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I'LL SLEEP
WHEN I'M DEAD

Tymber Dalton

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I'll Sleep When I'm Dead

Arden's been plagued by personal problems—none of them involving men. But when she waits on four hunky rich guys one night and they find out she's studying computers, their job offer is the answer to her prayers.

Trace, Steve, Ken, and Hal have been best friends since they were college roommates. They've already successfully birthed and cashed out one start-up that made them rich, and moved to Florida to focus on replicating their accomplishment. They hope buying a house together will help them recapture their magic and avoid distractions, like dangerously meddling family and crazy exes. But Arden, their adorable motorcycle-riding assistant, doesn't seem to understand how much she distracts them.

Then, a chance encounter at Venture gives the men a very bad—or very good—idea. And when Ken needs Arden's help hiding his secret from family, the men decide the risk is worth it. Now, all they have to do is convince Arden she's perfect for them.

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Length: 47,268 words

I'LL SLEEP WHEN I'M DEAD

Suncoast Society

Tymber Dalton



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A SIREN PUBLISHING BOOK

I'LL SLEEP WHEN I'M DEAD

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DEDICATION

To Hubby, and Sir.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tymber Dalton is the wild-child alter-ego of author Lesli Richardson. She lives in the Tampa Bay region of Florida with her husband (aka “The World’s Best Husband™”) and too many pets. Active in the BDSM lifestyle, the two-time EPIC award winner and part-time Viking shield-maiden loves to shoot skeet and play D&D with her friends. She’s also the bestselling author of over one hundred and thirty books, including *The Reluctant Dom*, *The Denim Dom*, *Cardinal’s Rule*, the Suncoast Society series, the Love Slave for Two series, the Triple Trouble series, the Coffeeshop Coven series, the Good Will Ghost Hunting series, the Drunk Monkeys series, and many more.

She loves to hear from readers! Please feel free to drop by her website and sign up for her newsletter to keep abreast of the latest news, snarkage, and releases. You can also find all of her Siren-BookStrand releases under all four of her pen names on her author page on the BookStrand site.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Before you even ask, yes, there will be more books featuring this group of characters very soon. They have already told me that, and they're rather pushy.

Some of the characters in this book appear in or are featured in previous books in the Suncoast Society series.

While most of the books in the Suncoast Society series are standalone works which may be read independently of each other, the recommended reading order to avoid spoilers and to not miss any backstory information is as follows:

1. *Safe Harbor*
2. *Domme by Default*
3. *Cardinal's Rule*
4. *The Reluctant Dom*
5. *The Denim Dom*
6. *Pinch Me*
7. *Broken Toy*
8. *A Clean Sweep*
9. *A Roll of the Dice*
10. *His Canvas*
11. *A Lovely Shade of Ouch*
12. *Crafty Bastards*
13. *A Merry Little Kinkmas*
14. *Sapiosexual*
15. *A Very Kinky Valentine's Day*
16. *Things Made Right*
17. *Click*
18. *Spank or Treat*
19. *A Turn of the Screwed*
20. *Chains*
21. *Kinko de Mayo*

22. *Broken Arrow*
23. *Out of the Spotlight*
24. *Friends Like These*
25. *Vicious Carousel*
26. *Hot Sauce*
27. *Open Doors*
28. *One Ring*
29. *Vulnerable*
30. *The Strength of the Pack*
31. *Initiative*
32. *Impact*
33. *Liability*
34. *Switchy*
35. *Rhymes With Orange*
36. *Beware Falling Ice*
37. *Beware Falling Rocks*
38. *Dangerous Curves Ahead*
39. *Two Against Nature*
40. *Home at Last*
41. *A Kinkmas Carol*
42. *Ask DNA*
43. *Time Out of Mind*
44. *Happy Valenkink's Day*
45. *Splendid Isolation*
46. *Similar to Rain*
47. *Happy Spank Patrick's Day*
48. *Fire in the Hole*
49. *Pretzel Logic*
50. *This Moody Bastard*
51. *Walk Between the Raindrops*
52. *Rub Me Raw*
53. *Any World That I'm Welcome To*
54. *Heartache Spoken Here*
55. *Roll With the Punches*
56. *See You Sometime*
57. *Borderline*

- 58. *A Case of You*
- 59. *Reconsider Me*
- 60. *Never Too Late for Love*
- 61. *Blues Beach*
- 62. *Happy Spanksgiving*
- 63. *Our Gravity*
- 64. *Friends in Common*
- 65. *Almost Gothic*
- 66. *Empty-Handed Heart*
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I'LL SLEEP WHEN I'M DEAD

Suncoast Society

TYMBER DALTON

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Chapter One

Oh, what fresh heck is this?

The apartment complex manager, whose name Arden couldn't recall because the dude had only been working there for two months, hurried over to her as she swung off her blue 1984 Honda Gold Wing GL1200 and removed her helmet.

The six fire trucks filling the complex's parking lot that Tuesday night were another clue there was a problem. In the dark, their lights bounced off the buildings and cars in a crazy way. It was a little after eight, and she'd just finished working a twelve-hour shift at her main job, a restaurant at a hotel over on Siesta Key, and she felt completely wiped out.

"What happened?" she asked. As she scanned the building, she only saw smoke and soot marks by one second-floor unit on the opposite end of the building from hers. Several residents milled around in groups, but no one looked panic-stricken, fortunately.

"Apartment at the east end of the building caught fire. Wiring problem."

"Was anyone hurt?"

"No, the tenant was home and put it out with a fire extinguisher."

Whew! "Okay, good." Her unit was at the far end and upper floor, but she couldn't park in her usual space because of the fire trucks now sitting there.

"But the whole building has been red-tagged."

"What?"

He wrung his hands. "They've ordered the power company to shut the electricity off to the whole building. When they were up in the attic looking around, the firemen found three places that had been smoldering for a while. I guess when the contractor ran the new fiber-optic cables last week, they stapled through some of the wires. Thank god they haven't done the other buildings yet."

"How'd the installers *not* get electrocuted?"

"I don't know. I'm really sorry, but you can't stay in your apartment. You can go in and get your things, but you can't stay."

It was starting to sink in now. "Uh, I don't have any other place to go."

"The Red Cross is on their way. They'll be issuing temporary housing vouchers."

“Wait a minute. Can’t you put me in another unit in a different building? I thought there were some vacant efficiencies? Move me into one of those.”

“I only had four, and they’ve already been claimed, sorry.”

Motherhumper.

She had early classes in the morning and had planned to spend the night studying. In her last semester at the State College of Florida, she almost had her BAS in technology management. Her unpaid internship at a local IT management firm was supposed to pay out by offering her a full-time position upon graduation.

So much for those plans for tonight, much less getting any sleep.

I guess I’ll sleep when I’m dead. “Do you have any idea how long we’ll be out of our apartments?”

