break your wallet."

He laughed, lightly lifting his head back, teeth showing, and then shook his head. "Free can be pretty expensive sometimes..." He turned with her to face the counter. The bartender was mixing other drinks, so he waited.

Tara was looking at him from the side. He had no marks of the thug. No visible tattoos running up his neck, no capped teeth, no head bobs or puckered lips. "How did you get into photography?"

He gave a rueful chuckle. "There's a story to that one."

"Doesn't look like we're going anywhere, unless you have work to do."

"Bartender?" He waved. "Two more please? Desert Roses." He turned his head to hers. They were close, shoulder to shoulder. "I'll be busy at the end of the auction. Got another half hour before I need to get moving."

"So, tell me." She felt comfortable admitting to herself that talking to him was easy and fun. Amos can't get mad at me for talking, can he?

"I stole my mother's camera."

"Stole?"

"Borrowed."

She giggled. "Uh huh."

"Well, really, I did. I put it back."

She nodded, understanding.

He said, "I had found this outrageous looking spider behind the garage and thought for sure it was Guinness Book of World Records material. My mother had one of the first digitals out in the mid-nineties and I thought it was perfect for my soon to be fame and fortune."

The bartender slid two glasses nearer them and patted the counter.

She took the opportunity before him. "Thank you." The bartender nodded with a single downward cast of the eyes. I wonder if they're not supposed to talk?

Marlon said, "Yes, thank you much." He sipped. "So, anyways, I grab the camera and run."

"How old were you?"

"Nineteen, just outta high school. I got back there and got a few super close-ups, but it had curled up a bit. So I poked the web with a stick a few times. The thing's legs flew out all threatening-looking and I got pictures of those."

"Ick."

"It was sort of beautiful. Certainly the web was. But I got creeped out looking at it and got the camera back in place before mama knew it was gone."

"That got you started in photography?"

"No, my father did."

"I thought the spider did?"

He winked at her. "When mama saw what was on her camera, she shrieked bloody terror."

Tara laughed.

"Pops comes running out with his 12 gauge ready to blow holes in whatever was making her scream."

She closed her eyes, trying not to laugh too hard.

"He sees what's on the camera and begins laughing. But then he's coming at me

and he grabs my shirt in his fist. He says, 'Now we know what you can be.' "

"You didn't have any other career designs?"

"I had thought about being a cop, but the hours sort of suck."

She frowned at him. "A cop, huh?"

"I wanted to do something that felt right."

She reached out suddenly, squeezing his arm. "That's so special to hear. Seems like a lot of people don't care today."

"I don't think many do." He reached a finger the short distance to her shoulder and brushed back several strands of hair. His finger trailed on her skin.

She shivered, frozen at the touch and discovering little trembles tickling through her and igniting heat inside. Her lips parted at the sensations swirling in her and she looked him in the eyes.

He was smiling, watching. He said, "Simple gestures between people are lost in a tornado of texting."

She opened her mouth a little wider to say something, but nothing came out.

He moved with his finger, sliding behind her, close but not touching. His heat warmed her back.

Tara gasped as the trembling increased. What is this effect this man has over me? He's hypnotic. Intoxicating. Her head felt as if her thoughts were swimming aimlessly. Her chest rose and fell as she panted with excitement. She would have run if he had grabbed her and tried to force a kiss. She had needed to run a few times before from overbearing men. But Marlon was silky smooth and, other than raising alarms, brought up no real reason for reaction.

His fingers came down on her right shoulder, igniting a fire there that spread down her side.

She closed her eyes.

His fingertips trailed slowly across her shoulder and then down her right arm.

Sizzling tingles of electric excitement lit up her arms with goosebumps. Her trembling intensified. "I...shouldn't be standing here—"

He said, "I can tell you're a different kind of woman. A very special and good kind."

Yes, I am, but...

He whispered in her ear, "You're not like the girls that approach me."

"I should hope not."

"There's something so peaceful about you..."

Yes, I feel that, too!

He lifted his glass with his other hand, bringing it close to her lips. "I'd like nothing more than to know your lips were on my glass. A kiss we can't share."

Ohhh...I'm going to collapse. She looked at the liquid for a few seconds, then dipped her head forward.

Marlon moved his hand with her gently, and tilted the drink to her lips. When she was done with her sip, he took the glass away and twisted away from her to the side. He leaned again against the counter and raised his glass to his lips. "Thank you..."

Her breathing and heartbeat were racing. She watched him sip from the glass, eyes closed. His form and physique called to her. She wanted to dig her fingernails into the man and smell his clean scent. Heat flooded her pussy so fast that she squirmed where she stood.

CHAPTER 2

Tara finished her third drink while sitting next to Marlon on a bench. They were pressed close at the side, touching, and sharing heat. She felt wet and achy, even if sitting next to him had been chaste.

He sighed long and low. "I've enjoyed our time tonight."

Oh my god, so have I. "Yes..."

He stood. "I need to get moving – pictures to take." He fished in his pants pocket and pulled out a card. "My card..." He trailed off, the first uncertainty in his voice she had heard all night.

A deflating feeling surrounded and embraced her. It's over? She took the card. It read: Marlon Ellis Photography. His phone number, email, and website were listed.

His look was sad, if anything. "I...hope you call."

She opened her mouth to say she might, but knew she couldn't. She accepted the card and settled for giving him something of a smile. A let-down smile.

His eyes told her he knew. He turned without another word and walked away.

~ ~ ~

In the parking lot later, she reached for her keys and touched the card. She stopped in the lot and withdrew it. She said to no one, "Marlon Ellis."

It had been a wonderful night – just talking. She felt close to the man and

connected. She felt a longing stir in her that was shameful and sinful. The heat returned to her and her pussy felt drenched. But she knew it was impossible. She loved her husband and he loved her.

She looked at the card for a moment before crumpling it and tossing it down.

~ ~ ~

Tara entered the bedroom and let out a huge sigh.

Amos was in bed, sheet over him, and reading. "How'd it go?"

"It was...fun."

His face screwed up in confusion. "All that high society crap was fun? You ain't never said any of that was fun before."

"It isn't. I ended up talking to the photographer."

His look was confused. "The photographer?"

She began untying the dress-strap at the back of her neck. "He's one of us."

Amos laid the book on his chest. "A brother?"

"Mm hmm."

"What are you doing running around talking to other men for?"

She sighed. "It was just talk." She thought of sipping from his glass so they could share a kiss that couldn't be. She shivered.

"How long did you talk to him?" His brows were down in suspicion.

She slipped out of her dress, her breasts swaying with freedom. "I don't know.

An hour?"

"Sounds like more than just chit chat. He talk you up?"

She removed her panties; they were very damp and she wanted fresh ones for bed. "It was probably on his mind, but I flashed my ring in his face, early."

He grumbled in bed, a warning sign. "He take the hint?"

"Yes, he did, Amos." She planted both fists on naked hips and gave him a stern look.

"What could you possibly talk about for an hour?"

She frowned and turned away to the dresser – not just to grab panties, but to hide her face. "Just things."

"Just things? What kind of answer is that?"

She bent, sliding into fresh panties. "Work, life..."

"Life? What is this shit? You pouring your soul out to some brother and say it's fun?"

She got into bed. "There's nothing to worry about."

"The fuck there isn't. What if I had some sister all pouring her soul out to me? That'd be okay?" He sounded very offended.

"You better not. I'd claw the hussy—"

"Yeah. And I'd claw your soul-mate, too. Teach him some manners."

"He was very nice."

"I bet he was." He reached over suddenly and grabbed her panties.

She squawked. "What are you doing?"

"Checking you out." His fingers tried to get under the material.

"Stop that." She struggled to get his hand away.

"Afraid? Scared? You hiding something?"

She knew in that instant that she couldn't. She dare not hide or there would be a fight. A big one with screaming and shouting and everything they didn't normally do in their happy marriage. She knew he had a right to know. She relented, worried about what he'd think.

His fingers dug under and found her aching pussy lips. They pushed into her folds and she gasped at the intrusion.

"Fuck, you're wet." It was a bitter accusation.

She pursed her lips and turned her head away.

His fingers fucked in and out of her hole, reigniting the heat that was hiding inside her. "He do this to you? He make you all wet? I thought you said he saw your ring and took the hint?"

She breathed raggedly, enjoying the feel of her husband's fingers. "He did. It was all chaste."

"Did he touch you?"

She knew she couldn't dodge the question without lying – and she didn't want to lie to her husband. "On my shoulder and arm."

"Fuck. You let him hit up on you—"

She twisted towards him suddenly. "We talked. That's all..." Her eyes dropped down to the sheet, drawn by the oddity. It was tented up, covering her husband's erection. She stared at it for a few seconds, trying to comprehend what she was seeing.

Amos saw it and turned on his side with a huff.

She said, "What is that?"

He was silent for a moment. "I was looking at porn."

She picked up the book between them. "A technical manual counts as porn now?"

His look was furious, but a hint of something else was there, too. "Don't you change the subject. You're all wet." His fingers pushed in deeper to punctuate his point.

She tore back the sheet.

His erection bobbed there, hard and throbbing.

Her voice rose several notches. "What is this? You're getting all horny about this?"

"The fuck I am."

"The fuck you aren't." She grabbed his cock, squeezing the dark skin. He had a deeper color than she did. "Amos Cook, you're all turned on."

"Am not." He leaned up and began yanking down her panties. "I wanted to make love to my wife. I can't believe I'm hearing you got all wet over some other brother."

She let him remove her panties. In truth, she desperately needed to be fucked. What's gotten into you? She watched his face, but he wouldn't look her in the eyes. However, his very hard cock told her he wanted her and badly.

He climbed between her legs, puffing with indignation. "Can't believe you got all hot over another man. What am I here for?" He stabbed his erection forward and began filling her pussy. His length slid in easily.

Tara closed her eyes and sighed, feeling that thickness stretch her open and slide in. Her empty pussy was filled in the way she needed it. She let out a moan.

Her husband began pumping, driving that thickness in and out of her. "Why're your eyes closed? You thinking of him?"

She moaned louder, not having any control over the sensations swimming through her.

"Fuck, woman, you are!"

She shook her head, though she couldn't get Marlon's face from her memory. "It's you I love. It's you. I love you."

He was moving fast, ramming his hips down onto hers. "That's right, baby. You better. You better love me. I'm not having you thinking of Mister Marlon Ellis while I'm making love to you." His breathing accelerated and so did his pumps. "I don't want you getting all wet...ahhh...for some other man. You hear?" His gasps came out high and tense.

"I love you." She clawed his shoulders, feeling so intensely satisfied to have her husband make love to her. But Marlon's face was in her memory and she couldn't shake it. What would a tryst with him have been like if I wasn't married? Her hips trembled and tensed. The ache that was stretched and filled twisted inside her in a slow, building roll. She cried out as it broke, sending waves of ecstasy over her.

Amos drove into her harder, driving her orgasm into orbit. "You better not be thinking of him."

Lights flashed before her eyes and stars flew. She couldn't help thinking of Marlon being on her with her husband reminding her. Oh, Marlon. Was this what it might have been like? If I hadn't been married? She sighed long and lusty as her orgasm subsided and was replaced by a pleasant ache of satisfaction.

Amos growled above her, shoving his thick erection deep. "Aghh!" His scalding spurts in her came hard and fast. After several squirts, he gasped and panted as if in pain – as if he had taken a deep splinter. He laid slowly down on her and kissed her lips.

CHAPTER 3

Tara came out of the bathroom the next morning, fixing her earring.

Amos was scowling at her. "Do I have to worry about you talking to this man again?" He was sitting in bed, elbows on spread knees, hunkered over like a watching gargoyle. A giant gargoyle. His cock rested flaccid.

She stopped and looked at him. "No, of course not."

"You didn't get his number?"

"I did—"

"Fuck. I knew it." He shook his head and pursed his lips.

"I threw it away."

"Uh huh."

She scowled defensively. "I did. He gave me his card. I threw it away in the parking lot, I swear. I knew it had to be done and I did it."

He had looked up at her, listening. Her words visibly relaxed him. He blew out a breath and his words followed his nod. "I see it. I see the truth in your eyes." He stood and came to her, looking down at her. The whites of his eyes flashed with ferocity.

She wasn't afraid; he had never hit her. Ever.

He said, "I don't want the woman I love cheating on me."

"I didn't, and I won't."

"I don't cheat on you; I expect the same courtesy."

She firmed her lips. "I haven't and I won't and you know it."

He sighed easier and grabbed her for a hug. "I love you, baby. You're mine."

She squeezed his muscular form. "I'm all yours."

He let go. "You really threw his card away?"

She coughed in indignation. "I said I did."

"No, no, I believe you." His smile was amused. "I guess I find that a little surprising. You make me proud."

She reached up and touched his cheek. "I always want to make you proud."

"Hurry back." It was Saturday and she had to go in for a few hours for Ms. Watson.

She said, "I will."

~ ~ ~

Tara became personal assistant for a few hours on a partly-cloudy Saturday. She sat in her office on the third floor with a splendid view. She checked Elizabeth's purchases from the previous night and entered dates of delivery on her computer calendar.

Through it all, she couldn't stop thinking of Marlon. But it wasn't a consuming imagination that plagued her. She thought about the photographer in ways that related to her marriage and her commitment. By the end of her duties that morning, he was a fading memory replaced by the routine of her life. Marlon Ellis was safely sorted out in her thoughts and dumped in the trashbin of experience.

She left the office building feeling free of entanglements.

~ ~ ~

She and Amos were paying on a posh little condo in a private complex. It was as much as they could afford and they ignored the occasional looks that hinted their neighbors didn't want them there.

Sometimes that angered Tara. It often angered Amos. She knew some blacks didn't care about how they lived. But that extended across all color lines. Why should she be held as indicative of others? She and Amos weren't ghetto dwellers. They didn't have refuse scattered about. She drove a white Mercedes C Class, not some rusted land yacht. She had even paid off the car the previous year.

No, she was not trash. She resented the bigoted looks that assumed she was. But their condominium was chosen for privacy. There were no open yards or lawns where they could sit out and field those kinds of looks all day long. Other than walking to their cars, they were as invisible as everyone else.

And not all their neighbors were bigoted: some were downright pleasant. Sometimes she found hope in society.

She entered their condo and closed the door against the heat. She sighed deeply, feeling the tension drain away in the air conditioning.

"Tara?" Amos called from somewhere.

"Yep, I'm home."

She heard a faint grunt of acknowledgment. She grabbed a glass in the kitchen and filled it with cold water from the cooler. They only drank bottled water.

He was sitting in the study. That was what they called it, anyway. It was really supposed to be a third bedroom. A row of shelves covered the wall without the window and a small leather love seat sat between a pair of matching tiffany lamps. A small desk held a computer they mostly didn't use – he had a laptop for

emails and the like. Their elegant collection of tiger figures accented the room. Tigers on the hunt. Tigresses on the prowl.

He looked up, removing his reading glasses. Sometimes he wore them, sometimes not. He was handsome in a different way when he wore them. "All done working?"

"Mm hmm." She leaned against the doorway.

He squinted one eye at her. "No secret phone calls to Mister Marlon—"

"No." Her word was sharp enough to stop him. "I told you I wouldn't." Damn, just when I had dismissed him from my mind.

He chuckled. "Just checking. What were you doing down there on a Saturday, anyway? Kind of unusual."

Pleased to change the subject, she relaxed. "Checking delivery dates for the art she won."

"Art, huh?"

"Art."

He shook his head. "Was any of it good? Or was it all shit?" He set aside the book.

"Well, none of it was my taste, but it was art."

He blew out a breath and shook his head again. "Some skinny VD punk calls himself an artist and puts shit on a stick. That ain't art."

"Some people think it is. Don't judge other people's appreciation of—"

"Fuck me it ain't. It's not art; it's shit on a stick."

She tried to suppress her giggle but couldn't. Amos might have been crude sometimes, but he was her man and usually brutally correct. She loved him for his honest wisdom. On the other hand, she shifted a little in discomfort. She had deftly settled the issue of Marlon in her mind and filed him away to be forgotten.

Now he was back on her mind, needing to be forgotten once again. Had Marlon been a test from God?

Her husband rumbled, "What're you thinking about? You got a look on your face."

She didn't want to tell him and start a long discussion on why she was thinking about Marlon. It would take hours to convince him she had only been thinking about him because he had brought the man up. No, I'd rather clean the toilets twice than go through all that. So she lied to him. "How much I love you." Though it was sort of the partial truth, it was still technically a lie and she immediately felt bad about deceiving her husband.

It just had to be done. For the good of both of them.

~ ~ ~

Tara knelt on the bed naked Sunday night and slapped her ass. She winked over her shoulder.

Amos chuckled sexily. Then he hummed in admiration. "What a beautiful woman." He was stroking himself, checking her out.

A distant thought flashed through her mind that she had heard those words recently. Marlon's image rose in her mind and she stamped down on it forcefully. She took a deep breath and let it out slowly. Her husband's hand grabbed her hip and tossed her over onto her back. She was startled. "What? You don't want—"

He jerked her knees apart and lowered his face to her pussy.

Oh, okay. She closed her eyes and let out a long sigh as his tongue began wetting and licking her clit. The high-octane sensations swelling in her made her squirm on the bed.

He pulled his tongue off and inserted some fingers. "Yeah." His smile was

satisfied and eager.

She looked down her body at him. "This is special."

He chuckled. His fingers moved in and out and he bent to flick a tongue across her clit.

She gasped and clawed a hand at her boob. Her nipples had hardened.

He said, "So what did this Marlon look like?"

She jerked, startled by the interruption of her enjoyment. She lifted her head. "What? Why would you want to know that for?"

He flashed a grin up towards her. "Curious, baby. A man talks you up and sends you home wet? I wanna know. I have a right to know."

She dropped her head back and let out a breath. "I don't know; he was nice-looking."

"Like a thug? A Fat Albert? Lady-boy with an afro?"

She laughed a little. "Um, no." She squirmed at the feel of his fingers moving in and out of her. "He was very clean-cut." She gasped as her husband's tongue touched her again. "Hair buzzed down. Hint of a mustache and goatee..."

"Yeah? Tough guy? Musclehead?"

"No..." Her breathing was accelerating. "He was very gentle, but not like effeminate or anything. Except for his shirt."

"Huh?" His tongue tortured her clit.

She moaned and arched her back. "It was a neon red, almost exactly like my dress."

He pulled his tongue off and chuckled. His hot breath was blowing on her pussy. He said, "So he was gay?"

"I don't think so."

"Hard to imagine what he looked like."

She trembled at the approach of a wave of pleasure. "He's probably got his picture on his website."

"Oh, he had a website?"

"Yeah, it was on his card. Something like Ellisphotography dot-com, I think."

"Hmm, I wanna check it out."

"Right now?" What about making love?

Amos was smiling. "Yeah, why not? I wanna know what he looks like."

She had felt herself getting close, but also felt pleased that her husband didn't seem mad now. "Well, alright then."

He reached under the bed and pulled up his laptop. Opening it, he turned it on and slid it closer to her on the bed.

She sat up and gave him an eyebrow. "You really want to know?"

"Yeah, I do."

She knew his tone: he did. She opened the browser and typed in the search bar. The results turned up several. She hovered the pointer over them and narrowed it down by the description. No, not Megan Ellis. Not Ellis-Peters. Selecting one, she watched a black background load with silver words. A picture of their skyline appeared. "This is probably it."

"Lemme see." He crawled over to the side of the bed she was at.

"His picture isn't here." She clicked the About link and was taken to a different page. There, in a studio shot, was Marlon, sitting on a stool with his hands clasped between his knees. A small thrill shot up her spine, reminding her of how magnetically the man had affected her. "Here he is."

He looked at the screen when she turned it. His eyebrow came up and a considering set to his lips. "Ahh...I see. So that's the man."

"Mm hmm." She kept her tone neutral, but she had developed a quiver in her innards that spoke of excitement and uncertainty.

"Handsome devil."

She wasn't sure how to respond to that, so she turned the laptop back around and shut down the browser. But not before she got another look at the picture. He looks hot sitting there. Memories of her heat rushed back in on her – the feel of her body responding to the man's talk, the ache that had tormented her inside. She remembered the deep, electrifying pull of the man's personality.

She shut the computer and pushed it to the side.

Amos was watching her, a small smile on his face. "Bring back memories?"

"No, it was all just talk, anyways." Better play it safe. I can't hurt Amos admitting anything. It's all over, anyway.

He got back between her legs and licked upwards over her clit.

She shuddered and gasped out.

He moved up, crawling over her. "You said he touched you."

"Well...yes." Please stop talking about him, baby.

"And you came home wet."

Hey, what is this? Court? I plead the fifth. "Um..."

He positioned his cock at her entrance, nestled just inside her lips. "Yeah, wet. He touched your bare skin..." He shoved forward, sliding his erection hard into her. His thickness invaded, filling and stretching her as it went deep.

She cried out, taken by surprise by both his thrust and the swelling of sensuality at the memory of Marlon's touch.

Her husband's voice became a feverish whisper. "Yeah, that's right. He had his hands on your skin."

She trembled, feeling a surge of dizziness. She moaned low in memory.

He drove deep into her with long pumps, satisfying her pussy's hunger to be stuffed. "Did he do anything else to you?"

"No, it was all clean."

"Did he kiss you?"

"No. But..." She remembered the glass as the images in her mind of their encounter intensified.

He slowed. "But what?"

"It's nothing really. He knew he couldn't kiss me so he offered me his glass to sip. So that he could taste my lips on his glass after me."

Amos gasped and shuddered. "Oh..." He panted, his eyes wide and watching her face. "Oh, that bad man. Wanting a taste of your lips."

Tara tensed, feeling her husband's thickness in her and remembering how hot she had become over the simple glass gesture.

Her husband trembled and began pumping again. "Those luscious lips."

She couldn't contain it any longer. Marlon's lips touching the glass after she had sipped filled her mind while her husband filled her pussy. It was too much for a woman to bear. The effort to maintain a separation between the two was impossible – no woman could resist the swelling orgasm that overtook her. Her fingers gripped into her husband's arms like claws and she cried out. Her hips rose in taut tension and hung there, trembling as her inner woman burst in explosive release.

Amos drove deep. "Yeah, baby. And you got all wet over it."

Victorious in ecstasy, a rising rift inside illustrated her defeat. She had wanted to forget Marlon Ellis: now she was experiencing a deep orgasm while remembering his magnetism and charisma. She clenched her husband's butt and pulled. Do it, baby. Fuck it, be my Marlon for tonight. Just for tonight...

Her husband sped his thrusts, panting faster with excitement.

She closed her eyes, feeling the last of her pulsing explosions recede. She imagined it was Marlon inside her at that moment. Her pussy clenched in desire and satisfaction. She felt the cock in her swell and throb. Scalding splashes sank deep and she froze with the feeling of her need being filled with seed.

CHAPTER 4

Tara knew torture. Not the physical kind, but the emotional. She would find herself at work, frozen over the keyboard with her mind fuzzily drifting along avenues of alternative existences. Her imagination traveled paths of futures where she was with Amos. Or she was with Marlon. Or she had never met either. She daydreamed of kissing Marlon, of loving her husband, and of being with neither.

Her work didn't suffer, thankfully. She had not much to do that required efficient speed and attention. A five minute scheduling task turned into ten minutes. She slowed, but it wasn't noticeable in her line of work. She made no mistakes; it just took longer, plagued as she was.

She half wanted to listen to voicemail and hear Marlon's voice inquiring after her. But she feared it, too, knowing she shouldn't dare entertain engaging the man on anything more than the level of an associate. I can't risk my husband- my marriage. It can't be.

Amos was strangely quiet at home for several days. His hugs and kisses were just as warm and loving, but there was something hidden there, unspoken and out of view. Something had come between them, and she knew it was Marlon.

~ ~ ~

She stroked her husband's shoulder in bed. He was reading one of his eye-gougingly dry technical manuals. She said, "You know I love you." She wanted to bring what was festering out into the open. She wanted the sunlight of their love to dry out the rot she felt had grown in the darkness of their silence.

He glanced at her, a hint of a smile on his handsome face. "Of course, baby." His

eyes flicked back to the manual.

She stroked his pectoral muscle with her fingernails. "I don't want anything coming between us."

He closed the book and gave her a more considering look of attention. "I know that."

"You've been quiet."

"Have I?"

She nodded.

He reached and clasped her hand. "I love you, baby, always. If I've been quiet, I haven't realized it."

She felt as if she weren't getting anywhere. "I will always be yours."

His grin spread much like Marlon's had that fateful night – a slow spread of melting butter in a hot pan. "You better, woman. You better."

"You know me."

"Yes, I believe I do." He was watching her, though, not talking much except to respond.

Not wanting to even mention Marlon, she saw no way to get her point across without bringing him up and potentially deepening the wound she felt between them. "I want things like they were..."

His response was certain and swift. "They are, baby. Nothing's changed."

A peace settled over her, easing away some of the tension. She sighed with relief and nodded. She looked down, not wanting to meet his eyes unless he saw Marlon reflected in them. Best to put this behind me once again. Wherever you are, Marlon, I hope you aren't as tortured as I am.

~ ~ ~

Weeks had passed since that night of the charity auction. Tara felt as if her life was a boat that had come near capsizing and was only now slowly righting. Eventually, she would be able to move on in her life with Amos and forget things had felt so dangerously close to being wrecked.

A night like any other woke her. A simple night, comfortable in bed and deep in sleep turned different by something not ordinary. She was turning over in bed in that half sleep-state of turning and getting comfortable. She twisted, settling her head into the pillow. A half-eye told her it was after three in the morning. She would be getting up to start her day at five o'clock.

Something was strange, though, that woke her a little more. Her husband was turning, too. Or she thought he was. What? Something's wrong? She lifted her head, trying to make sense in the dim light of the digital clock.

Amos was moving and breathing funny. His exhales were louder than his inhales. He moved not smoothly but in fits and starts.

Tara reached over to lightly touch him, wondering if he was having a nightmare. Her hand came down near his chest, very lightly. She immediately felt the sheet moving lower down. She blinked, realizing his breathing sounded like sex. He was masturbating under the sheet, but very obviously in a deep dream-state.

A panic flooded her for a brief second, leaving her breathing heavy. What are you dreaming about? Should I wake you? Stop the dream? What is it? Who is it? She felt as if she were trespassing, but wanted to know what this secret dream was all about. She pulled her hand back and settled, listening to him pant sexually. Then came a couple of whispers.

Her husband's head moved a little – one way, then a little to the other. "Yeah... Yeah... That's it... That's good..."

Her heart pounded in her ears. He's having sex? Is it with me? Or someone else?

His hand moved more surely and she could feel the sheet tented up. He gasped

and jerked.

She closed her eyes and tried not to breathe.

He panted lightly for a few seconds then groaned quietly, as if annoyed. He rolled out of bed and padded to the bathroom.

She watched him with mostly closed eyes. She thought she saw a very dim reflection – a flash – of his erection in the clock's light.

The bathroom door quietly shut and the water in the sink ran for no more than two seconds. After another three seconds, he came back out and climbed into bed. He scooted over to her and cuddled. His forehead touched her nose – it was freshly damp and cold. His penis touched her knee. It was also freshly damp and very cold. He sighed deeply once and went still.

Tara could not find sleep the rest of the early morning.

~ ~ ~

She thought she had known torment before; she felt it even more so now. It was Friday, and thankfully one that wasn't busy.

Elizabeth Watson was a white-haired lady who kept her hair perfectly coiffed at expensive salons. Her face displayed too few wrinkles and Tara suspected plastic surgery at some point in the past. The woman leaned into Tara's office and delivered an unexpected declaration of doom. "I want to update our portfolio with a picture from the JJS art auction. Arrange it?"

Tara felt the blood drain from her face and her words were wooden. "Sure. Of course."

Elizabeth said nothing else and gave no further gesture of acknowledgment.

Her boss left her sitting in a state of stunned inaction. This is unexpected. What

do I do? Her eyes searched her desk for answers it couldn't hold. I'll have to do it. Fast. Get it over with. She clenched her fists. Damn, I thought this was all behind me.

She brought up the phone book and paused. No, I don't want to call him. I don't want to talk any more than I have to. Maybe I can just show up and see the pictures. Select one and be done with it. Or maybe I could email him. She pursed her lips. No, that might seem like an invitation: he'd know my email.

Tara considered arranging to have the printer select one himself, but knew Elizabeth would expect her to make the choice, not trust it to someone who didn't know her tastes. Damn it. She knew she would have to see Marlon again – it was preferable to having him knowing her phone number or email.

She considered calling Amos, but knew his phone would be on voicemail. She could text him, but he would only check it during breaks. In emergencies, she could call the plant directly and contact him by landline, but this wasn't an emergency. God help me.

She tapped in her browser and brought up Marlon's site. She jotted his address down on a post-it note and looked for a long second at the About link.

She clicked it.

His image came up, bold and beautiful. Arising in her with the image were all the forgotten and forbidden tensions of that encounter. Her heart began to beat faster. Her breathing became labored and she panted through half-open lips as she fought against a sudden dizziness.

She blinked several times and closed the browser. She rose and grabbed up her purse.

~ ~ ~

Tara parked her Mercedes across the street from Ellis Photography. The neon

Open sign told her she would not be avoiding her fate today. The glow of the sign pulled on her as a flame would a moth. It was inevitable. Gripping the black leather steering wheel, she tried to set a measure of composure. She closed her eyes and felt the cool breeze of the air conditioning across her face. I can do this. Get in, select a picture, get out. No funny talk. All business. She pursed her lips and nodded to herself. Black and white. Just like my car. White car, black interior. No grays for confusion. No room for question.

She stepped out and thumbed the key fob, hearing the quiet chirp and soft locking of the door mechanism.

She crossed the street after a car and walked with confidence towards her destined doom.

CHAPTER 5

Tara only briefly looked at the photos and portraits in the glass window before pushing in. She had no time to stand outside and consider the layout or artistry of Marlon's camera work. No, this was a business visit: a quick and clean get in, get it done, and get away.

The door chimed electronically as she entered.

A simple forward area of the studio was arranged with frames and examples of his work. A small loveseat and two chairs sat in the center - probably a place to view photos – and the register sat on a long glass counter that contained other items that could display pictures.

Marlon's voice drifted from the back of the store, behind the partition-wall and hanging curtain entrance. "Be right out."

Tara's senses thrilled slightly to the sound. She took several deep breaths to keep her composure. She began to wander the walls, looking at photos and frames: married couples; weddings; family shots. Some sports pictures – the ever present blonde young boy holding a football and his helmet under the other arm.