“Not right now, no. I’ll call an electrician to come out tomorrow to do an inspection and give me an estimate then.”

Before she could ask any other questions, he hurried off to talk to another resident who drove up.

Frak.

She unlocked the trunk and pulled her cell phone out of her backpack.

It took her a moment to think about who she could call. No boyfriend she could stay with. She really didn’t have many close friends here in Sarasota, and she wasn’t about to call her family in Jacksonville. She knew a few people from Venture, and the local munch she’d started attending several months earlier, but she didn’t know anyone there well enough yet to ask if she could impose on them by spending a night or two on their couch.

As she was about to call a girl from her job at the restaurant, who she’d gone out with a couple of times to see movies, she spotted a large Red Cross box van pulling into the parking lot.

Grabbing her helmet and her backpack, which was her purse, she locked the bike’s trunk and hustled over to where they parked, first in line for whatever she could get from them.

Forty-five minutes later, she had a voucher for a hotel room and a couple of meals, and was heading upstairs to her apartment to grab a change of clothes, her laptop, and her school books, along with as much as she could take from her fridge in the bike’s trunk and side bags.

Thirty minutes later, she and several of her fellow residents were checking in at the nearby hotel.

Honestly? It wasn't a bad place. And unlike their apartment complex, at least it had a pool. Even had a small fridge and a microwave.

After thinking about it, she made another run back to the apartment to grab what she could from the fridge, then cleaned out the rest of the food from the fridge and freezer. Better to get rid of it than have a stinky mess. Wasn't like she had a lot in there. She'd lived there for the past six years, but had turned living light into an art form.

She tossed the garbage bag in the community Dumpster and returned to the hotel.

Now *I can go study*.

Actually, first thing on the agenda was a shower. Then studying.

At one a.m. she forced herself to stop and go to sleep.

Try to sleep, anyway.

As she lay there, she tried to take inventory of her life and then decided against that.

It depressed the heck out of her.

No boyfriend. Strained and iffy relationship with her family. Crummy day job that barely paid her bills, but with her schooling almost completed, it would mean a better job with regular hours and benefits.

And weekends off, for a change.

I'm only twenty-five. I still have time to get my act together, no matter what my parents say.

She just wished she already *had* it together.

* * * *

Arden felt a moment of disorientation Wednesday morning when she awoke in a strange place.

Holy shizballs.

At least she didn't have to worry about running out of hot water as she stood under the shower and tried to wake up. Today she had classes all morning, then would grab lunch on her way to her internship, where she was supposed to be at one. No tables to wait today, no aching feet at the end of her shift.

Fortunately, she didn't have any tests today. Tomorrow morning she was supposed to work at the internship, then pull a ten-hour shift at the restaurant

from two until midnight. The pay was crapola, but she usually made decent tips, due in no small part to the push-up bras she wore, her low-cut tank-tops, innocent flirting, and pretending to have an IQ smaller than her bra size.

She wished she didn't have to resort to that, but when she'd first started the job seven years ago, she'd received the valuable piece of advice from one of the older waitresses and it had worked almost immediately.

Middle-aged and older men, especially ones staying at the beach resort without their families, were willing to part with more of their money when their order arrived quickly, correctly, and with a winking smile and ample cleavage.

She'd salvaged cereal and milk last night, so she was able to wolf down a bowl with her cup of adequate coffee from the room's coffeemaker. After carefully repacking all the books she'd need today, as well as her charger cords for her laptop and her phone, she pulled on her armored motorcycle jacket, grabbed her helmet and riding gloves, and headed outside.

The Gold Wing wasn't a car, and it did suck having to wear rain gear half the year. It was cheap on gas and she'd only paid eight hundred for it, bought off the mother of a coworker four years earlier. The woman's father had died not long before Arden's beater gasped its last breath. When Arden's coworker heard about her car problems, and learned that Arden was about to borrow a friend's motorcycle until she could afford another car, the friend got her mother to sell it to Arden on payments.

It wasn't the prettiest bike, but it ran good and after she'd customized the seat, taking a couple of inches of padding out of it, and putting on slightly shorter shocks—plus her chunky boots with inch-thick soles—she could ride it with her five-four frame. Having two older brothers who'd loved motorcycles had helped in one way, at least. She'd easily earned her motorcycle endorsement when she got her regular driver's license.

Since then, she hadn't tried replacing her car, wanting to get through school first. Even the near-misses she'd had with traffic weren't enough to make her want to switch back to four wheels yet. She had good rain gear, she saved a fortune in gas and car payments, and it forced her to remain conscientious about living light.

Random, spontaneous purchases at the store always had to be weighed against whether or not she had room on the bike to carry it.

Every spare bit of money she earned or saved needed to be put into her

bank account. Once she graduated and started working full-time, she could find something good and reliable, used, that she could pay cash for.

After stashing her backpack in the trunk, she zipped her jacket, pulled on her helmet and gloves, and headed to campus. School was a refuge for her and always had been, despite what her parents had told her she wasn't capable of.

To heck with them.

She'd almost managed to forget about her temporary living arrangement by the time her classes ended. She swung through Subway to grab a sandwich, then headed to work.

Except...when she pulled into the parking lot at the small strip mall off Beneva, there weren't any cars parked in front of the unit that held the offices of Kraiges Technologies.

What the heckin' heck?

Usually, she parked in a little grassy strip just under the complex's sign, but today she parked right in front of the unit and walked up to the door even before she pulled her helmet off.

Inside the front door was taped a note that looked like it'd been printed on a computer.

Closed indefinitely. Please call (941)555-8990 for information.

Son of a sea cook.

This was news to her. She'd just been here two days ago, on Monday. She ripped her helmet off as she stormed back to her bike and dug through her backpack to find her phone. Back to the door, she called the listed number. An automated message played, a man's voice she didn't recognize.

"We apologize for the inconvenience, but Kraiges Technologies is closed until further notice due to a death. Final checks will be mailed to all employees to the addresses on file. Please leave your name and number after the beep."

Shock filled her, and it took her a second to start speaking. "Um...Hi. I'm Arden Hasegawa, the intern. I...uh...I'm sorry. I don't know who died, but...my condolences. I guess I don't need a check since I wasn't getting paid. If there's someone who could at least e-mail me a reference letter I could use to find another job, I would appreciate it. I was supposed to start

working full-time after I graduate in a few months. Sorry again. Thanks.” She hung up, stunned.

Well, shinola. At least she didn’t have any personal items inside the building.

She also didn’t have any personal cell numbers for her coworkers, and a quick check of her e-mail didn’t reveal any messages from anyone.

She opted to shoot a quick e-mail to Ben Massington, who’d been her direct report.

I just showed up at work and saw the note on the door. What happened?

She included her cell number.