It was when she neared the counter that something she saw captured every last fragment of attention she had. Night scenes, bright with low lights and color. And a distinct red that stole her breath away and left her temples pounding with pressure.

There Tara sat framed on the wall, looking to the side, her red dress obvious in the night. In another, she stood near the bar. In yet another, she stood looking up. She knew that one: the glittery sleeve just at the edge of the picture would be that of her boss, Elizabeth. But the picture was all Tara: she had been standing and watching the art pieces come out for bidding.

The fourth picture was the worst of all. The entirety of the picture was of Tara's face, zoomed from a distance. Her eyes were soft and looking somewhere to the side. Her nose and lips were sharp while her ears and hair had that telltale

fuzziness that came with distance. She could see something wistful in her own face in that shot. What was I thinking? Was it him?

A rustle from the back startled her, and she swung around to put her back to the pictures. She didn't want to be seen looking and have to acknowledge she knew he had taken pictures of her to display next to his counter – where he could easily see them.

A young girl in her twenties, whip-thin with attitude and an afro, was buttoning her blouse and walking from the back. She looked at Tara as if shamed, but then stopped and looked her up and down.

She set her mouth in a firm line at the girl's look. Why you little hussy. I got more than you'll ever have. Put your eyes back in your head and be on your way. She did not say it, though, only giving the girl a raised eyebrow of disdain.

With a twist of her mouth and a shifting bounce to her thin hips, the girl gave her back a challenging look that insisted the younger had the measure of the older. The young thing walked out.

Tara was looking after her when Marlon's voice tore away all shreds of sanity.

"May I...?" He trailed off as she was turning her head to him. He swallowed and visibly straightened, flicking his eyes towards the door and the departing girl.

Uh huh. Had yourself some young stuff, huh? Amazingly, her voice came out cool. "Hello, Mister Ellis."

His eyes snapped back to her and softened. That grin slow as melting butter spread on his face.

But she detected no cover there. She saw the flash in his eyes – the genuine delight and interest.

He said, as if discovering a lost treasure, "Tara."

His single word melted her resolve and sent one large spike of warmth down her middle and to her pussy. She felt it twitch uncontrollably. She jerked in shock and moved to cover it, taking two steps towards the man. She kept a very respectful distance, though. Too respectful. Enemy respectful. She swallowed

and said, "Miss Warren would like to purchase a photo for our portfolio."

Marlon's face betrayed no immediate reaction, but something in his eyes became muted. "Of course." His eyes flicked over her shoulder to the wall where her pictures hung. He moved to the side as if to block her view of them and held out his arm towards the curtained partition. "Of course. I still have them on my computer. Come on back."

She moved to the hanging curtain from which the girl had emerged. Expecting to see a man-lair with leopard prints and seductive candles, she instead saw cables, tarps, canvas, and pieces of furniture for taking portraits. A desk sat there with a computer against the wall. The layout told her that behind the desk wall was an area with rooms – a live-in studio.

There was no immediate stool or chair set, or lounge, from which the girl might have been posing topless or nude. No lights were set up. The girl had come from the rooms down the hallway.

She inquired neutrally, "You live here?"

"I do."

And that confirmed it. Afro-girl had come from the back, buttoning up from some sexual activity, but using the store-front to leave. A score for a hunting man, surely, but not a close lover who would either stay in the rooms or use the back door.

He slid over a stool. "Sit."

She did, lips pursed and heart steeled.

He sat and opened files on his computer. Folders and titles flashed as he navigated. With a certainty of familiarity, he opened a folder. "Here we go. I have printouts if you like, or you can view them on the screen." He was opening a file drawer and fingering through the folders with long fingers.

"Screen is fine." Immediately she regretted it, realizing she could have asked for some printouts and left. It all would've been handled by phone. She opened her mouth to retract, but held her breath instead. Too late. Don't look like some foolish girl now.

He glanced at her once, his eyes hopeful, but his smile waning.

She saw the slightest of tremors in his hand.

He opened up a picture and set it to slideshow. The photos began shifting.

Tara saw the nervous lick of the man's tongue on his lips. Am I seeing this right? He's nervous? Because I interrupted his dalliance or...? She was staring at the side of his head and not at the screen.

He leaned back in his chair, crossing his arms and stroking his chin as he appeared to critically view the photos flashing by.

What are you thinking, Mister Marlon Ellis? Are you really as uncertain as you look? Why is my picture on your wall? Heat flushed downwards, enwrapping and enfolding her pussy. It gave a twinge that let her know just how potent was the man's personality and magnetism. She thought he had been nothing: a flash in the pan; a mistaken gauge of her emotions; or a misunderstanding of her happiness with her husband. But sitting there and being so close to him again caused a resurfacing of all the wild desires she had felt that evening almost two months gone. She felt the pull from Marlon as strongly as she felt the love for her husband. She found the magnetism as undeniable as the strength of her marriage.

Marlon glanced at her again and appeared shocked that she was looking at him. She shifted her eyes away, but not before he had caught them. He seemed to tense and relax at the same time, something rising in him that increased his magnetism and at the same time settling him with an ease that was infuriating.

Tara tried to avoid looking at him.

Pictures flashed by as they both pretended to consider them.

She swallowed nervously. Why do I feel this need to touch him? To feel his skin under my fingers? Her nipples hardened in her blouse. Why do I want to claw him and kiss him? She squirmed on the stool, suddenly sexually uncomfortable. Her word was almost a convulsion. "Stop."

Marlon jerked in his seat and grabbed the mouse. "Um?"

"Back up two pictures." She was panting, unable to speak clearly and she knew he knew it.

He stopped the slideshow and clicked back, opening a picture.

"Not that one. Forward one or two." She tried to keep the desperate tone muted, but it came out almost with anguish. She used her hand to ostensibly scratch at her other arm, her forearm crossing over her breasts. Moving with the scratch, she surreptitiously rubbed her nipples through her blouse with the side of her arm to ease the ache that antagonized her. She put a hand down on the stool and pressed as if to shift. She angled her clit against her wrist and squeezed.

Marlon was none the wiser.

She jerked, a spasm of pleasure radiating up from her clit. She removed her hand. "That one," she said with relief.

It was a simple picture, not one very artistic. Much like something one would see in a magazine, Elizabeth was facing the camera but looking down at a twisted sculpture, her face partially hidden. It was perfect.

Marlon sounded amused. "This? Are you sure?"

Aggravated by the sexual tension teasing her, she said, "Yes, I am quite sure."

His attitude was instantly sincere. "Of course. Would you like to see any others? Two or three photos just in case—"

"I..."

His eyebrows rose solicitously, but his face was turned towards hers and inquiring of something possibly deeper.

Tara clenched her jaw shut, wondering if she could handle sitting here and pretending to look through more photos. She decided she could not; she felt as if any second she was going to keel over and fall off the stool in a sexual dizziness. That would not look good. "Um, the one is fine. She likes things understated."

He frowned and nodded slowly.

Does he look hurt because I'm offending his artistic professionalism or is he wanting me to stay? Her pussy sent a tortuous twinge that fed her ache. She slid off the stool, feeling hot and almost sweaty. She needed air.

He offered, "I can email this to you in whatever format—"

"Yes, fine." Just get me out of here. "JPEG."

That damned smile spread on his face and caused a flush of moisture in her pussy. He snatched up a pen and small notepad, offering both. "Write down your email for me."

Caught now, she could not avoid giving him that bit of personal information without making the entire situation uncomfortable. She was discomfited as it was. Her pussy was on fire and demanding something she couldn't provide for relief. She took the pen and pad and noted her email down.

He took it back and made a notation next to it with the number of the picture.

She said, "How much do we owe you?" Get this back on business, fast.

His eyes came up and locked on hers. He appeared balanced easily between sexual interest and business professionalism. "Thirty-five."

She wanted to touch him, but with his eyes on her, she felt as if she had been turned to stone by the gaze of the gorgon. She gave a nod to break the eye-lock and looked away. "Fine."

He rose, hesitating for a brief half-second. His smile was reassuring, but his words carried a wealth of curiosity and caution. "Up front, at the register."

She spun - a little too fast in her rush to leave - and almost stumbled. She made a point of reaching into her purse and pretending to look for her wallet. She knew exactly where it was, but it kept her from having to look around.

He crossed behind the counter and noted the purchase down on a sales pad.

She put down the company credit card with a firm snap.

He scooped it up, looking at her from under brooding brows. He turned and

swiped the card, then tapped on the keypad. He waited, tapping the edge of the card on the shelf behind him. She saw his head turn towards the left where her pictures were hanging. He glanced back quickly and straightened somewhat. "I, uh..."

She knew he knew she had seen them; they were unavoidable. Only a certified blind person could miss her face on the wall just to the side. "I wondered why you'd have my picture on the wall. Isn't that an invasion of privacy or something?"

He turned, sliding her card back across the counter. "No, it was a public place and I'm not selling the photos."

She jabbed the credit card back down into the pocket slot inside her purse and missed. She jabbed again, her impatience with it coloring her words. "Why me?"

He was coming around the counter, receipt in hand. "Because you're beautiful." The words were so smooth and subtle, that Tara was reminded of a fine Scotch flowing with a hint of honeysuckle and toffee.

She jerked as if slapped. Beautiful? Should I be hearing that from any man other than my Amos? She found her backbone. "Really? I would've thought you'd prefer someone with a little more flair – say, an afro?"

He paused a couple feet away and actually looked hurt. Something on his face spoke of a tortured reality. He moved the last few feet and gently slid the receipt over her hand. "Sometimes, a man has to settle for what he can get..." He looked up from the receipt and into her eyes. "When he knows who he really wants is someone he can never have."

She gasped. Her hand grasped the receipt in a clutch that crinkled it.

His words were slow and very quiet. "I've thought a lot about you, Tara—"

She tried to say goodbye, but it came out garbled. She fled the store.

CHAPTER 6

Tara came home in a state of mind she had never experienced at any time in her life. On the one end of her life stood Marlon, large as sin in her thoughts. On the other was the feeling she was losing her husband to whomever he had masturbated over in his dreams. She felt pulled in two different directions, arms outstretched, trying to reconcile the changes in her life without losing all she had earned.

The air conditioning in their home offered no comfort. Instead of cooling her, it chilled her with foreboding – as if the next turn of the corner in the hall might produce a confrontation with a stranger. "Amos?" she called out.

His familiar voice drifted through the hall. "Here, baby." The study – his usual place after work and a shower.

She ran to the room and dropped down onto the loveseat next to him. Unable to formulate any words of what she was going through, she hugged him tightly instead.

His voice was amused. "Whoa there. What's got all over you?"

"I love you..."

"I love you, too, baby."

She leaned back a little to look him in the face – to search for the sign that her fears told her were true: that he wanted to end things. "I don't want to lose you."

He looked as amused and offended as if some bird had flown by and perfectly dropped a poop in his beer. "Say what? I thought we've already done talked about this."

I need to bring up the night thing, but I'm afraid. She tugged on his neck with her arms. "Um..."

"You got something to say?" His eyes looked at hers without suspicion and

without scrutiny.

A wave not unlike the inevitability of an orgasm swept her up in futility. She had nowhere to go and nothing to say on this collision course with calamity. She could not hide from him, lie to him or try to shy away from the moment at hand. Instead, she stalled. "I need a drink."

He hummed deep in his throat. "Well, all right."

She knew she was avoiding the inevitable by getting up, but she needed courage. She needed time on a night where she felt she had run out of time. She couldn't take days and weeks to think this through. She couldn't seek the advice of her friends and come to a consensus. She couldn't call mom and get her opinion – not from her worthless mother, anyway; she would have better luck talking to her mother-in-law.

In the kitchen, she took down a tumbler and grabbed the first bottle she felt in the liquor cupboard: a blended whisky. She yanked the cork top and poured.

Her husband moaned low behind her, "Whoa there, baby. Take it easy."

"I need it." She took up the glass and went to gulp some liquid courage.

His hand stopped her, his eyes serious and his face registering the gravity of the moment. "Is everything all right?"

They stood there like that for a moment, his eyes intent on hers.

He mumbled, "Is something wrong?"

The tumbler trembled in her hand. "I need to know...you love me."

His deep rumble was instant. "Always."

Drive as fast as you want in a car, take any street available, and you still cannot avoid the fifty-mile wide asteroid obliterating the city. Here it was, as sure as Godzilla – pissed off without coffee – and right in front of her face. "A couple of nights ago..."

He waited through her pause, then finally coaxed her. "Yes?"

"I woke up to you...playing...with yourself."

He let out a burst of a chuckle. "Uh..."

"You were going at it and then got up and washed your face."

His smile faded, replaced by uncertainty. "Well..."

"What were you dreaming of?" Who were you dreaming of?

He didn't answer. He reached for a tumbler of his own and poured himself as stiff a drink as she had.

She watched him, gulping from her drink as if the act might save her.

He turned and led her back to the study. He settled down onto the loveseat as if resigning his fate to forever sitting. His shoulders slouched and his features and posture took on a look of defeat. "I guess if you saw, you have a right to know."

She said nothing.

"I dreamt about you...that night."

"Me." Her word was not a question, but an accusation.

He gave a slow and sincere nod. "I did, surely."

"Do you often dream about me and masturbate?"

His teeth flashed large in a smile that gave nothing and everything. "More dreams like that, maybe."

"And you're sure it was about me?"

"I said it."

"All right."

"I don't dream about other women. None I can identify, anyway..."

She decided against slapping his arm. Instead, she took another gulp. Already,

she felt a numbing buzz climbing her neck and temples. "What was so special about that one?" Fine tremors tingled through her limbs in a way that was not pleasant: she was scared.

He glanced back and forth between her emptying glass and her eyes. "Well..."

"Go on."

"It was about...you and Marlon."

She felt as if she had been hit on the forehead with something heavy. "Marlon? Marlon?" All at once, she felt the guilt of her encounter that day with the man and her husband's seeming prescience over the event. How could he know? I did nothing wrong.

"Your photographer guy."

She blinked. Yes, I know who. "Yes...but..."

"You wanted to know."

"Yes, but, why him?" She felt the need to connect it all together in a way that made sense, but none of the pieces matched.

He turned the tumbler in his hands and watched the liquid move.

She had to repeat herself. "Why him?"

His eyes flashed to hers, searching with a distinct lack of confidence – something so unusual in what she expected from her normally confident husband. He started slow. "I dreamt about you with him. And I woke up excited."

She was shaking her head. "I would never do anything—"

His hand touching her arm stopped her as surely as a gag to the mouth. "It was just a dream."

"But you got excited?" She was searching his eyes for something she couldn't find.

He chuckled. "Strange, huh?"

She drained her glass. Maybe I shouldn't tell him anything about today. This is far more disturbing than my little meeting. "That's quite a dream... Why were you turned on?"

"I don't know..."

Best not to push that one. "You know I would never—"

"I know. I know." He held up his glass and balanced the air with his other hand. "I dreamt it and got excited."

"What...was I doing?"

He laughed low, with a hint of rueful reserve. "All the things you do with me, baby. All the things—"

"Um..." She shook her head.

"I know." He gripped her thigh. "I know it, I do. But I dreamt it and I woke up so hard..."

"Why would that be exciting?"

"Tara, I don't know. All I can say is that I woke up harder from that dream than any dream ever before."

She dropped her head down onto his shoulder. This solved nothing tonight; only made things worse. But at least he's not dreaming of some other woman, right? At least there's that, right?

CHAPTER 7

Tara sat trembling at her desk and stared at the email inbox. An unread email from Ellis Photography shone at the top of the read list on an otherwise normal Monday morning. A paper-clip icon told her it was the picture she had purchased. Fear rooted her to her chair.

This should be safe, right? Open it, download the picture and that's it. Delete the email and finally be done with Mister Ellis. A pang of numbness spread from her center at the thought. Why do I feel so empty at the idea of putting him behind me?

Elizabeth walked by the door, not stopping. Nothing more than a breeze of perfume wafted by. Much of Tara's workday was like that. Many of her duties were assigned by email, even if they were only two doors separate. She worked at her own speed, well within Miss Warren's expectations, and was paid well.

She clicked the email, feeling the dread reveal a thrill and entwine around her heart and soul. Butterflies rose up in her stomach and caused much distress. She scanned the email with nervous eyes; words skipped by and she had to start over again. Blah blah, business, business, business.

At the bottom was the attachment. She clicked it and downloaded. But above that was a postscript.

P.S. I sure enjoyed seeing you again, Tara. I checked your LinkedIn profile and saw your picture was a selfie. If you'd like, I'd love to have you come in and sit for a free portrait. You deserve a much more professional picture. Don't get me wrong, I adored the selfie. But a studio picture on LinkedIn for a classy lady seems only fitting. Let me do this for you.

~Marlon

She sat back, suddenly self-conscious. She clicked her LinkedIn bookmark into a new tab and logged in. Her page came up and showed her tasteful selfie. Is it that obvious? She scanned her friends and considered their pictures. Among her list,

only two of her friends used selfies. The other thirty-plus friends used professional photos. Those do look a lot better...

She clicked back to the email and stared at it. She hadn't told Amos about her visit to the studio. It had been a simple task delivered by her boss. She shouldn't be ashamed of that, should she? She shouldn't think she had done anything wrong, should she? She hadn't flirted with the man – far from it. That she had felt things around him but not acted on them was part of a normal life, wasn't it? No secrets there; nothing to tell.

After her husband had told her the reason behind his nighttime masturbation dream, she had panicked that admitting she had been to Marlon's studio might look really bad. So she hid the truth even though she had done nothing to hide. Did that make her a bad wife? She hadn't lied about it and nothing there had happened that would alarm anyone on the surface. In fact, her husband could have been standing there with her and would've seen nothing out of the ordinary. The strange feelings had all been inside.

But if she had told him, wouldn't he be suspicious? Wouldn't her innocent visit have fueled the wrong fires of his strange dream? She felt somewhat comforted that she had handled the visit so perfectly. Her husband would have been proud. But what I had felt inside...

She hit Reply and stared at the text box. Would Amos approve of her getting a free portrait for her LinkedIn profile? What could cause him to get angry if there was no flirting? If she didn't talk the man up, what could possibly cause anything to come between her and her husband?

Marlon,

Thank you for the offer, I would like to take you up on it. I hadn't noticed before how amateur my selfie looked and you're right – a studio picture would look much better.

I'm free at 11 every day for lunch. Let me know a day and thank you in advance.

Tara Cook

She hit send.

Should I tell Amos? Would he care? Would it matter if I'm just getting a picture taken? She felt the rightness of telling him anyway; it was the proper thing to do.

She refreshed her email a half hour later and saw Marlon's reply. With an uncomfortable and heated squirm in her chair, she clicked open the email with a sense of eagerness flirting around her mental edges.

Tara,

Tomorrow and Wednesday are good for me. I have some day work to do Thursday and Friday. Shall I expect you tomorrow?

~Marlon

She immediately hit Reply.

Tomorrow will be perfect. See you then.

She left it short without any introduction or sign-off and hit Send. A warmth spread from her center and flushed out and up. Heat tingled on the back of her neck and scalp and she found herself smiling in satisfaction. She took several deep breaths and filed away in her mind the budding happiness and anticipation of seeing him the next day.

~ ~ ~

"Amos?"

"Hmm?" He paused in the act of turning out the nightstand light.

"I met with the photographer a few days back to select a picture for Miss Watson."

"Yeah? How'd that go?"

I don't know what he's asking, but I'll play this up front and safe. "It was all business. She wanted a new picture for her portfolio."

"Hmm. So?"

"He offered to take a free studio picture for my LinkedIn page."

"That's mighty nice of him."

"I thought so, too. Anyway, I'm going tomorrow at lunch to have it taken."

Her husband looked at her for the longest time, no suspicion on his face, but consideration.

What is that look for? "I thought you should know."

His eyebrows drew down a little. "Why should I know? Something you're not telling me?"

"No, not at all." What do I say here? Panic sifted through her resolve. "It's just that you dreamed about him..." Oh god, that sounds stupid...

A small smile quirked sideways at his mouth. "Yeah, I did." His eyes took on a smoky look. "He gonna be putting his hands on you?"

Tara jerked, fearful of the thought but at the same time reacting to a very definite twinge in her pussy. "Um, no. I don't think he needs to touch me to take a picture."

Her husband chuckled deep. "If I was the photographer, I'd have my hands all over you."

"Amos." This is dangerous territory.

He chuckled again.

She tried to stress with her eyes her words. "It's just a picture."

He moved closer to her, his eyelids dropping down suggestively. "I'd have my hands all over you. Touching your breasts, your pussy—" He reached out and slid his fingers down between her thighs.

His words conjured the image of Marlon in her mind and she gasped in fright. I can't react like this with him talking about him.

Her husband was leaning closer. "I wouldn't be able to resist kissing you." His face was near enough. His mouth met hers.

She was trembling, shaking harder with each passing second. She tried to talk, but his mouth was on hers. Her husband's ardor was obvious. The sheet was beginning to lift down there. I need to think about Amos, not Marlon, or this is going to get bad. Twisty turns in her stomach sent convulsions up her body.

He pulled back his head and smiled suggestively. His fingers worked into her panties and massaged up and down her clit. His warm breath caressed her parted lips. "Mmm, yeah, I'd be kissing you."

She gasped, the twinges in her pussy repeating their reminder of her excitement. "I don't think there's going to be any kissing..."

"I'd be touching you, too. Like this." His fingers dipped in and slid into her opening.

She moaned out without any control as she was swept up a swelling wave of tension.

Her husband's voice cracked low, desperate. "Man would have to be gay not to want to do this to you. Is Marlon gay?"

She couldn't answer. Her breaths were frantic gasps as she fought against the orgasm. But the images of Marlon in her head were too strong. It's not my fault. It's not my fault! She lifted off the bed, almost sitting up as her orgasm crashed over her in exquisite indications of defeat. She cried out, grinding her hips on his fingers, her pussy clamping hard with relief. Regret at her lack of control was as sharp as the climactic bursts of pleasure that ripped through her. I can't look at him. I can't. He'll know I was thinking of Marlon. He'll know. She tried to turn her head away.

Amos was up and over her, knocking aside her knees. His erection was strong and accusing. His thrust into her was forceful and frantic.

Her pussy clamped repeatedly on his sliding shaft and her thoughts flipped back

and forth between him and Marlon. She couldn't help it and there was no effort she could mount that would stop her thoughts.

The sex that night was good. It was so very good.

CHAPTER 8

Tara was conflicted, confused in her consciousness over her husband's damnable talking about the photographer. She was trying to do the right thing; she was trying to forget the other man. She was trying to move on with her life past Mister Ellis and be the wife she was supposed to be. She wanted Amos; she didn't want to throw all that away over some stupid flirting at a dumb charity event.

But she couldn't deny that Marlon excited something in her that was unusual. Not only did she love her husband without question, but now she felt a thrill rise in her to take place beside her love for her husband. She didn't think such a thing should be possible.

And there was her husband, unwittingly causing a conflict in her that could only end badly. Did he have to mention him during sex? She thought he would be outraged if he knew that she had Marlon on her mind as she was being fucked. That would be a disaster if he knew – a fight of epic proportions. But it wasn't her fault; it was he who had brought him up – made her think of him as he had been doing sexy things to her.

She finished her hair and came out of the bathroom.

Amos was sitting on the edge of the bed, rubbing the side of his face. "Mmm."

"What?"

His smile was broad and sexy. "You look good in your panties and bra."

"Do I, now?"

"You know you do."

"For your eyes only."

He feigned an annoyed look. "Don't make me out to be selfish, now."

"You? Selfish?"

He chuckled.

She grabbed down a blouse off the hanger.

"You're going to wear that old thing?"

She rolled her eyes. That's not what a woman wants to hear, dear. "It's not old."

"It looks old."

"It's going to be on my LinkedIn profile."

He got up, his dick swinging heavily. "Right. Make it good."

"What's wrong with this?"

"Not flashy enough."

Tara frowned. "Flashy? For a portrait?"

"Sure, baby. Think about it. You're going to put up a picture that men and women are going to be looking at."

"Of course they are. Duh."

"Your picture is going to be just as important as your credentials."

He was right, and she knew it. "Well, yeah..."

"So you want it to be the best you can show."

"Alright, I understand." She looked over her wardrobe.

He pointed. "Wear the red blouse."

"Why that one?"

"Because red is so striking on you."

She replaced the blouse she had in hand and pulled down the red one.

He was nodding.

She shrugged into it and buttoned.

"Nah, nah. Not like that."

"What?"

"Unbutton."

"What are you, my mother?"

He laughed. "Sorry, no; I'm not a crackwhore."

She sighed. It was not contentious between them that her mother was worthless. "I didn't mean it that way."

"I know, baby." His hand squeezed her shoulder. "Open those buttons and wear your gold cross."

"For a business picture?"

His eyes went wide with intensity. "Yes. You want to dazzle."

"I'm not throwing on a bunch of bling—"

"No, no, understated. The one piece of jewelry will be right."

"Hmm." She nodded; he was making sense.

His hand came down and cupped her ass.

"Stop that. Don't you need to shower?"

"Mm yeah." He leaned in and dropped a kiss on her cheek. "Sexy woman."

She giggled dismissively and looked in the mirror. The red blouse was the deep color of blood. It did look striking on her. She fluffed out the placket and took up the gold chain and cross. It does look good, my husband, but Marlon will be

seeing this, too. She heard him running the shower in the bathroom. A thrill wound up her insides and her pussy clamped slowly on emptiness. Her breathing quickened and she parted her lips. Her hand slid down and she allowed it, following her baser instincts without a will to resist. Her fingers slid down over her panties, teasing her clit underneath.

She trembled and closed her eyes, imagining Marlon.

~ ~ ~

She parked in front of his store and got out. She almost reached up and buttoned an extra button, but restrained herself. She was showing a scandalous amount of cleavage and Amos had approved.

The door chimed on her entry.

Marlon's voice drifted from the back. "Be right there."

She waited, purse in both hands in front of her. Butterflies awoke in her stomach and played havoc with her nerves. Will he like this outfit? She had worn a short, mid-thigh black business skirt with the blouse. She hated nylons and never wore them.

Marlon parted the curtain and looked at her. A smile instantly spread on his face. "Tara." He was wearing a black shirt, fashionably open at the top to show his chest. His black jeans fit snugly, giving a hint of his naughty physique.

His use of her name sent a silent thrill spiraling up her spine. She tried to sound normal. "Marlon."

"Come on back."

She took a faltering step, feeling her heart pounding in her chest. She took another, more smoothly, and then moved confidently into the back studio.

He had set up lights and a backdrop. "Hmm." He was rubbing his chin and looking at her breasts. "Maybe a different backdrop. Go ahead and sit. Lemme change the setting."

She felt his eyes leave her and she took in a ragged breath. Her nipples had hardened painfully under his gaze. She sat on a couch along the wall and watched him roll away the backdrop.

He glanced at her and saw her watching. He smiled, friendly and intimately. His eyes dropped to her legs and he licked his lips quickly.

Heat exploded in her and flamed her pussy with punishing torture.

His smile widened as his eyes caressed her legs. "I'm glad you came. I don't often have such a beautiful woman to photograph."

She arched an eyebrow. "Often?" she quavered.

His smile grew more bashful. "None as beautiful as you."

A burst of pride and satisfaction swelled inside her. She found a measure of confidence again. "What are you buttering me up for, Mister Ellis?"

He straightened from moving the stool. "Oh, please, don't call me that. I treasure hearing my name from your lips. Marlon."

Dizziness swam about her head as she smiled demurely at his words. "All right then. Marlon."

He twisted his head to the side and pointed as if hearing something. "Um, you know... Do you mind if I grab a voice recorder and record you saying that?" His smile was playful.

She laughed at the absurdity of the question. "Um, what?"

"You know, you could just say my name over and over into it and I can listen to it later."

She laughed and covered her mouth. "Are you serious?"

He started shaking his head. "Don't cover your mouth. Your laughter and smile are so wonderful to see. Please don't cover it." His hands were on his hips, a serious look on his face.

She dropped her hand down into her lap. "You want to record me?"

His smile returned. "Could I?"

"Why would you want to hear my voice?"

"It's exciting."

"And you'd just turn it on and listen?"

He flicked an eyebrow slowly, suggestively. "Oh, surely. But in private."

"In private?" She felt as if she wanted to laugh. The sense of adventure in these simple words had her as giddy as a schoolgirl.

"I'd have to be naked, so yes."

She clamped her mouth shut and felt her eyes widen in shock. Naked? Listening to my voice? Her pussy twinged hard and she shifted on the couch. She finally found her voice. "Are you serious?"

His eyes drifted over her legs and breasts, then back up to her face. "Oh yes." He turned abruptly as if to turn away from the subject.

She felt as if his attention had been amputated and the loss in her was striking.

He pulled another backdrop out and maneuvered it. "This will go better with your color and blouse." He was not looking at her.

She wanted him to turn and talk to her again, but she said nothing.

He moved one of the light umbrellas a few inches then looked at her. He motioned to the stool. "Take a seat."

She rose unsteadily. Her knees felt as if they were wobbling on water. Her temples pounded with pressure, but not in a painful way. She moved to the stool and sat.

He stood in front of her and his hands came down on her shoulders, filled with heat and tenderness. "Turn this way," he murmured.

The heat from her pussy collided with the heat from his hands in a bursting wash of tension. She twisted with his hands, turning slightly sideways. His eyes were staring at her opened blouse, and she felt her nipples harden further.

He brought his eyes up, hands still resting on her shoulders. "Perfect." He stood there like that, looking into her eyes and not moving.

She grew discomfited, her tension twisting in her in ways that teased that hollow ache in her pussy. She felt herself flush with moisture. "I look presentable?"

He whispered, "You look beautiful." He removed his hands slowly. He moved back, stepping fast to the camera. He fiddled with it, pressing buttons and moving the view. He dropped his hand down quickly and adjusted his package in his jeans.

She caught the move and looked. His jeans were bulging out and doing nothing to cover the obvious excitement. I did that to him? A surge of victory rose up in her and sent tingles along her arms. She could not tear her eyes away.

He came back to her, his eyes on hers. He leaned towards her and placed his hand on the small of her back. His face was near hers, his eyes wandering over her features. "Straighten your back." He rubbed his hand on her. His other hand came down and rested on her bare thigh.

Explosions of lust and heat at his touch ripped through her, sending her breathing into a state of uneven gasping. She squirmed on the stool as her pussy clenched over and over. She endeavored to sit straighter. It had the effect of putting pressure on her pussy and she welcomed it.