Meanwhile, she grabbed her sandwich from the trunk, sat in the shade under the front of the building with her back against the wall, and ate while watching for an e-mail reply.

Her phone rang just as she was finishing her sandwich.

“Hey, Denny. I’m sorry no one thought to call you. It’s...been crazy.” The usually jovial man sounded subdued, shocked.

“What happened?”

“We’re all at the funeral right now. Well, the visitation. It’s... bad...”

Monday afternoon, the wife of Bill Kraiges, the eponymous founder and owner of the business, had discovered he’d been cheating on her when she went to the doctor and learned she had contracted an incurable STD that would be impossible for her to get any other way than her husband cheating on her. She confronted him that night when he arrived home.

That led to Bill making a tearful confession to her that he thought he was a sex addict, and yes, he’d been cheating on her for most of their twenty-year marriage.

In what was agreed upon by all as an overreaction, she pulled a gun on him and shot him dead. In her suicide note explaining the events, she claimed she didn’t mean to kill him, only meant to make him get on his knees and beg, but she couldn’t live with herself now that she had.

Unfortunately, she’d also been the one who ran bookkeeping functions, although she’d worked from home.

Arden leaned her head back against the wall and closed her eyes. “Well, that sucks all the way around. I don’t suppose I can get a reference letter from

you when you have a little free time, could I?”

“Oh, sure. I’ll do that when I get home. Sorry we didn’t have you looped in on this. Shoot me a reminder e-mail if you don’t have it by morning.”

“Thanks. What are they going to do with the office?”

“I don’t know. The attorney is getting an emergency order so he can pay us. I guess we’re all out of jobs now. Bill was kind of the backbone of the business. When I find a new job, I’ll e-mail you if they have any internships.”

“Thanks, I appreciate that.”

Numb, she sat there for a moment. At least she still had a paying job.

For now...

She returned to her apartment complex and found two vans from a local electrician parked in front of her building. A man in a uniform with a matching logo was talking to the apartment complex manager.

Arden removed her helmet and walked over, waiting until they were done speaking to ask.

“Any news?”

“At least two more days,” the complex manager told her. “And possibly a week or more, or maybe even longer. I’m sorry.”

“Well, do you have a waiting list or something for efficiencies? The people who moved can’t all be wanting them.”

“I can take your name, but there are already about fifteen names ahead of yours. I had a line at the office door this morning.”

Shizballs. “Okay, thanks.”

She was about to get on her bike again when she heard her cell phone ringing. She was able to dig it out in time to see it was Sue, one of the girls she worked with at the restaurant.

“Hey, what’s up?”

“Oh, my god! Thank goodness you answered. I know this is short notice, but can you cover my shift today? My daughter’s school just called and they had to transport her to the ER in an ambulance. She tripped going down stairs between classes and they think she broke her arm. They want to do a CT scan to make sure she didn’t get a concussion.”

Arden rubbed at her forehead. “Yeah, sure. When are you working?”

“Two to eleven, oh, my god, thank you so much! I’ll call them back and tell them you’re coming in.”

“I need to run home and change first. Might be closer to two thirty when

I get there.”

“It’s okay if you’re a little late, they’ll understand. I owe you big time!”

So much for studying tonight. “It’s all right. I hope your daughter’s okay.”

“Thanks!”

And like that, Arden was staring at her cell phone and wondering if she’d somehow brought some sort of ancient curse upon herself by accident.

Maybe Granny was wrong that nice girls always come out ahead.

Chapter Two

“Let’s go out for dinner tonight.” Trace looked through the lanai screen and toward the protected woodlands to their west. “I don’t feel like cooking.” Two corners of the property were bordered by land that couldn’t be developed. Since the house sat at the end of the street, it meant only one neighbor, to their south, and a ten-foot privacy fence separated their backyards from each other.

“I’ll vote for that,” Steve said as he walked over to stand beside him and survey the view. “We still haven’t tried that place downstairs.”

Ken emerged onto the lanai from the sliders leading to the living room, the realtor on his heels. “I’m in,” Ken said as he clapped his hands together, rubbing them. “I love this place—it’s perfect. Let’s sign.”

Trace and Steve turned. “What about Hal?” Steve asked.

Ken hooked a thumb over his shoulder, a smile curving his lips. “He’s rubbing his junk all over the bedroom he called dibs on.” He ran a hand over his shaved, dark brown scalp. “I hear something about not cooking tonight?”

“Yeah,” Trace said. “Want to try that restaurant downstairs?”

They’d been renting two adjoining suites at a hotel on Siesta Key for the past week, taking turns cooking simple meals in the tiny efficiency kitchens their rooms had. Problem was, they were limited by what they could do in the tiny space and with the most basic of cooking equipment. All their stuff was in storage until they bought a house.

Which it looked like they’d just done.

“Yeah, I could go for that,” Ken said.

“First we have to pry Hal out of his new bedroom,” Steve said. His straight, black hair fluttered a little in the breeze, and his dark tan skin and smoky brown eyes had charmed their real estate agent, who apparently had a thing for Indian guys.

She’d been flirting hard and heavy with him ever since they’d met her in person for the first time, and Trace got the feeling it wasn’t just because she was trying to make a sale.

This was the fourth house they’d seen today, the latest of more than two dozen houses they’d looked at over the past several days, and they’d loved it on sight.

Well, Trace had loved it, Steve had been fine with it, and Ken had needed a little thinking time as he walked through the house. But that was Ken and normal for him, cautious and wanting to look at pros and cons before committing.

Hal apparently loved it so much he was trying to fuck it.

Florida was a far cry from where Trace had grown up in Brooklyn—hell, all of them had grown up in or near one of New York City’s boroughs—but they knew coming into this there might be a little culture shock.

That was the *point*.

Moving to Florida was a fresh start for all four of them. They needed to escape the echo chamber they’d created for themselves on Long Island over the past dozen years since college, even if they’d been lucratively compensated from the sale of their company. It was time for them to start over, if they wanted to replicate their wild success.

The good thing now was they had the leisure and cushion of being financially set to take their time and set themselves up right to replicate that success.

They’d all lived relatively close together, and had worked together in their offices, but their initial success started in college when they’d shared an apartment and got the idea for Collidezkope, the music-centric social media platform everyone was predicting would out-Facebook Facebook in a year at its current rate of growth.

Knowing they didn’t want the headaches accompanying the scaling up of their platform, they’d taken it public and then cashed in, staying on as paid consultants.

Two years later, and they were now at the expiration of their non-compete clauses and ready to work on new ideas.

Something different.

Something that would challenge them and overshadow their previous success.

Hal emerged from another sliding glass door. “We all in? I *love* this place!”

“We heard,” Trace said. “Make sure to stick a biohazard sign on your door, please.”

Hal shot him a bird. “Let’s go sign the papers. I heard it’s supposed to rain later.”