He gave a satisfied smile and nodded. He removed his hands.

She wanted to lurch forward and drag his hand back. She could feel the imprint memory of his skin on her thigh. Put your hand back. Rub my leg. Reach higher and rub... She blinked furiously and took a deep breath.

He was back at the camera. He flashed a few pictures, then came back to her.

"Might I suggest...?"

"Yes?"

He moved his hand to her cheek and brushed his fingers back.

Shivers shook her and she closed her eyes.

He moved her hair back gently over one shoulder. "Sometimes having your hair back on one side gives the face emphasis. Can we try that?"

She nodded, knowing she probably couldn't answer with words without sounding like a total fool.

He smoothed her hair back over her shoulder and then ran his fingers through it. "Such beautiful hair."

She tried to breathe. If you don't take the picture, I'm going to fall off this stool and diddle my pussy on the floor until I come.

CHAPTER 9

Tara came home dripping wet. She'd been wet all day. She wanted nothing more than to sit in the tub and aim the water hose at her demanding clit. She wanted to cum. She wanted to cum hard and think about Marlon's fingers on her pussy. Amos will have to entertain himself while I take care of business.

But her designs evaporated when she entered the study.

Her husband looked up at her, a smile plastered on his face like a naughty boy caught putting a frog in a girl's lunch sack. "How'd the picture-thing go?"

She was caught off-guard. She had put no effort into thinking about what she'd tell Amos. "Uh, okay, I guess."

He rose from the loveseat and came to her. He hugged her close and tight. "Just okay?"

"Mm hmm." She hugged him back, clutching his familiar strength and comfort.

He leaned his head down and kissed her, hard.

Afterwards, she disengaged. "I need to wash up a bit before dinner." She kissed him lightly on the lips and winked.

In the bathroom, she reached her hand down her panties and began circling her clit. Oh, Marlon. Why didn't you touch me more? Her lips moved as her fingers circled faster. "Yes, touch me. Do it. Yes, that feels good." The long-denied orgasm wrenched heavily in her, coming fast. She gasped, diddling faster. She moved her hips back and forth and looked up to the ceiling as the wave came over her. She gasped harshly, trying to be quiet, cumming on her fingers while imagining Marlon.

The satisfaction was instant. Pulses of relief pushed through her and left her knees wobbling. At the same time, guilt gave her grief as she realized she had just cum thinking of another man while her husband sat in the study.

~ ~ ~

It was later in bed that he brought up the pictures again. "So the pictures were just okay?"

She was getting into bed. "Yes, I suppose." She did not feel bad about anything that had happened at the studio. Other than the touching, everything had been clean and decent. She did, however, feel self-conscious about her bathroom activity a little earlier.

He pulled her close to him and pressed his hardening cock against her thigh. "Did he touch you?"

"Um, yes..." She searched his eyes for anger.

His eyes lit up with interest. "Yeah? Where?"

"My shoulders to turn me."

He almost looked disappointed. "Oh, yeah."

"And my back."

"Your back?"

She shifted; his erection was uncomfortable against her. She grabbed it to pull it up. "Yes, for posture. He also touched my thigh."

Amos took in several ragged breaths. "Yeah?"

She nodded and began stroking him, trying to order her thoughts about how much she should reveal. "He rested his hand on my thigh when he pressed the small of my back."

"I knew he couldn't resist. No way I could."

"You're not mad?"

His word was long and drawn out with annoyed amusement. "No."

She stroked him a little more confidently. If I can keep him off my diddling afterward... "He said I was beautiful."

"Damn right you are." His cock flexed. "I'd have to go down there and bitch-slap the man if he couldn't see how beautiful you were."

"Oh, I think he knew. He was...excited."

"Excited? How?"

"He had a big bulge in his jeans."

Amos choked. "Ah. Ah. Ah..." His cock swelled dramatically and began spurting cum.

"Oh my goodness..."

He groaned, panting, an amazed look on his face.

She shook her head in wonder. "Wow, I don't think you've ever cum so fast before."

He shook his head as if to clear it. "Whoo wee." Then he began laughing.

~ ~ ~

Tara drove to work, wondering about Amos, and looking forward to seeing if Marlon had emailed her. Is Amos gay? Or was he really excited that Marlon was turned on by me? Her husband hadn't shown any jealousy, only curiosity. His questions hadn't been tinged with suspicion. His curiosity was driven by the desire to know Marlon's actions and reactions, not hers.

Relieved that he hadn't questioned her closely at all about her own feelings while it all had happened, she felt as if she had some wriggle room to engage Marlon on a more personal level. Would he be mad if I flirted with him? Or would that excite him? I should broach the subject with him. Maybe tonight. What would I say?

Her love for her husband was as strong as ever. But Marlon had found room in her soul in a way that didn't crowd out her husband. How can that be possible? She didn't know, but she definitely felt thrilled in a new way that energized her workday. Looking forward to going home to Amos, she now looked forward to going to work on the chance Marlon might be encountered in some form.

Pulling into her parking spot, she knew she was going to take that step through emails to something perhaps a little more personal. Her work life that had been as dull as her work had entered into a new phase and promised to be as fulfilling as her home life.

She walked into her office and read Miss Watson's Post-It note:

Excellent picture selection. Thank you.

Elizabeth was like that. Little direct contact. Most everything handled via email or notes like these. She plucked the note and crumpled it: message received. She powered up her computer and logged in. Three emails from Elizabeth and one from Marlon.

Pulsing with excitement, she saved his for last. She opened Elizabeth's and began noting down plans and queries about future charitable events. She would need to arrange a couple of hints about an upcoming auction to which her boss had not yet been invited. A phone call or two should solve that and secure their attendance. Another email requested an electrician install a special spotlight over her latest purchase.

Tara handled these first before even opening Marlon's email. A quick call to CRC Electric, another suggestive call about attendance to Robbins Enterprises and the upcoming artist appreciation auction, and a few notes on the results of both calls. She emailed Elizabeth back with an update and promise to keep her posted.

She clicked into Marlon's email.

Tara:

I have several sets you should see for your new profile picture. Care to meet me today to go over them?

Looking forward to seeing you again,

Marlon Ellis

She hit Reply with a shaking hand.

Marlon,

I will come by today. I would love to have you show me the results.

Tara

She frowned, wanting to be more suggestive, but not knowing how. She hit Send and closed out her email.

~ ~ ~

She walked confidently into his store. Her body thrummed with electrical excitement and her nipples had already stiffened. She had worn another revealing outfit today and Amos had not questioned her. But his looks told her he approved. Safe with hubby so I can give Marlon something to look at. The best of both worlds. She felt alive.

Marlon was at his counter, finishing a sale for an older white couple. "I'll have those sheets ready Monday afternoon."

The old man was dressed sharply in a blue suit, his wavy white hair combed straight back into a ducktail style that went out probably in the 1970s. "Thank you, young man. We'll see you then."

His wife was a charming looking woman with a smile larger than her crinkled eyes. "What's it been," she asked her husband. "Fifteen years since our last portrait?"

They were walking out.

"I think so, it was the last time I wore this suit."

Tara smiled at the two as they left, but her attention quickly melted off of them and onto Marlon.

He said, "Come on back."

She followed him, taking the time to check him out in the proper way through his clothing. Broad shoulders tapered down to a small and muscular butt. He was shaped very well and very sexy.

He sat her down in a chair next to his computer. He opened files on the screen. "I can print these out if you want, later."

"After I choose the profile picture, what will you do with the others?"

His eyes shifted sideways at her and he paused a few seconds in silence. "Keep them. For myself."

An earthquake inside her sent shivers of warmth and numbness spreading through her body. "Oh?"

He ignored that. He brought up the picture viewer and began clicking through pictures. "These are how you started. This one here is with the hair pulled back on one side."

She leaned forward, considering. He had been right, it most certainly did add some flair to the shot. "Hmm."

He clicked through them all, slowly enough for her to think about them. He was taking his time.

She said, "I think I do like the one with my hair back."

His smile was his only answer. He clicked to the picture set he had taken – six of them – with her hair back.

She watched. "The second one, I think."

He appeared surprised. "Not the sixth?"

"No, I look kind of funny in that one."

"You look very relaxed and sexy in it."

"Maybe to you, but this is going on LinkedIn."

He sighed, nodding with understanding. "You're right, of course. I shouldn't think it's the right picture for you just because I like it."

She turned her head more fully towards his face. "So you'll save that one? Seriously?"

He chuckled, low and suggestively. "Mm hmm."

She was reminded of the way Amos hummed his assent the same way. She reached out and touched his arm, smiling. "Seems a bit unfair."

"Huh?"

"You get to have all these pictures of me? I have none of you."

His smile spread, gaining confidence. "I have a few of myself."

"The one on your About page is very nice."

He coughed. "Oh, that one? Tame."

She sat up a little straighter. "Tame? Oh? You have something a little more... adventurous?"

He winked at her and began navigating folders. He clicked into one outside of his business folders and selected a picture. Bursting onto the screen with electronic frenzy was a shot of him in bed, naked, the edge of the sheet just covering his lump. One arm was back behind his head and his other hand held

the sheet over his package. But the thick base of the shaft was just visible and also his trimmed pubic hair.

She gasped, clutching his arm for support. "Oh my goodness."

"Like that one?"

She nodded, uncertain she could articulate anything beyond a strangled gurgle of sudden, surprising lust.

"Want me to email that to you?"

She nodded again, eyes wide.

The door chimed.

He puffed a quick sigh and said, "I'll be right back." He was rising when the curtain was thrown back.

Young afro-girl stood in the doorway, fists on hips, tube-top, ripped jeans and gum-smacking attitude in full riot. "What's she doing here?"

Marlon's back was to Tara so she couldn't see his face. But she heard his tone, and again, she was reminded of Amos when he was supremely annoyed. Marlon grated, "She's a customer."

An exaggerated nod of disbelief sent the afro swaying. "Oh, uh huh."

He was to the girl in two steps. He gripped her arm and turned her, leading her back to the front.

The girl snapped, "Get your hands off me."

"I'm busy right now—"

"Busy with her? What about us?"

"There is no us, Jessie. You get what you want. Now go on."

"What do you mean there is no us?"

"Just as I said." His voice lowered, but Tara could still hear it. "I never made you any promises, girl. Don't come around expecting something that isn't there."

"What do you want with that old woman for?"

Tara pursed her lips. Old? Me?

"Out. Go on."

Jessie said matter of factly, "I'm not putting up with this shit."

Marlon's voice was the solution to the equation the girl had posed. "Good, then we're done. Out with you."

"You can't pull this shit!"

"I just did. Now get out."

There were a few seconds of silence, then the door opened with a rushing pull on the air in the studio. Footsteps stomped out.

Tara heard Marlon sigh.

He came back, parting the curtain and peering at her with searching eyes. "I'm very sorry about that—"

"Should I go?"

He had the temerity to look as annoyed as Amos did in an almost twin-like fashion. "Shit no. Um, sorry. I mean, no."

She stifled a giggle, but was still unsure. "You don't need to apologize for swearing."

He blew out a breath and shook his head, looking back towards the living area of the studio. "A man gets lonely sometimes. And sometimes a lonely girl comes along and..."

"You don't have to explain."

His eyes locked to hers. "I don't?"

She pursed her lips again. "It's your business, not mine."

"She was a minor convenience. Marched in here at eighteen demanding to be my woman."

"Demanding?"

"I had photographed her for her parents. Volleyball in high school. I guess she had her sights on me."

She started to cover her mouth and stopped. Her mouth twisted into a barely controlled grin. "Took advantage of her, did you?"

His eyes flashed in warning. "Only after she was eighteen."

Tara laughed. "You said so. I wasn't doubting you."

He sat back in his chair and shook his head. He ran a shaking hand over his cropped hair. "I don't know why I got involved with her like that."

"Loneliness?"

His look was open and genuine. His nod was a slow acknowledgment. "It's over, anyway. But I'm sure it'll take another couple shakes to get her off my leg."

She burst out laughing at the image of Jessie clutching to him like a leg-humping dog.

CHAPTER 10

Tara opened her email less than twenty minutes later. She clicked into Marlon's email and downloaded the picture. Then she plugged in her phone and copied the picture to it. She opened the viewer on her computer and stared at it for the longest time, twinges of ache and need pulsing in her pussy. This is almost shameful; I'm married. How can I be feeling such things when I'm so in love with my husband?

She felt caught – trapped – by her emotions and the way Amos was acting. She had been unable to come clean with him about her feelings. She had been unable to tell him about the growing lust inside her. No, he had kept bringing him up and she didn't want him to think that she was obsessing over Marlon and wanting to replace Amos. So she had said nothing of what she had thought and experienced.

Fortunately, he hadn't asked. She had safely avoided admitting that she had been turned on by the man. But she wanted to tell him and get it out of her system. She didn't want to be hiding things from her husband. She wanted to be honest and share with him that, yes, the man had affected her with his charm, and then move on together. It definitely would not look good, though, if Amos asked her and she admitted to it. Nope, then it would look like he had uncovered a secret. She needed the right time to admit that she had been affected so she could dispose of it all in a sanitary way – not in a suggestive way. Her husband would know she was being honest, forthright, and inclusive.

Her eyes trailed over Marlon's form and stopped on the thick base of his cock peeking out above the sheet. She licked her lips reflexively and moved her eyes up his chest to his face – as if she were in the picture crawling over him like a cat. She hummed in appreciation. "Mmm mmm mm."

She pulled at her blouse to get air and sat back in her chair with a pant. I can't look at this or I'll start diddling. She glanced at her phone. Maybe I can diddle later and look at his picture.

She sighed raggedly. I need to tell Amos. Get it over with tonight. This has

stretched on far too long. Her eyes went to the window behind the viewer. She clicked out of the picture and hit Reply on the email.

Yum. Very sexy, thank you. I'll take more of that kind if you have any.

She went back to looking at his picture. She refreshed her email a bit later and saw his response. She clicked into it.

I have several, maybe not as adventurous, as you put it. Of course, I could take some after hours today. Got any requests?

She hit Reply.

Send what you have to my phone. 206-200-3131. You could always show a little more.

She clicked out, feeling another adventurous thrill thrum through her. A few racy photos couldn't hurt, could it? Her cell vibrated a bit later and she opened up his message.

Marlon: Here are some. Show more? That wouldn't be fair, would it? All I have are face shots of you.

She smiled at her newfound secret friendship. She texted back.

Tara: You'd really want pictures of me?

Marlon: YES.

Tara: lol

Tara: I don't have any.

Marlon: I could take some.

Shivers filtered down her spine. The thrill of adventure morphed into danger and dread. She stared at the text for several seconds, feeling as if things were slipping out of control. Is this too far? What will you say, Amos?

She slowly thumbed her response.

Tara: I'll get back to you on that.

~ ~ ~

Tara was on a mission. Face set neutrally all night, she approached the bed with firm resolve.

Amos gave her a suspicious look.

How does he know? I've been careful all day and night. She firmed her lips at him.

He lifted an eyebrow in annoyed consideration. "I'm guessin' you want to talk about something."

She half coughed a laugh. "Is it that obvious?"

His annoyed look turned to one of feigned outrage. "You're wearing it all over your face like a neon sign, woman."

She rubbed at the bridge of her nose and closed her eyes.

He said, "Out with it, whatever it is."

She laughed quietly, shaking her head. She climbed into bed. "Your photographer friend has been flirting with me."

Annoyance resurfaced, but the feigned kind. "My friend?"

There, it's out. Now we can talk like husband and wife.

Amos smiled. "Flirting, huh?"

She nodded. "I was...flattered, I guess." She tried a smile on him.

"You should be."

"Anyway, I want you to know it has nothing to do with being bored with you or something."

His smile widened. He twisted over to face her directly. His hand cupped her hips and pulled her closer. "That's good to hear."

"He, um, kept pictures of me."

"Yeah? Like what? The profiles?"

She glanced at him, then away. Tell it all. "He took some I didn't know about at the charity auction. He's got them hanging on his wall in the store."

"Does he now?" His hand was warm on her hip.

"I asked him if he had any pictures I could have since he had a bunch of me."

"Mmm?" His tone was low and interested.

"He showed me a bed picture. He's covered and everything—"

"Do you have it?"

"On my phone, yes."

A groan of disappointment rose out of his throat. "Holding out on me? Let me see it."

She laughed nervously, but was happy the conversation was going so well. She twisted and reached for her phone. She tapped into her picture folders and brought the bed shot up. She showed him.

Amos took the phone and studied the picture with an appraising look on his face. "Well, now..."

She kept quiet, unsure what to say.

He handed her back the phone. "You keeping that?"

She shrugged. "I could delete it, if you want."

His hand came down on her panties. "What? No."

"Are you sure?" She parted her legs, allowing his fingers to touch her lower.

"Why would you go delete such a handsome man?"

"I would if it bothered you." She humped her hips upward as he rubbed his fingers over her panties. She wanted this to be her and her husband.

He growled with satisfaction. "Do you like the picture?"

She gasped as his fingers worked over her covered clit. "Yes, it's nice."

"Got any more?" He worked his hand underneath her panties and touched her moist lips.

"No, but he offered to take more."

Amos chuckled low. "Nice of him."

"He said it wasn't fair, though."

"Huh?" He dipped his fingers down and slid two into her pussy.

She moaned, quivering at the familiar feel of his touch. "He wanted some pictures of me."

"Did you give him any?"

"I meant, like that bed shot. So, no."

He panted heavily for a moment, his fingers moving in and out.

She gripped his cock in her hand and began stroking.

He whispered, "You know he'd jack his stuff looking at your pictures."

She trembled violently, barely holding back the sudden surge of an orgasmic wave. "Uh, I guess so."

"He'd be a fool not to."

Unable to avoid thinking of him, she stroked Amos wondering what Marlon's cock would feel like. "He offered to take pictures of me. Like that."

Her husband tensed up, gasping. His cock swelled in her hand. "He did?"

She nodded, watching her husband's shaft strain in her hand as she stroked.

"Oh...yeah..." He had a dazed look on his face. "Are you going to do it?"

"No, of course not. I'm married. I wouldn't do that to you."

"You should. Why don't you?"

"Let him take pictures of me?"

"Yeah, baby. Why not? As long as I get to have them, too."

"And you know he'd be masturbating over them—"

"Ah!" he cried. His cock twitched and began erupting long squirts of cum.

Well nuts. I wanted you in me. I really need it.

CHAPTER 11

Tara texted Marlon.

Tara: Pictures of me are a "yes." My husband gave the green light.

She waited to no avail and her mind wandered back to the morning's conversation with her husband. She had not believed he would support her getting her pictures taken by Marlon. Not of the nude kind. But Amos had thought it was sexy and wanted it. He wanted the same pictures for himself, too.

She had tried to deflect the direction of all of this back onto the tried and true track of their marriage, but Amos would have none of it. He derailed every objection of hers with a feeling of trust and encouragement that had her dread turning back to a sense of adventure, once again.

She was not nervous about being found out now, she was nervous about where it was all going to end. She had finally admitted to him the previous night that she was flattered – that she liked Marlon's attention. He had not batted an eyelash in jealousy. But what could develop out of her situation but wreck and ruin? She had admitted what she had set out to reveal, but should she have said more? She honestly desired to be with her husband. She wouldn't ruin that. But letting another man see her naked? Even if they were studio pictures? What if she liked it?

Her phone vibrated.

Marlon: You want to take some today?

Tara: If it's a good day for you. Amos said he wants copies.

Marlon: Anything for him.

Tara: You've never met him.

Marlon: He's letting me photograph you? I'd give him both my legs.

That made Tara feel very good and tension drained out of her she didn't know she was holding. She felt as if she were on the Pirates of the Caribbean ride at Disneyland bumping and grinding along the conveyor belt and her boat had just slipped into deep water to bob and float on its own. It was a lingering sense of freedom that was at once sedate and comfortable.

~ ~ ~

Tara entered the store.

Marlon was at the counter and smiled. He came around and locked the door, flipping the Open sign to Closed. "Don't want any interruptions."

"Jessie?" She arched an eyebrow.

"Definitely not her. But she won't be a problem. She came back last night and I sent her off. Told her to go find someone else."

"You didn't have to do that."

His look pinned her to her spot in the middle of the store. "I wanted to."

"But your loneliness?" She lifted her chin at him in challenge.

He came close, brushing his knuckle along her cheek and smoothing back her hair. "I'm hoping our friendship erases that. And the pictures I'll have of you..."

She looked down, smiling. "Amos says you'll be jacking to them."

Marlon leaned his head back and laughed with surprise. "He sounds like a smart man."

She giggled. "He is."

"He married you; he must be."

"I don't think you need to flatter me to take pictures."

He touched her arm and held out his other, indicating the curtain to the back.

She led the way. In the back, she surveyed the bedroom scene he had constructed. A bed, a cushioned chair, a nightstand and lamp. The backdrop was a curtain of black velvet.

He said, "We'll start you off wrapped in a sheet. It might be uncomfortable to you, but I can help out there. Most picture sets like these flow a little easier if I match the state of undress with my own. Eases the shyness a bit."

She gave a small smile. "Oh. I wondered about that – if I'd be camera shy."

He touched her shoulder. "Don't worry, you'll be fine."

She followed his instructions, removing her clothes behind an old-fashioned changing screen. She lifted the sheet draped over it and wrapped her nakedness in it. She stepped out.

He was smiling. "Drape it around you, under your arms like a towel. Over the shoulders makes it look like you're trying to be a ghost."

"Oh." She hid a smile and adjusted the sheet.

He took pictures. "Nervous?"

"A bit."

He stepped back and began removing his clothing.

She watched with large eyes, unsure what to do.

He didn't look at her until he was down to his boxers. "There we go. Better?"

She had to laugh; she did feel better. "Yes." She drank in his chest and flat stomach. Her eyes moved over the contours of his even coloring. Amos was darker by several shades. Marlon was as smooth as milk chocolate – much like her own coloring.

He pointed to the chair and began directing her: posing behind it; to the side with

one foot on the cushion and showing leg; sitting primly; sitting legs spread wide and sheet covering her inner thighs. He moved the camera and lighting umbrellas effortlessly and with a grace that left Tara relaxed and moving easily to his direction. He did not make her feel uncomfortable at all.

She was reclining sideways on the bed when his direction came to expose herself.

"A breast at first." He pointed. "Your right one."

She felt her eyes shining with embarrassment. "Okay."

He flashed a sexy smile at her. "You're doing great."

She moved the sheet and exposed her breast. The cool air caressed it and her nipple hardened.

He came over to the bed, holding the camera. "Let's just arrange the sheet a little more naturally."

She felt the heat of his fingers near the skin of her breast. She glanced at his boxers as she had been doing since they started. Now that he was up close, she could see the heaviness swaying behind the fabric. His manhood had swelled some, it looked like. For me. She felt a flush of heat spread down to her pussy. She looked up and saw that he was watching her eyes. She pursed her lips, feeling the blush creep up her neck.

He stepped back, satisfied with the position of the sheet. He continued directing her until she was lying back against the headboard, breasts exposed. "We'll move into the more exposed shots and eventually get rid of the sheet."

She felt strong enough to go through with it. "Okay."

"Would it make you feel better if I was nude, too? Most prefer it that way, even the men."

"Oh?" She thought quickly, realizing that she could take advantage of the situation. This was her opportunity to see what he was hiding. "Yes, that would help."

He winked at her and tugged down his boxers. His cock popped into view just as easy as that.

She gasped in and held her breath, her eyes locked on his semi-hard shaft. It was beautiful. Long and thick, her eyes moved up and down its length and thickness. "Oh my..."

His smile was wide and amused. He grabbed his shaft and lifted it a little. "What, this old thing?"

She burst out laughing. She covered her mouth and shook her head.

He took on a look of feigned hurt. "What? It looks funny?"

"Oh my gosh. Not." She heaved a few breaths, feeling her nipples hardening.

He winked again. "Move the sheet off."

She followed his directions, lying in different poses in increasing levels of exposure. He kept telling her to look up at the camera, but her eyes kept falling back down to his cock. It was hardening and she couldn't stop looking.

He came over to her. "Lie sideways here and put your foot..." He gently grabbed her knee and pulled. "Have your knee up. Rest your head in your palm."

She barely heard him; his cock hung heavily, waving less than two feet from her face. She could feel his heat. She could see the shaft flexing with his heartbeat. She realized he had stopped talking. She looked up quickly.

He was looking down at her, his mouth open in a predatory pant. "Do you want to touch it?"

She dropped her mouth open in shock, wanting to, surprised he had offered, and steeling herself with enough courage to reach out and... Her hand gripped his hot flesh. Her hand and arm quivered with excitement as a wash of heat and moisture flooded her pussy. She had reached for it, expecting something calamitous. She had thought she would feel some tearing in her relationship with her husband – some damage to their marriage bond that might be irreparable. But she felt nothing except the excitement.

She squeezed his shaft and his manhood hardened rapidly in her hand.

He sighed raggedly, then took a picture.

She laughed in shock. "Oh, um, I'm not sure about pictures..."

"For me."

She giggled, feeling relieved. "Oh, okay." She began stroking his hot shaft, relishing the squishy-hard feel of his sex in her hand. There was no marital discomfort worming through her at what she was doing. But I can't tell Amos about this.

Marlon moved a little, twisting to reach a hand. His fingers found her pussy and rubbed deliciously over her tense clit. Explosions of ache and need twisted in her hole, demanding attention. Her hips moved and legs squirmed on the bed.

She stroked slowly, marveling at his thickness and length. He was much the same size as Amos, just a little thicker. With his cock in her grip and her eyes locked on it, her body moved sinuously to Marlon's finger-work on and in her pussy. She moaned out at the sensations connecting them together.

Marlon pushed her away gently, disengaging her hand from his shaft.

She pouted, wanting to touch it some more.

He knelt down to her between her thighs and pushed his face into her pussy.

She cried out in shock and ecstasy as his tongue touched and began moving on her clit. The hot and soft wetness of his tongue slid easily around her engorged clit and created the most satisfying of sensations swirling inside her.

He licked over her clit and then down her lips. Tension tickled up her pussy and pushed at the ache inside, igniting and inflaming it.

She panted, her breathing coming faster and ragged. Her heart thudded in her chest, her pulse racing and throbbing in her neck and temples. She felt a swelling wave approach her with passion and promise. Oh, this is gonna be good...

CHAPTER 12

Tara groaned in desperation as Marlon's tongue on her clit drove her orgasm nearer. She surrendered to the approach, feeling her insides twisting tight with the need to release all that sexual tension.

His fingers pushed into her, chasing the ache deeper.

She lifted her hips, shaking with the onrush of her orgasm.

His tongue and fingers disappeared.

She wailed low and quiet, with loss and lust. Eyes squeezed shut in disappointment, she said, "No, don't stop."

Marlon moved.

She gasped as he climbed over her and pressed his cock against her wet folds. She felt the pressure of him pushing. Her pussy lips moved, sliding over and around the helmet of his shaft. Slowly, her hole stretched open and wide, allowing the head of his cock to begin sliding in. Tantalizing tendrils of need and satisfaction teased up her insides from the sliding sensation of his shaft moving through the skin of her opening.

He shifted, pulling back a little.

Oh no you don't. Get back here. She reached up, gripping his butt, and pulled. I need this, right now.

He held back, aligning better, then pushed back in. His shaft slid in, pushing deep and filling her desperation with his thickness.

She moaned with need. She pulled his butt, wanting it deep and complete. Her hips lifted, offering herself to his invading manhood. She felt her hollowness filled deep – the achiness chased away as her pussy stretched around his cock.

He reached full penetration and let out a strangled sigh. Then he began moving,

shifting his hips, his erection sliding slowly in and out of her.

Tara moaned, used to the hard fucking Amos gave her. With Marlon, his moves were tortuously slow. But they were also so different from her husband's that she felt the orgasm bursting in her at the contrast. She tensed dramatically as she felt lifted on that final, frantic wave. Her tension shattered. She cried out, her body quivering out of control as her orgasm exploded through her. Wave after wave of relief came harder and more demanding with each passing burst. She ground her hips up, working her sex against the shaft filling her. Her pussy clamped repeatedly on his erection until she finally collapsed in exhaustion.

Marlon's eyes were squeezed shut, but he opened them as she relaxed. He looked down at her desperately, his pulse pounding visibly on his forehead. "Oh, yeah, Tara..." He moved more forcefully, sliding his cock in slow and deep. But his movements began accelerating. He chuckled, shook his head, and began panting. "Sorry, you feel way too good..."

She gasped for breath, feeling satisfying tingles radiating along her skin. "What?"

He thrust deep and groaned. His erection swelled, stretching her open farther, and then sent rapid pulses of scalding wetness deep into her pussy.

She gripped his shoulders, working her hips to milk his spurting cum from his cock. She felt the satisfaction of their wonderful union: his lust worshiping her womanhood and her femininity conquering his manhood. He had only lasted a minute beyond her orgasm – which had been almost immediate – but he was still hard in her.

He heaved a sigh and smiled down at her. His eyes wandered over her face with all the contentment and adoration she wanted to see. He whispered, "Give me a few moments and I'll be ready to go again."

Not wanting to feel his cock slide out of her pussy, she wriggled on the bed and giggled. "Good."

When he was ready again, their union lasted for more than two hours.

~ ~ ~

Tara leaned into Elizabeth's office. She opened her mouth to speak, but her boss cut her off.

"There you are."

"I'm sorry, Miss Watson; something came up."

"Oh, no worries, dear, I just needed you to make some calls."

She knew her boss would forgive her, but she also knew the woman expected better. Tara wanted to reassure her. "I'll make sure that doesn't happen again."

A very small nod from Elizabeth conveyed to Tara that her boss was pleased at the apology and expected nothing less than the promise she had given.

She went to her own office and began performing the functions she had been tasked.

~ ~ ~

She pulled into the carport at their townhouse complex. I can't tell Amos any of this. Just that pictures were taken. Plagued by an increasing sense of unease as she had driven home, Tara knew that what she had done was far out of the bounds of her marriage – even if it had felt so right at the time. Why did I let Marlon...?

Entering their home, she called out for Amos. Need to act normal.

"In here." The kitchen.

She went to him.

He was pouring wine in two glasses. His eyes considered her for a second, a small smile playing on his face. "So..."

"So?" She was confused.

"How did the pictures go?" He handed her a glass of Pinot Noir.

"Oh." She shrugged as if it were nothing, but couldn't meet his eyes. "Fine, I guess." She forced herself to look at him.