Ken rolled his eyes. “Non Sequitur Hal strikes again.”

“That’s not a non sequitur. It’s an ‘I don’t want to get stuck in the fucking rain again’ comment. Rains like a sonofabitch here, if you hadn’t noticed.”

“Remember that bitching you’re doing now when your mom’s complaining about the snowplows in December,” Trace reminded him.

“True.”

Since Hal had driven them today, they’d had to wait for him anyway. They piled into his car and followed the real estate agent back to her office. They’d each contributed equally to the trust they were buying the house through, and to the corporation set up to protect all four of them and through which they’d also run business expenses and profits. With their finances already pre-approved for a cash sale, and the very motivated owner willing to immediately take their offer, all they had to do was sign papers. The five-bedroom, six-bath house had most recently been a short-lived Airbnb property.

According to the real estate agent, the original owners who’d had it built planned the layout so their kids could come down and visit them from up north. After their passing, the kids were tired of dealing with it and facing hassles from the HOA for renting it out.

Thus, they wanted to sell. Finding a traditional buyer for the layout, at the price the seller wanted, had been difficult, but it was perfect for the men’s needs. A bedroom and private bath for each of them, along with one spare for a visitor. They’d turn the huge dining room into their war room/office area.

Having a pool and a hot tub was a bonus.

Not to mention the men were used to New York City real estate prices. This was a bargain, to them.

An hour later, they were signing papers in the title insurance office.

“Today’s Wednesday?” Hal asked as he pulled out his phone to double-check.

“Why?” Ken asked. “You lose a day?”

“Apparently. I thought it was Tuesday all day.”

Trace smirked. “See? Living this life of leisure’s messing with your steel-trap brain already.”

Hal flipped him another bird. “I let you assholes talk me into moving down here, all right? Quit busting my balls.”

Trace felt famished by the time they left the office to head for their hotel. It was a perfect coincidence all four of them were currently single, making this move possible in the first place.

“Whose hare-brained idea was this, anyway?” Trace joked.

“Yours,” the other three men said before breaking into laughter.

“You know,” Hal admitted, “I’d be lying if I didn’t say I kinda missed living with you assholes. Seeing some of you for a few hours a day at the office isn’t the same as living together.” His smile faded. “And living alone sucked.”

Steve cleared his throat. “If we’re having a moment, then fine. I missed you guys, too.”

Ken, who’d ended up riding shotgun, nodded. “Yeah, I did.”

“Call me stupid,” Trace said, “but I’ve been fucking *bored*. I haven’t really felt excited about anything since we sold out. *Now* I’m excited again.”

* * * *

From his seat behind Hal, Steve could watch Ken’s profile in the front passenger seat. They hadn’t yet told the others they’d been fucking around for the past couple of months. Nothing permanent yet, but something more than friends with benefits.

Both of them had been burned badly in their last breakups, and all they wanted for now was stress-free safe and easy sex, along with a heaping dose of friendship.

Although he’d be lying if he denied his feelings for Ken were dangerously slipping into deeper emotional waters.

It’d been easier for them lately while sharing the same suite. Trace and Hal’s bedroom was far enough away that the two of them could lock their door and have at it without worrying about their friends hearing them.

They weren’t sure how the other two men might take it. Steve suspected Hal would be okay, because he was heteroflexible enough to be using the line between bi and het like a jump rope. Trace never gave any indication he was an asshole, and had always treated Ken like they were brothers even knowing Ken was gay, but who knew? Steve had never made a secret of the fact he was bi, and Ken was openly gay as long as they were nowhere near any of his family. Trace never seemed to react badly, but then again, the two of them

had never made their fucking around together open knowledge before.

Another reason Steve knew Ken had been fine with this move—so he could breathe easier and not have to make excuses to avoid family events, or find a beard for them.

Ken had once joked it'd be far more acceptable for him to bring a white girl home than to come out as gay to his family. The other three men had helped him out with that over the years, lining up understanding female friends for Ken to take to family events.

While he preferred men, Ken had been known to sleep with a woman once in a while, if he was attracted to her, but he still labelled himself as gay, not bi or homoflexible.

Like the waitress the four of them had shared one really hot night after they'd all become instant multi-millionaires when they took Collidezkope public.

When Steve had tried coming out to his parents as bi, they'd settled on an archaic *don't ask, don't tell* dynamic. They wouldn't disown their only son, but even though they'd both been born and raised in Ohio, it was far easier to fib to their very conservative extended family—including family still living in India—and pretend he was straight.

"Guys—there's a dungeon here in Sarasota!"

They all looked at Hal. "Okay," Ken drawled. "That was left-field, even for you."

"I've been meaning to tell you all about it," Hal said, "but I keep forgetting. We should totally check it out this weekend."

"I'm not really interested in clubbing," Trace said. "I'm a little old for that scene."

"You're only thirty-five," Hal shot back. "And it's not a bar. It's a private-membership club. They hold classes and everything. I'd really like to go."

"Then go," Steve said. "Nothing stopping you." Although yeah, this was something else they all had in common—more than a little of a kinky streak in all of them.

Except in the Big Apple, it was harder for them to go incognito due to their high-profile status once their company went public. They'd visited clubs out on the West Coast before, when business took them out there, and another time they'd gone to one outside of Chicago.

But they didn't shit where they ate, meaning they kept their kinky sides deep in the closet when home in New York.

"They got a website?" Steve asked.

"Yeah," Hal said. "Pretty decent one, actually."

"Forward us the info to look at. I might be interested."

"This is *our* time, you know?" Hal added. "I don't know about you guys, but maybe we *needed* to get out of New York for more than business reasons."

"You just don't want that woman who's determined to have your baby stalking you," Trace teased him. "She was damned determined."

Hal's good cheer evaporated. "Any of you fuckers dare tell her where I am, I'll fucking kill you."

"Don't worry," Steve said. "Since we're sharing a house again, I don't want her crazy crossing our doorstep. Mum's the word." The woman had figured out where Hal lived on Long Island, and had even gone so far as to rent an apartment in the same building he'd lived in.

It'd taken a restraining order and a substantial payment to his lawyer's scary-looking "family friend" to persuade her to move and leave Hal alone. Still, she tried e-mailing him at least once a week, and he'd stopped accepting any Facebook friends requests because she was constantly stalking him on social media.

The hotel on Siesta Key was nice, and the laid-back beach atmosphere had gone a long way toward easing Steve's anxiety. He didn't like to just... sit around. Yeah, they'd been "working" as consultants, and none of them were stupid when it came to being careful with their money, but Collidezkope hadn't been "their" baby any longer.

He wanted to get back to the basics, the daily grind. Of developing something that was close to their hearts. Working on the code, working out the bugs, and building it from the ground up.

What that something was remained to be determined. They'd decided to take the time between leaving New York and settling into a new house in Florida as a "vacation." No work to be discussed between them. They could make notes to themselves to bring to the table once they were ready to start work again, but they were supposed to be refreshing their mental palates.

To Steve, being idle was akin to the closest thing he considered a mortal sin. Rest was for the weak and lazy. Not having a clear focus was driving him

crazy and making him snappy and bitchy, something his friends had started commenting on more frequently the last couple of months. Another reason Ken had been happy to pick up the pace of their secret relationship, because it was a little of a stress reliever for them both.

I'll sleep when I'm dead.

After running the paperwork upstairs and changing clothes, they headed down again and grabbed a comfy corner booth in the back. It turned out tonight was karaoke night.

Hal elbowed Steve. "You should get up and sing."

"I'm never going to live that down, am I?"

"Nope. Never seen you so drunk in your life." He grinned. "And the video lives on for eternity."

Steve grabbed a menu from the stack propped against the napkin holder in the middle of the table. "Dick," he muttered. But his mood immediately lifted over the cute waitress who arrived, dropping coasters onto the table with what looked like an exhausted smile.

"Welcome, gentlemen. What can I get you to drink tonight?"

Helloooo, sweetie.

Chapter Three

Oh, great. Karaoke night.

Now Arden remembered why she wasn't fond of working the Wednesday night shift.

At least the tips are better.

Drunk people singing horribly might be someone else's idea of entertainment, but it wasn't hers. To her, it was like dragging nails on a chalkboard.

Fortunately, the horrible singing wouldn't really get cranking until nearly ten o'clock, so most of her shift wouldn't be torture. And she'd been making halfway decent tips today, so that was a plus.

Add to that she now had a table of four hunky guys to serve.

I really need to get out to Venture.

It'd been too long since she'd taken time off for herself. If she wasn't working at the restaurant—or working at her currently non-existent internship—she was studying.

Worth it, though, if it meant making a life for herself and being able to give her family a metaphorical *screw you* in the process. She knew Granny would be proud of her.

That was always well worth it.

When she had thirty seconds to herself, she scrolled through her phone out behind the kitchen, where the staff took smoke breaks, and found she had the reference letter from Ben Massington in her e-mail.

Well, that's one thing handled, I suppose. A minor victory in the face of what was starting to feel like a mountain of losses.

"You all right?"

Arden turned to see Allie, her friend and fellow waitress, step outside, her e-cig in her hand.

"It's been a heck of a twenty-four hours." She told Allie about it.

"Wow," Allie said after Arden had run through her slew of bad luck. "Well, you can sleep in our RV, if you want."

"What?"

"No kidding. My in-laws stay in it when they come visit." She grinned. "If you're living in it, they can't. Seriously, two hundred a month, including

utilities, cable, Wi-Fi—everything. We have it parked behind the house and hooked into a septic thing my husband rigged. I'll even do a lease, if you want."

Arden quickly ran numbers through her mind. With that kind of savings every month, she could easily save up for a car, or at least cut back her hours at the restaurant to give her some breathing room on her studies. "Where do you live?"

"Only fifteen minutes from here, unless it's rush hour."

"I don't know how long it'll be until I can get into my apartment again."

"Heck, if you're living there, it means I don't have to make excuses why I don't want them coming down from Pennsylvania. Whether you want to stay a week or a year, I'm good with that."

"Oh, my gosh! I think I love you!" She hugged Allie. "Thank you!"

"I don't have to be here tomorrow until noon. Come by and look at it tomorrow morning, if you want."

"Yeah, I do!"

"Do you need help moving your stuff into storage from your apartment?"

"I will."

"Just let me know when. My husband has a truck."

"Will do!" Arden headed back inside, rejuvenated. *Maybe my luck is turning around.*

She could only hope.

* * * *

The four hunks in the corner booth seemed nice and friendly. Something about their manner spoke money, even though they weren't dressed super-fancy or anything. Two white guys, one guy with black hair and dark tan skin who looked like he might be of Indian or Middle Eastern descent, and a handsome bald, black guy who looked vaguely familiar, like maybe an actor she'd seen on TV or something.

Yum!

The four of them were the friendly kind of flirty, not obnoxious, and she finally had to ask when she brought their appetizers.

"You all here on vacation, or what?"

"Nah," the black guy said, giving her a warm, wide smile. "Relocating

here. We just closed on a house this afternoon. Starting our new business here. We were partners in our previous business before we sold it. Did a couple of years of consulting for the new owners, and now that the non-competes have expired, we're ready to stretch our wings again."

"That sounds mysterious. What do you do?"

"Ever hear of Collidezkope?"

"Yeah. I have friends who keep trying to get me to join, but I'm not as crazy into bands and music as they are."

He pointed at the blue-eyed blond cutie. "Trace, there, came up with the name. Didn't hurt he was a little drunk and couldn't spell worth a shit. Steve"—he pointed at the guy who looked Indian, with handsome brown eyes and straight black hair—"he's the one who hit on the basic site architecture and structure we started with. Hal and I shouldered building most of the initial framework. We were in college when we started it."

Hal, who was the other white guy and had hazel eyes and brown hair, flashed her a smirk. "Ken here is a little too modest. It started out as a class project for a grade and kind of blew out of control. Before we knew it, we had a dot.com company."

"Holy cow! That's awesome. If you're looking for unpaid interns, I'm looking for a new position since I just lost my old one. The company owners...eh, died."

* * * *

I have a position I'd like to put you in.

And Trace knew it would involve zero clothes, cuffs, a collar, some implements, and a whole lot of lube.

"What happened?" Trace asked. From the frown she'd flashed, it didn't sound good.

"Guess the owner of the company was cheating on his wife and brought home something antibiotics couldn't get rid of. She killed him, and herself. Just the other day."

"Oh, shit."

She nodded. "Yeah. Killed my internship, too. Which sucks, because when my classes are over at the end of the semester and I graduate, I was supposed to move to working full-time for them."

“What are you studying...”

And that led them into a discussion of her skillsets and studies and had Trace re-evaluating his earlier dirty thoughts. Especially when she gave him her portfolio web URL and he took a look at the test sites she’d built for her classes.

When Arden left to take care of another table, Trace leaned in. “Guys, you thinking what I’m thinking?”

“That I’d like to ride her like a pony?” Hal joked. “Fuck, *yeah*.”

Trace reached over and slapped his shoulder. “Asshole. We talked about the next step being we’d need an AA. She’s almost done with school, she’s got some skills already—she’d be perfect.”

Ken frowned. “You’re serious? We don’t know anything about her.”

“That’s why we ask her for a resume,” Trace said. “You’re in charge of personnel until we get big enough for an HR department, that was the deal. She can be our first hire.” He held up his phone. “She’s not just blowing smoke out of her ass.”