"Fine? That's all? Tell me about it."

"He said he'd email them this afternoon."

His glance at the clock was expectant. "So, you should have them by now."

She nodded.

"I wanna see."

She swallowed a gulp of wine. His look was so curious and insistent that she felt compelled to discover whatever Marlon had sent. "Okay."

In the bedroom, she pulled up the laptop from under the bed. Her hands moved without tremor, but her insides were a mush of water, butterflies, and a sinking feeling of loss. Why didn't I think before doing what I did?

Amos reclined on the bed on his side, glass in hand. His smile was as easy as ever.

She opened her email and clicked into Marlon's message. It had been sent just twenty minutes before. She clicked the download button while reading his text.

Tara:

Here you are. I hope you and Amos enjoy them. I know I sure enjoyed taking them.

Marlon

Amos was peering at her. "Did he say anything?"

Caught in the open, there was nothing to do except read the email. She did so in a wooden voice.

Her husband chuckled. "I bet he enjoyed it."

She opened the folder and clicked the first picture. She reclined next to him and showed him the pictures. Clicking through, she almost felt as if she were presenting evidence to a judge – incriminating evidence that Amos would see through in an instant.

Amos sighed happily. "So beautiful. He took you well."

Alarmed by the image of Marlon taking her physically, she jerked her hand in misunderstanding. Oh, he means how he photographed me. She drew in a ragged breath and kept going.

"So did he get excited while taking these?" There was an edge to his voice she couldn't decipher.

"Um..."

"You know, did he get hard?"

"Yes..."

"Tell me." His eyes left the screen and looked at her.

"He, um, stripped down to his boxers—"

"Did he?"

She said quickly, "Yeah, he does that when taking pictures of men and women to help put them at ease."

Amos chuckled. "Men, too?"

"Apparently."

"So he got hard in his boxers?"

"Yes...he did."

Her husband's face broke into a huge grin. "I woulda been hard, too."

She clicked through some more pictures, getting to the ones where she had moved to the bed and began exposing herself.

"Did he touch you?"

Uh oh, dangerous. "Yes, a couple of times to set up a pose..."

He laughed low and quiet. "Yeah... How did that feel with you being naked and all?"

"Sort of uncomfortable."

"Uncomfortable? What? With him in his boxers?"

She shrugged helplessly, not knowing what she could reveal without exciting his suspicions.

He frowned in consideration. "How hard did he get?"

She laughed in a burst of nervousness. "Um, pretty hard, I guess."

"Sort of hard not to look at it, huh?"

She tilted her head both ways. "Well, yes."

"Did he take off his boxers? Did you see it?"

Her heart pounded forcefully, sending strong pulses up her neck. Her mouth hung open a few seconds before she licked her lips and forced herself to answer. "Yes, to make me more comfortable."

Her husband's laugh was happy and suggestive.

How can he laugh like he likes the idea? She clicked nervously through the last pictures.

Amos frowned. "They sort of end abruptly."

Because he began licking me. "Well, I was nude..."

"He was standing close taking this one. His dick must have been about in your face."

She laughed, wondering at how ridiculous this all sounded to her. "Well, yes it was."

"Did it look nice?"

"It looked like yours."

"Did you...reach over and touch it?" His voice shook, strangled with something. Jealousy?

"No, of course not!" she answered in a rush.

Out of all expectations, his face fell in disappointment. "Aww, come on. You had it right there hanging in front of you and you didn't touch it? What kind of woman are you? You should have."

Her eyes went wide. "I couldn't do that to you; I'm married. You're my husband."

He hummed high in his throat and shook his head. "I couldn't blame you if you had. Nice man standing there offering you his cock? How mean of you not to appreciate it."

"Mean?" She shook her head.

"Yeah, mean." He shook his head at her in a different way. He got off the bed and removed his clothing. His cock was hard. He pulled the laptop from her and closed it. Then he removed her clothes.

She was frozen, not really understanding.

He said, "You had that nice cock hanging there and you didn't touch it? Shame on you."

"You would've wanted me to touch it?"

He growled with lust. "Fuck yeah, woman. I'm disappointed in you."

She coughed, blinking. Her panties were yanked down. "But...I'm yours."

"That's right. And there you go disrespecting that poor man that paid you so many compliments." He climbed over her and thrust his erection into her pussy, hard. "Didn't you want to touch him?"

She cried out and clutched her fingers into his shoulders. "Well...yes, I guess so."

"If I was him, I wouldn't be able to hold back. I woulda fucked your brains out, right there."

Tara moaned uncontrollably as her husband's cock rammed inside her where Marlon's had been a couple hours before. "You... You would've wanted me to fuck him?"

Amos gasped loud, his eyes rolling up in his head. "Oh!" His body froze, tensing. Then he hammered his hips down into hers, driving his cock deep and hard. "Oh, fuck yes. Fuck yes, baby." Scalding spurts told her he was cumming, fast and furious.

She blinked in shock, realizing what he was saying. He was turned on by the idea that she could have been with Marlon. Oh my god, are you kidding? I tried to be good and you wanted it? I failed and lied to you but I didn't have to?

~ ~ ~

Tara toyed with his chest hair in bed later that night. "I'm surprised the idea of me being with Marlon turns you on."

"It grew on me."

"That's not the Amos Cook I know."

"It's me, baby. Like I said, it grew on me. I'm still your husband."

She laughed low.

He said, "Are you going to take any more pictures with him?"

"No. Why, would you want me to?"

His smile spread. "Yeah, why not? Maybe you can—"

"Amos, are you sure about what you're saying? What if I did and your fantasy turns to reality and then jealousy? I can't believe we're even talking about—"

"I'm serious, Tara. I love you. And I...have this desire deep in me to have you be with Marlon, then come home to me."

"I never thought you'd want me to cuckold you."

He shook his head slowly, his expression deep in concentration. "I don't think it's so much that, baby. I think it's sexy as sin to share you with him. But only him, not anyone else. I can't explain it."

"And isn't it a sin?"

"It's a sin to share? Isn't that the greatest expression of love there is?" His tone was soft and serious.

She blinked rapidly, shaking her head. "Why didn't you tell me this before?"

He shrugged. "I wasn't sure how you'd take it."

She laughed bitterly, realizing she had lied to him about Marlon and she hadn't needed to. But how could she have known? He hadn't been up front with her, either. These secrets can destroy things. How did my perfect marriage to the perfect man fall so suddenly to secrets?

He whispered to her suggestively, "Do you think you could take another set of pictures?"

"You want me to?"

"Yes. Would you want him to take more? See you naked again?"

She panted in excitement born of fear. "Maybe..."

"I think you should. And when he's close, you should show him how good your hand feels on his cock."

She jerked upright, determined to take control – of his fantasy and her fear. "And how do I know you won't change your mind? How do I know you wouldn't turn all jealous?"

"I won't. But maybe I should meet him before anything happens." He had a thoughtful look on his face.

She firmed her lips. "What if I don't want to do this?"

"I want you to. But if you really didn't, then I'll drop it."

"And I'm afraid you won't be able to handle it."

He looked offended. "I said I could."

She shook her head, thoughts formulating in her head that made her smile. "What if I need proof?"

He frowned. "What do you mean?"

Her heart beat faster and she realized she might be on the brink of having all that she wanted: her wonderful husband and a sexy photographer friend. She searched his eyes frantically. What could I do...? What would make us all connected in a safer way? "I'll tell you what, Mister Cook."

"Uh oh, it's never good when you call me that."

She shook a finger at him. "You want me to mess around with him, I'm going to need proof."

"Yeah, you said that. What kind of proof?"

"Damn right both of you are going to meet." She moved her finger between him and an imaginary Marlon. "You'll prove it to me by sucking him."

His face screwed up. "Fuck, what?"

She was nodding. "That's right. You want me to be with him, you're going to suck him first."

"I told you I wasn't wanting to be a cuckold."

"No, not out of disrespect. Because when I tell him about all this, my condition will be the same for him. If the two of you want me – to share me – you're going to have to share yourselves, too. You suck him, he sucks you. Only then—"

"Are you kidding?"

She gripped his chest and shook him. "I want to know this is something you so very much want that you'll do this to show me. And the same for him. If neither of you are willing, that tells me I'm not worth the effort of trying. That tells me there's too much between fantasy and reality that will end up hurting things rather than making them the la-la dreamland of bliss."

"You're worth everything—"

"Then you'll blow him."

He blinked in imitation of her earlier confusion.

"You'll do it, or there won't be this sharing fantasy of yours."

"Would I have to blow him every time?" he asked in a pained voice.

Thrills shot through her that her husband was looking forward into a future where she did Marlon more than once. She stifled a smile that wanted to burst from her face like an alien baby. "No... No, I think once is enough."

He looked serious. "To prove I won't be jealous?"

"Maybe not so much that as to know that all of us are involved. You show me you can lick the cock that goes into this pussy, and I'll believe you."

He was twisting his lips one way, then the other. "Do you think Marlon would go for it?"

"I can ask him tomorrow."

He jerked his chin to the side. "Do it now."

Challenge thrown down, accepted, and taken up. She leaned over and took up her cell phone with a quivering hand.

CHAPTER 13

Tara said, "I don't know." But she was thrilled; Marlon had not immediately declined her conditions.

Amos pursed his lips. "Can't say I'd blame him if he doesn't."

She arched an eyebrow. I bet he agrees because he's already been in me, baby, and I know he wants more. "I don't know..."

Her husband chuckled and shook his head. "Just a silly fantasy, anyway."

"I'm silly, now?"

"I didn't mean it that way. What sane man would want to share you like this?"

"I think you're pretty sane."

"Not me - him."

She smiled. "He got hard for me. Would he suck you for the privilege of getting me?"

Amos chuckled. "Oh, baby, you know how to make me hard."

She teased him. "That he'd suck you?"

He looked mortally offended. "No! That he'd get you."

She giggled.

"I won't hold my breath, though."

She had an urge to tell him that Marlon had already had her, but thought better of it. There's no good way to admit lying without causing suspicion forever after that what I might say would be another lie. Best leave that one buried and forgotten. Live and learn, move on. Make sure I never lie to him again.

They fell asleep in each other's arms.

Her cell phone chimed near eleven o'clock.

She picked it up, instantly awake. A text message from Marlon.

Marlon: If it means I can have you, then I agree. But I am not gay and won't be that for you.

She bit her lip.

Amos was twisted around, looking at her. "That him?"

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

She waggled the cell phone, showing him the glowing screen. "He agrees." She typed back a response.

Tara: Will talk to you further in the morning.

Amos breathed deeply. "Damn, baby. I'm getting hard just thinking about it."

"About getting sucked?"

He threw a hand over his face and laughed.

~ ~ ~

Tara emailed Marlon from her office.

Marlon,

I'm glad you agree. But there's one more condition: Amos must never know we were together during the photo shoot. He thinks we haven't been together, yet. I

don't like lying to him but I did because I was afraid things would be ruined.

Please understand this. I love my husband with all my heart and I can't have him hurt.

Can I get this promise from you?

Tara

She scanned through her work list for the day while waiting.

He texted her phone.

Marlon: I understand, of course. No word of our previous engagement.

She texted back.

Tara: He wants to meet you.

Marlon: LOL. Punch me out?

Marlon: Just kidding. I guess we should.

Tara: lol

Marlon: When?

Tara: Come by tonight.

Marlon: It would be late. Have a shoot to do.

Tara: Like how late?

Marlon: After 9.

Tara: Hmm, kinda late, but as long as it's before 10.

Marlon: What's your address?

She texted him the address of their townhouse.

Marlon: The heights, huh? Posh.

Tara: Townhouse. It's nice, but not that posh.

Marlon: All right, I'll be there.

Marlon: You sure I'm not going to get punched out?

Tara: LOL

~ ~ ~

Tara paced nervously in the kitchen. "It's almost ten."

Amos frowned and swirled the wine in his glass. "Maybe his work took longer —"

The door thumped quietly to a medium knuckle-knock.

She jumped, suddenly awash with adrenaline and fear.

Amos raised his eyebrows and gave an enigmatic smile – but she saw the uncertainty in his eyes. He licked his lips nervously and turned away to go answer the door.

Shouldn't I answer it? Be a buffer between warring nations? Why do I feel this is going to be a battle? She snatched up her cell phone and pocketed it in case she needed to dial 911.

Amos said, "Marlon?"

Marlon said, "Amos?"

Tara bit her lip. They sounded as if they were enemies identifying each other.

Her husband backed up a step. "Come in." His voice was tense.

Marlon stepped in, eyes flashing back and forth between her and her husband.

Amos swept a hand towards the living room. "You, uh, want a glass of wine?"

A quick nod upward as he studied her husband's face preceded a quick answer. "Sure. That sounds good."

Amos went back into the kitchen, leaving her alone with Marlon.

She indicated the sofa. "Late work, huh?"

"Sunset shots for a couple."

"Ohh..."

He sat, fingers clasped together between spread knees. The confidence she usually saw was not there.

Do I look as uncertain to him? Why is this so awkward? Because people don't normally talk about sharing lovers?

Amos came back and handed him a glass. "Pinot Noir."

Marlon accepted. "Thanks."

Her husband had refilled his own. "I have to ask, right away..." He raised his eyebrows, obviously uncertain as to how to phrase his question. He twisted his glass at the stem. "Um...you're clean?"

Marlon's nod was immediate. "Very. Nothing, ever."

Her husband let out a sigh. "Good. Sorry, had to ask."

"That's okay. It's perfectly understandable."

Tara didn't feel much better about that; she knew Marlon wasn't the kind of man to be dirty.

Her husband settled back on the sofa next to him. "You know that my wife and I

are quite close."

A nod.

"I hope you know I never intend to let her go or give her up."

Marlon nodded again. "I'm being allowed a gift, right? But she's yours and yours alone to loan out."

Amos tilted his head as if hearing sense. "That's absolutely right." He nodded in affirmation of their agreement.

Marlon's voice was sincere. "I wouldn't want it any other way."

Her husband smiled, looking far more at ease. "She's a beautiful woman and I won't have her disrespected."

Tara felt left out of the conversation, but knew this was between her husband and the man.

"I would never disrespect her," Marlon soothed.

A slow nod and grin from Amos preceded a handshake offer.

The two men firmly gripped and shook hands: comprehension; understanding; and agreement made.

Tara felt a slow settling of tension leading to relief. At the same time, butterflies rose in her stomach. An odd sense of being traded drifted through her along with the excitement of their bargain.

Marlon cleared his throat. "So..."

Amos said, "I guess we're done here."

Both looked at her with bad-boy eyes as if trying to hide something.

She straightened. Better grab this now and reassert my control. "About my conditions..."

Both of their faces dropped.

She wanted to giggle, but a sense of seriousness came over her. "Listen, it may be all cool and shit between you two, but I need confirmation, too. I'm a part of this."

The two men shared a suffering look.

Damn you both, don't get all cozy against me now. "I want to know going into this that you accept each other. What if I visit you, Marlon, and you want to lick me? What if my husband had been in me that morning?"

"I'd lick you."

Tara lifted an eyebrow. "You just might."

"I would, no questions."

Amos nodded in defense of Marlon. "There, you see? If he's willing to do that then there's no need for this condition of yours."

"Yeah," Marlon agreed.

Her eyes drew down to slits to both of them. "You had conditions, I have mine. I want proof. If you're willing to lick me after one or the other of you has been in there then it's no big jump to you sucking each other."