Ken pulled out his wallet, rummaged through it, and found a business card. The phone number listed went to a VOIP number he could check from anywhere. “I want to give her my cell number. Any of you assholes got a pen?”

They didn’t.

She returned with their entrees and Ken went to work. “Can I borrow your pen for a second?”

“Sure.” She handed it to him, and he quickly jotted his cell number on the back of the business card. “My e-mail’s on the front. Send me your resume tomorrow and text me so I have your number. We’d like to set up an interview with you.”

“Interview?”

Trace watched Ken turn on the charm. Hell, it made his cock twitch, and while he wouldn’t weird his friend out by admitting he’d maybe thought about what it’d be like to take a spin through the sack with Ken at least once, like hell would he ever tell him.

“We have a plan,” Ken told her. “House came first. Next step is setting up an office, and hiring people. Very first hire has to be an administrative assistant. Won’t be much coding for you to do in that job. Not at first. It’ll be sort of a catch-all position. But as we grow, we’re going to need to add on

staff, and that's where you'd have more responsibilities. Having someone who knows the technical side of things will be a huge help."

She stared at the card. "Are...are you serious?"

"Absolutely. We'll work around your class schedule, of course."

"Wow. Thank you!"

"We're staying here, for now. We have two suites up on the top floor. It'll take us a few days to move our stuff from storage and get set up in our new place. We'll be working out of there, at first. Long story we can chat about at the official interview."

He held out a hand to her and they shook. "Ken Rossi. That's Trace Huffer, Steve Chaudhary, and Hal non sequitur Larsson."

"Dick," Hal muttered, but he offered her a smile. "Hi."

"Arden Hasegawa." She tucked the card into her back pocket. "I really appreciate this. Would it possibly lead to a paying position after I graduate?"

Ken's smile widened. "I'm sorry, I think you misunderstood me. Depending on how the interview goes, and after we tell you more about us and the job, and we hear about your skillsets, if we extend an offer to you we'd want to hire you as our paid AA, starting immediately."

Her eyes widened. "Really?"

"Really." He pointed toward where she'd slipped his card into her pocket. "So don't forget to send your resume to me ASAP."

"Thank you!"

Trace watched her walk away and leaned in. "You thinking what I'm thinking?"

"I'm thinking you'll get us our first sexual harassment lawsuit if you don't stop thinking with your little brain," Ken snarked.

"No, asshole. I mean, I just had one of those flashes."

The other men went quiet. "Seriously?" Steve asked.

"Yeah. Like she's perfect, and she's the first step to us building something bigger and better than we had before."

"I hope you're right," Steve said as he tucked into his burger. "Because I wouldn't mind replicating that, and you've never been wrong, you spooky fuck."

Trace focused on his chicken sandwich as the others started eating. His friends were believers because every time he'd had one of his flashes of intuition, it'd always been dead-on accurate.

And the only time they'd ever ignored him, Hal had ended up with a crazy stalker.

* * * *

Steve hoped they weren't about to make a mistake. He could already see Hal was attracted to Arden. He'd known the man for the better part of twenty years and spotted the signs already. Trace definitely liked her.

Sure, they'd shared that one waitress, but that had been a celebration and wasn't exactly a winning business plan on which to build the foundation of their next multi-million-dollar tech company.

When they finished, he picked up the tab, since it was his turn. He paid the bill on a card, but instead of adding the tip, he slipped her five twenties. "Don't forget to send Ken your resume," he said.

Her eyes widened as she realized how much he'd given her. Sure, she'd probably have to share it with whoever was on staff, but even more reason to tip her well.

She'd be less likely to forget them.

"Th-thank you so much!"

They headed out of the restaurant and over to the elevators.

"Mmm mmm mmmmmm," Ken said.

"What?"

He arched an eyebrow at him. "Bitch, *please*." The doors slid open, and they all stepped inside. "You all are hoping for a repeat of that waitress. This is work, and we all agreed work and play do *not* meet. You *never* cross the streams."

They parted ways at their room doors. Once Steve and Ken were safely behind theirs, he confronted Ken. "You're not against hiring her, are you?"

Ken started stripping. "I'm not for or against hiring her. Don't even know her. Need to see her full resume and talk to her. She might decide we aren't her cuppa." He tossed his shirt onto his bed and stood there, staring at him. "I'm not good enough for you now?"

But the way the corner of his mouth twitched a little told Steve he was trying to hold back his smile.

Man wanted to get laid.

Steve was good with that, because he was feeling pretty horny himself.

Steve pulled his shirt off and started working on his shorts. "Hey, I caught last time."

Ken finished undressing, and seconds later, Steve was on top of him on Ken's bed.

"Know what I thought when I saw the lanai at the house?" Ken asked as he grabbed Steve's ass and ground against him.

"What?"

"How I'd love to bend your ass over in that hot tub and long-stroke you until my dick fell off."

"So romantic." Steve slanted his lips over Ken's in a crushing kiss. "Where's the lube and condoms?"

"Now who's the romantic?" Ken pointed at the table between the two beds.

Steve stretched and grabbed the lube and a condom and it didn't take him but a few seconds before he was balls-deep inside Ken's ass and they were both moaning.

* * * *

"*That's* what I needed." Ken hooked his feet around the backs of Steve's legs and rocked his hips in time with the man's thrusts. He curled his hand around his cock, squeezing, stroking, building himself up. A lot of what he and Steve did was quick and dirty and scratching their mutual itches, even if they did end up sleeping in the same bed all night.

Steve's cock perfectly hit him in all the right places, nerves firing and building Ken's need until he had to slow his own strokes or bust his nut before Steve found joy.

He reached up with one hand and played with Steve's right nipple. "Quit holding out on me. You know you want it."

It was just what the other man needed. "Fuck, yeah!" Steve gasped, now pounding his cock into Ken's ass.

Ken stroked himself, his eyes falling shut when his balls tightened, spilling cum into his hand and all over him and Steve both.

Steve didn't move, his arms braced on the bed on either side of Ken's head. Ken playfully smacked his cock against the other man's abs. "You were thinking about that waitress, weren't you?"

“Which one?”

“The one we nailed. Which one you think I meant?”

He sat back. “Never mind.”

“Hey, hold on.” Ken grabbed his arm so Steve couldn’t pull away. “If we’re hiring her, she’s off-limits. And you know as well as I do, if she’s qualified, wouldn’t be fair to not hire her just so the four of us can have kinky fun with her.”

“I know. I just...” His deep brown gaze bored into Ken’s. “Sucks your family isn’t open.”

“We having us a moment now?”

“Kinda, yeah.”

Ken released his arm and reached up to cup his chin. “You never saw me get jealous over you dating before.”

“That was before we were...this.”

“This gonna be a problem?”

“No. I think we need to quit hiding it from the other guys, though. That’s what’s weird, is we’re not being open with them.”