"I ain't gay," Amos protested.

"Neither am I." Marlon was frowning.

Tara drew in a deep breath. "You don't have to be. I'm not expecting you two to jump into bed and swap man-spit. I just want a demonstration that neither of you has a problem with the other man being with me."

Her husband looked as if he had been slapped – four times. "But why a blowjob?"

"Yeah," Marlon agreed.

She pointed to her lap. "Because if this means that much to both of you, then you'll be willing to prove to me it does." Then she tapped her chest. "I want to

know it in here."

Marlon's gaze was more intense. "Amos, whip it out. I'll prove it right here."

"Say what?"

"Let's get it over with."

Her husband chuckled. "I may not like this, but I like the way you think."

Marlon warned, "Don't get any ideas about me doing it again."

Amos laughed. "I probably won't even get hard. No offense, but a brother just don't do it for me. Unless you're hiding a pussy down there." He began undoing his belt.

Tara covered her mouth.

Marlon sounded hurt. "Fuck you, I'm no sister."

"You sure? Git yours out, too. Might as well get both demonstrations over with."

"Yeah, yeah." Marlon removed his jeans.

Both men looked at each other's cocks.

Tara lifted an eyebrow, amused.

Amos said, "That's a fine length of flesh you got there."

Marlon grinned. "I see you aren't sporting a small one."

Tara grimaced. "Are you two going to compare all night?"

Marlon was ignoring her. "You want to go first?"

Amos looked very unsure. "No, no, that's all right. You go first." He leaned back against the back of the sofa as if to stay as far away from the act as possible.

Marlon grunted. "I've never done this before." He reached over and gingerly took her husband's cock in his hand. "I don't know what to do with it."

Tara laughed. "Uh huh."

He shook his head at her. "Woman, you just don't know how much this hurts." But he bent over and his head obscured her husband's lap.

Alarm tore up her insides. He's actually doing it? Wow. I guess he really does want me. A smile sifted across her lips and she shifted to watch. But sitting on the other side of Marlon from her husband, she couldn't see anything but the back of his head. She moved over to the recliner.

Immediately, she saw the upper half of her husband's cock in Marlon's mouth. She felt a quick fear that he'd bite off her husband's dick. But his movements were sucking, not biting.

Her husband's eyes were wide, and he was leaning way back, hand across his mouth in horror. He looked at her as if to accuse her, and looked down at Marlon's moving head in surprise.

She stifled a laugh. She also resisted squirming on the recliner.

Marlon hummed a chuckle.

Amos jerked. "What're you laughing at?"

He pulled his mouth off and stroked. "Looks like you're getting hard."

Tara's mouth dropped open.

Amos shifted very uncomfortably. "Yeah, so? I was imagining you were a woman."

She arched an eyebrow at him, words dangerous. "What woman?"

He pulled at his collar. "You, baby. You."

Marlon went back to sucking and her husband's shaft hardened fully.

Amos jerked again. "Whoa there, watch the teeth."

Marlon pulled off. "This isn't easy."

Tara laughed. "Yeah, and all you boys think us women can give endless blowjobs for hours."

Marlon shook his head. He bent back down to continue. But he pulled up again. "I'm not swallowing if he..."

Amos made an offended noise. "Who say's I'm going to—"

Tara was up. "Goodness, you two sound like a bunch of old women. I'll get a towel."

Marlon released her husband's shaft. He scowled at Amos. "Don't think I'm going to keep going with her out of the room."

Amos sounded incensed. "Fuck you, boy; you keep those lips to yourself."

Both men nodded as if that was settled.

Tara wanted to laugh and barely kept the hilarity from erupting. But also swarming in her were swirls of heat and lust: watching Marlon suck her husband had been incredibly hot. She got two towels and brought them back. She put them on the coffee table and removed her slacks. "Figured...I'd get comfortable. You know."

Eyebrows and smiles from the two men eased her shyness.

Marlon squinted at her husband and said, "All right. Let's do this. Try not to get too excited."

Amos smirked. "Get down there and get to work. It's past my bedtime."

She watched her husband's cock disappear into Marlon's mouth. A huge twist of lust turned in her pussy and she reached a hand down her panties.

Amos chuckled.

Marlon looked.

Tara said, "What? This is kinda hot." Her fingers touched her clit and sent pleasurable waves of tension flowing through her.

Her husband's chuckle turned into laughter that wouldn't stop.

She scowled. "What?"

He shook his head, squeezing his eyes shut. "I can't believe I'm sitting here letting another man slob on my knob and you're getting turned on over it."

Marlon had pulled off, his hand gripping her husband's erection. "Don't expect me to be laughing when you blow me."

Amos' face fell and his laughter died away into some serious throat-clearing. "Yeah, well."

Tara said, "Finish him."

"Do I have to? I've already sucked him."

"Finish it." She wanted to watch some more.

He grumbled, but bent back down over her husband.

She twisted her clit, toying at the folds and hardened bud. She moaned in growing lust and pressed her fingers inside.

Amos was tense, head turned away, and fist clenched on his chest. His breathing was rapid. His eyes popped open. "Ah..."

Marlon grunted.

"Get the rag." He waved a hand.

Marlon was off in an instant, eyes wide and fearful. He grabbed up a rag and gave it to her husband. "I don't want you cumming in my mouth..." His hand jacked the engorged erection.

Amos huffed, his hips rising off the sofa. His cock erupted spurts of cum into the air and he grimaced with the effort of his orgasm.

Marlon released the shaft as if it were a venomous snake and shielded his face.

CHAPTER 14

Tara watched her husband slowly relax back onto the couch with a low groan. Wow. I really liked that. Seeing him get blown and cum to someone else's mouth had filled her with a rush not unlike a roller coaster ride. Even her limbs jittered with excitement.

Marlon was wiping his mouth. "Yeah, well. That's done." He looked like a bad cat thrown in the bathtub.

Amos said, "Don't quit your day job."

"I didn't intend to."

Tara gave her husband a wicked eye. "Your turn."

Her husband scowled. "Do I have to? I let him suck me. Isn't that enough?"

Marlon growled, "You aren't getting out of this."

"Why, you need sucking that bad? Ask her."

She snorted and wiped her nose. "Um, not yet."

Amos nodded emphatically. "Yeah, let her do it."

Her eyebrows drew down. "I will. After you do. Or none of this happens."

Marlon scowled. "Fuck you and do it. I'm not going to have my blowjob on you wasted. Get it over with so she can do it."

Amos tilted his head at him and then looked to her, a feverish look replacing the revulsion on his face. He licked his lips. "Yeah, you're right." He pushed Marlon back and bent down over his lap. "I hope you cum fast and I hope none of you ever tells anyone I did this."

She giggled. "Just imagine that's the cock that's going to be in my mouth—"

Amos groaned, his mouth sucking down onto Marlon's limp shaft.

The man's eyes opened wide. "Damn, Mister Hoover."

Amos grumbled, "Fuck you."

Marlon leaned his head back. "Sheeeit you got some powerful lips."

"Fuck. You."

He sighed and squirmed.

Amos pulled off. "Not gay, huh? Why you getting hard so fast?"

"You got hard, too."

"Not as fast as this."

Marlon looked sheepish. "It feels good."

Amos scowled as if someone had pissed in his Wheaties. "Oh, fuck you nine ways to next Sunday."

Marlon pointed to his dick. "Keep going."

"You like that so much, you get your own head down there."

Tara was giggling with laughter. "Amos, hurry up."

"This is bullshit, MacReady."

Marlon laughed. "The Thing?"

"Yeah, fuck you, too."

The photographer laughed harder.

Amos went back to work and Marlon gasped.

Tara whispered, "Ooo, that looks so good."

Amos pulled off. "Woman, don't make me regret this."

"You wanted this: show me."

He growled in irritation and went back to sucking.

"If you can lick me after Marlon has been in me, then you--"

Amos groaned fiercely and sucked harder.

The man's eyes widened. "Oh...wow..."

Tara smiled with a growing sense of connection between these two men who so wanted her. Yes, this had been the perfect way to introduce us all as involved together.

Marlon groaned, lifting his hips.

Amos pulled off, grabbing a rag and throwing it at him.

Marlon said, "Almost. Stroke it." He readied the rag.

Her husband grumbled something vicious and jacked Marlon's cock.

Tara gasped loudly. Her husband's darker hand on the man's shaft was too much for her. She lifted her hips off the recliner and shoved three fingers into her hole, pushing against the oncoming wave of her orgasm. Her tension twisted hard, coiling inward and then exploding outward in a burst of release. Successive waves broke over her, bringing relief.

Marlon groaned breathily and came while watching her.

She panted heavily, collapsing down onto the recliner and sinking into it. Her arms flopped limply to the sides. A warm ball of connection revolved in her, growing in strength. Yes, this had been the perfect thing to do. The right thing to do. She smiled at her two men.

Amos was shaking his head. "I can't believe I did that."

Marlon's grin was salacious. "You did a good job."

He pointed a warning finger. "Shut up."

"It felt good."

"Fuck you."

"You have a nice touch."

"Don't make me throw down on you right here."

Marlon laughed. "Don't worry; just teasing you."

"Damn straight you better be."

"I wouldn't have done any of it, except for her."

Amos looked over at her, eyes suddenly warm. "She's worth every minute."

Tara looked at them both sideways. "Well, I guess that's settled."

Her husband stood up. "Good." He turned to Marlon. "You want to take her tonight?"

She frowned. "It's awful late."

Marlon's look grew sexy. "It is, but I can make up the sleep later."

Amos nodded. "Then it's settled," he rasped.

Tara exclaimed, "Hey, wait..."

Her husband shook his finger at her. "Git your ass back into the bedroom before I spank it. He done performed your conditions. I believe the man has a right to get what he deserves."

Marlon said, "Yeah."

She laughed incredulously. "It's late."

Her husband took her hand. "It's never too late for love."

~ ~ ~

Tara was shaking her head on the bed. "How are you going to work in the morning?"

Amos paused in the middle of sitting. "Don't you worry about me. I'll make it." He settled into the chair, his limpness lying on his thigh.

Marlon stood nude. "You sure?"

Her husband grunted. "I'll make it. I wouldn't give up this moment for anything."

Marlon looked at her helplessly.

She beckoned him.

Her husband sighed contentedly.

He came to her and climbed on the bed.

Amos began breathing heavily, a fire lit brightly in his eyes.

She welcomed Marlon's embrace and kiss. Then she pushed him over and bent over his lap. Lifting his half-hard cock, she sucked the upper length into her mouth.

Marlon let out a sigh just as her husband took in a gasp.

She worked her head, feeling the weight of exhaustion in her eyelids. I'm going to be dragging tomorrow, but this is going to be worth it.

Marlon's cock hardened fully after several minutes. So did her husband's. He was jacking it slowly, watching with rapt attention.

She pulled off and stroked. "I think this feels ready."

Marlon said softly, "Yeah." His eyes kept shifting back and forth between her and her husband. He looked unsure, uncertain.

She climbed over him, moving up his body.

Amos sighed long and low.

Tara felt like a sexy cat, moving up Marlon's abdomen. She straddled his hips and lifted up. She gripped his erection, squeezing it to make sure it was ready. She angled the tip up and to her opening. Already, her pussy was clamping with expectation and need. Heat flared in her and she trembled as the head of his cock rubbed across her lips. She found the right angle and began shifting over and down. The head of his cock pressed into her and she felt her lips spread open and stretch.

Amos groaned.

She looked behind her. He was stroking his cock with relish, eyes open wide and surprised.

He whispered, "Oh, baby, do it. So sexy."

She moved her hips forward a little and settled, feeling his shaft begin filling her pussy.

Marlon's fingers gripped her hips, pulling down. He let out a long sigh as her pussy slid down his shaft until she was sitting.

Tara clawed his chest as she wriggled her butt down onto his thighs. She felt so full and stuffed.

Amos was gasping, the sounds of his jacking obvious in the bedroom.

She felt a vibration almost humming in her – one of satisfaction and excitement. It was as if she had found a lost treasure. She moved, riding his cock up and down. She looked back as she did and watched her husband. What she saw there was something she'd never forget and never want to forget. He was looking at her – the object of his love – as she rode another man's cock. Amos was masturbating in time with her moves and his face was slack with lust and love. It was beautiful.

Marlon caught her by surprise, gripping her and tossing her over. He aimed his cock for her and thrust it back in.

Her husband hissed with desire. "Yes, that's it. Fuck her good."

Tara floated high on a cloud of satisfaction and joy. Being taken by Marlon on the bed she shared with her husband seemed so much more fulfilling than the studio bed. Here, it was personal and intimate. She felt her pussy filled by Marlon's shaft, back and forth, in and out, while her husband watched with approval. She was still numb from her previous orgasm and she knew she wouldn't be cumming again this night. But it felt so good.

Marlon settled down on her and kissed her while sliding his cock in and out of her pussy.

She moaned up into his mouth and moved her hips with his motions.

Amos groaned happily from the chair and the sounds of his hand on his erection complimented the wet sounds of Marlon's cock in her pussy.

What had felt so forbidden before now felt so easy and right. What had she been afraid of? Losing Amos? But she had not lost her husband and instead had gained a friend. She had been happy with Amos – fully satisfied. She had not lacked before Marlon. But now was something unexpected and different. Now was something new that didn't crowd into her space with her husband, but added alongside in an area of her heart she had not known existed.

She embraced the addition, soaring high with a peace that she had not known she was missing. Weeks of tension were gone and the absence left a heady sense of accomplishment. She had endured the test and emerged someone new and enriching – someone with a capacity she had not imagined having. She wrapped her legs around Marlon's moving hips and hugged him to her tightly. She accepted his faster thrusts and eventually the wet gift of his male passion deep inside her.

EPILOGUE

Tara welcomed her husband into bed after they both saw Marlon out.

Amos looked tired, but his eyes held an abundant wealth of love for her.
"Mmm."

She stroked his arm as he crawled over her. "Are you okay?"

"Very." He aimed his erection at her and stabbed deep, filling her where Marlon had been minutes before. "I love you, Tara."

She lifted her hips to his forceful thrusts. Her answer was a pant of sexual stimulation and satisfaction. "Are you sure?"

He chuckled. "Very."

"I love you, too."

Her husband reclaimed her pussy on their marital bed – with all the ferocity with which she was familiar. Marlon had been slow and satisfying; Amos was energetic and exhausting. She felt as fully emotionally satisfied as never before. Accommodating Marlon had been exciting, but having her husband right after was the pinnacle of the night's passion: she was complete.

~ ~ ~

Tara discovered a new self in the mirror: one with a more agile confidence. She almost felt pity for who she had been – someone who limited themselves by their own mental boundaries. But she valued who she had been; the Tara of before had led to the Tara of now.

As days passed into weeks and months, she made a connection with Marlon on a fundamental level in her heart: she loved him. He helped Amos complete her in ways she had never suspected existed. Marlon and Amos became fast friends, sometimes so close she felt the need to wedge herself in between them. But that was good, too, and she would have it no other way.

Gone was the fear of ruining her marriage; in the months that followed, she realized it was enhanced. Apart from the small secret she would need to keep about when she had first had sex with Marlon, she resolved going forward to never lie to her husband again – he deserved better. He deserved all she had to give.

And she gave it.

Thank you for reading Hearts Entangled. All reviews are greatly appreciated.

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