“Is that really bothering you?”

“Yeah. Like I’m your dirty secret or something.”

“Nah, that ain’t it.” He pulled Steve down onto him and kissed him. “We have a house now. We’re gonna be working again—*finally*. I didn’t want to say anything before now because I didn’t want to tip what we had the wrong direction. Meaning the four of us. Didn’t want Trace and Hal thinking we ganged up on them and formed our own team or something.”

Steve propped himself up on one arm and stared down at him. “Still say we should try to find a woman like that waitress.”

“You still thinking about that night, huh?”

Steve grinned. “Yeah. Man, that was fucking *hot*. She wore us out.” His smile faded. “We’re at our best when we’re all together, the four of us. Any time we had significant others, it sort of borked the perfection, you know? Maybe what we need is one we can all share.”

“A unicorn.”

“Yeah. Look at that guy you were dating last year. You couldn’t so much as work late without him blowing up your phone wanting to know where the hell you were. And he hated me.”

“He hated you because I was honest with him that we’d blown each other

before. Imagine how much he would have hated you if we'd graduated to fucking by then?"

"I don't want to think about how shitty that would have become. But I mean, look at what happened. That psycho chasing after Hal. How tense we all were then. And that last bitch Trace dumped because she thought he was a walking ATM."

"You haven't had the best luck either, you know."

"Yeah." He seemed to have more to say and Ken waited him out. "You ever think about fucking Hal or Trace?"

"If your question is have I ever jerked off over my friends, yeah. Not gonna lie. But Trace is straight, and while I know Hal is a little loosey-goosey at times, he's never indicated to me that he'd be open to more."

Steve arched an eyebrow. "I think I know how to remedy that."

"How?"

"Tequila and our new hot tub."

"You want us to get them drunk and horny?"

"Trace'll fuck an electric socket, he gets drunk enough."

Ken patted him on the ass to move. "I think we can find better ways to get back to our college roots than drunk-fucking our more straight-inclined buddies." He headed for the bathroom, Steve following.

"Not like that, but...think about it."

Now that Steve had put that thought in his head, however, Ken couldn't think about anything *but*.

He also wouldn't deny they were very intriguing thoughts.

Chapter Four

Arden couldn't get the four hunks out of her brain. If they were serious, and if they offered her a decent salary, this could be the start of her new career.

Hot dang!

Despite her exhaustion when she returned to the hotel room that night, she pulled out Ken's business card and started to research the men. There were plenty of tech articles about the wunderkinds and their former company—including pictures—which told her at least they were who they said they were.

And they had the chops to back up what they were saying.

She pulled up her resume and went through it, updating the information about her current school level and classes taken, as well as the information about Kraiges Technologies and her responsibilities there. Once she'd proofread it, she attached it and the letter of recommendation from Ben Massington to an e-mail, and tried to calm her shaking fingers as she composed a cover letter, double-checking the spelling of their names with one of the articles as she did.

Dear Mr. Rossi,

I enjoyed meeting you and Mr. Hufte, Mr. Chaudhary, and Mr. Larsson tonight. As we discussed, here are my current resume and a letter of recommendation from Ben Massington, who was my direct supervisor at Kraiges Technologies. My cell number is 941-248-5555, and I'll text you in the morning as you directed...

She included a brief statement about her current class and work schedule at the restaurant so he had an idea of when she was available for an in-person interview. Anytime tomorrow would be best, since she was supposed to have been at the internship.

After her shower, she stretched out in bed.

Guess you were right, Granny. Good girls do eventually come out on top.

She needed to get to sleep. Tomorrow she was meeting Allie at nine, then would have to arrange for a storage unit...

Poop.

Okay, this, too, would pass. Just a hiccup. Door closing and a window opening, all that garbage. Annoying, but in the grand scheme of things it might mean something way better in the long run.

And I won't tell those guys what a mess my personal life is, either. Don't need them thinking I'm some sort of train wreck.

* * * *

The next morning, Arden stood in Allie's backyard and stared at the RV, stunned into silence.

"Well?" Allie asked. "Don't you want to go inside?"

Arden had thought maybe it'd be an old Winnebago or something. Maybe with a tarp pulled over the top to keep it from leaking.

Something.

This...

She swallowed. "Two hundred a month, huh?" she asked, barely able to pull air into her lungs to form the words.

Allie's brow furrowed. "Too much? I don't mind doing it for one-fifty, if you need a cushion." She opened the door for Arden and went in ahead of her. "Come on."

Arden swiped her feet on the mat just under the steps, then wiped them a second time, knocking her boots against each other and hoping there weren't any dirt clods stuck in the treads.

The RV sat parked on a concrete pad under a pole barn structure. And it wasn't *just* an RV.

It was a huge, new, mint-condition Airstream coach that looked like it'd never *seen* a road before, much less been driven on one.

Inside was nicer than any place she'd ever lived or stayed in her life. To the point she was nearly afraid to touch anything.

"No, it's not too much. I...I just had no idea."

Allie giggled. "Present from my parents. They'd only had it a couple of months when my dad had his heart attack. They didn't want the hassle of selling it, and Mom's terrified to travel like they used to now, so they literally gave it to us. My husband gets hives at the thought of driving it on the road. Has less than ten thousand miles on it." She sat on the sofa. "Now you see

why I can't get my freaking in-laws to go home when they come down. This is nicer than a lot of hotels."

"Yeah, it is." She looked around. "Dang. You sure two hundred is enough?"

"Oh, yeah, absolutely. And you can pull your bike around and park under the barn with it. Plus I'll give you a key to the utility room door, so you can do your laundry here."

Arden wiped at her eyes. "Allie, I...I'm speechless. I don't know what to say."

She patted the couch next to her. "Hey, Denny, you're doing *me* a favor. I love my in-laws, don't get me wrong, but I love them more when they're *not* here. This way, they have to stay in our guest bedroom."

She sat next to Allie, still stunned as she stared at the interior. "But isn't that kind of counter-intuitive?"

"Nah. Then they won't stay more than a week. She's allergic to dogs, and we all start getting on each other's nerves when we're stuck in the house together. Hubby can tolerate them nearly forever when they're living out here. Not so much if they're under the same roof. Then his limit is about four days before he gets reeeeeallly cranky."

"Ah."

"Yeah. Sooo...you in? I printed up a lease thingy and changed it so if you want to move there's no penalties or anything."

"Yeah. When do you need the money? I don't know how long it'll take me to get my security deposit back."

"No worries. I know you're good for it. Come on—I'll show you around."

Fortunately, Arden had remembered to text Ken Rossi before she'd left the hotel. By the time she left Allie's, she could barely think. The RV was probably more square footage than even her small efficiency apartment. It was just laid out differently.

Okay, Granny. You were right.

By the time Arden returned to the hotel, she had a text message from Ken Rossi.

4pm today work for you?

Followed by an address and a four-digit gate code.

That's perfect, thanks.

She Googled the address and found it was a house in an expensive gated golf course subdivision.

Oh, fudgeballs.

Well, hopefully no one would mind she rode a motorcycle. At least it wasn't any louder than a car.

And if they pay me decent money, I'll be able to buy a car in a few months.

Her next stop was the apartment complex, to arrange to move out and get her security deposit back. Allie and her husband would help her move on Saturday morning. At least she didn't have a lot of things to move. If it wasn't for her bed, table, and couch, they could easily move her stuff in one pick-up truck load.

Then Arden rented a storage unit close to Allie's, and before she knew it, she was heading to her interview. She'd tucked a blazer into her trunk, and wore a decent blouse, but she wasn't going to try to wear slacks and dress shoes on her bike. She always took clothes to change into when working at the restaurant, and changed back into her riding gear before leaving.

Jeans it is.

Just as she'd feared, the gated community was ritzy. She nearly lost her nerve when she pulled up to the kiosk at the front entrance to punch in the gate access code. She easily found the house, located at the end of the street. There were two cars parked in the large driveway.

She parked at the end of the driveway, turned sideways so she wouldn't be rolling downhill when she left. Then she quickly changed into her blazer, tucking her riding jacket into the trunk. While she didn't think theft would be a problem, she carried her helmet with her because she couldn't afford to replace it right now, and she damn sure didn't want to lose it.

Before she made it to the front door it opened, and Ken Rossi stood there waiting for her with a smile. "Right on time." He shook hands with her.

"Am I okay parked where I am?"

He seemed to finally see her helmet and peered around her, his eyes widening. "You ride a bike?"

“Yeah. Sorry I’m not dressed more professionally right now, but kind of hard to when riding. I’ll bring office clothes with me and change once I’m at work. Kraiges Technologies allowed jeans, but if you—”

He laughed, cutting her off. “You are too funny. We’re casual around here. Jeans or shorts are fine. Once we’re in an actual office, jeans work. Come on into the war room and let’s sit and talk.”

He led her inside, closing the door after her. There was no furniture yet, nothing on the walls. But when they walked through the enormous house into what was likely meant to be a large dining room area, there were two folding tables set up there and four folding chairs, three of them occupied.

“Please excuse our lack of real furniture,” he said. “We’ll be moving stuff over from storage. Today we had to get the internet and cable hooked up.”

The other three men looked up, instant smiles for her as they all stood and shook hands with her. Her first impression of them last night hadn’t been wrong. They were all handsome in their own way, and she knew from the bios she’d read of them that they were all in the thirty-four, thirty-five age range, ten years older than her.

Ken gave her the vacant chair, which she guessed had been his from the way it’d been positioned in front of a laptop on the table.

“Let’s get down to the nitty-gritty,” he said. “Our next project still remains to-be-determined. This is the start of that, and it’ll work in phases. Phase one is we get moved in, and get up and running as a team to start the brain work. That’ll all be done here.” He swept his arms around, indicating the room. “It’s how we succeeded the first time.”

“Except that was a tiny-ass apartment,” Hal joked.

“True,” Ken said. “We’ve been able to upsize this time around. We’re no longer starving college kids, so we can take our time. But we all shared an apartment, and that secret sauce helped us do what we did.”

She’d read about that, too, when perusing the stories about them.

“Before we move into an actual office, we will add a few key personnel, while still working out of here. But at first you will be our only ‘employee.’ We’ll also need you to sign an NDA for us.”

“I have no problem with any of that, but I’m still not sure what I’m going to be *doing*.”

“A little of everything, at first. Being the wall we bounce ideas off of,

helping us break what we create to find the bugs, helping create stuff, helping us with project management and keeping us on task.”

“A little bit nanny and a little bit AA,” Steve teased.

“For the most part,” Ken continued after shooting him a look, “it’ll be Monday through Friday, and we can be flexible on the hours. None of us are really morning people, so if we don’t get cranking until ten and work until six or seven, that’s actually prime hours for us. Like I said, we’d work around your class schedule. So if you want to make up time by staying later or working weekends, we’re cool with that, too. When do you graduate?”

“Six weeks. Well, six weeks until end of semester, and graduation is a couple of weeks after that, I guess. I mean, I wasn’t going to actually attend it.”

All four men looked shocked. “Why not?” Trace asked. “You’ve earned it.”

“Because it’s extra expense to rent a cap and gown and stuff. Not like I have anyone to come watch me walk.”

Shoot. She hadn’t meant to get personal.

“Anyway,” she quickly added, not leaving space for them to reply, “all I need is the diploma. That’s all I care about.”

Ken seemed to grok she didn’t want to discuss personal stuff. “Well? What do you think?”

“We haven’t talked pay yet.”

“Forty thousand to start,” he said. “Once you’ve graduated, we’ll discuss a raise. We’ll pay you weekly. Two weeks paid vacation, and ten paid family leave days a year. Paid major holidays off.”

Her eyes nearly bugged out. Maybe it wasn’t the most someone could make in IT, but considering she was barely scraping by right now, and would be fresh out of school, it might as well be a fortune.

And paid leave time?

“When can I start?” she asked.

Chapter Five

Once Ken had seen Arden out, Trace relaxed. There was something about Arden that turned his crank *hard*.

Except rule one between them—they didn't screw their work up for a relationship. And since she'd be working with them, that meant she was firmly off-limits.

Besides, they were finally getting back to doing what he lived for—working. He wasn't about to waste time screwing around and distracting himself. They were *finally* getting back to the basics.

Upscaled and well-funded basics, but same thing, only better.

This was *them*, and as they'd started setting up the online server they'd purchased, including installing project management and incident ticket tracking software, he felt really energized for the first time in a couple of years.

Part of him wished they'd never sold Collidezkope, kept it private, continued to run it. Except they wouldn't have been able to give it the kind of success it now enjoyed. They didn't have the capital then, and unless they'd taken VC money, which they hadn't wanted to do, they never could have taken it to the next level.

No, it made sense to release their baby into the wild so it could grow and mature.

The trick now was to replicate their success.

While empty and echoing, the house was already starting to feel like home. Their home.

There was plenty of room for them. The living room and smaller off-set den areas would be TV and gaming spaces. They each had their own room and en suite bathroom. The kitchen was huge, with a breakfast bar counter.

The Wi-Fi worked out on the lanai, meaning they could escape out there, if they wanted a little quiet.

And the neighborhood was quiet. Even in the morning there wasn't a lot of noise, other than lawn equipment as landscaping companies mowed and performed yard maintenance.

A far cry from the constant hum of traffic and humanity, even out on Long Island.

It was...an adjustment.

One he was glad they'd made.

Sure, he'd thought it was a crazy idea when he'd come up with it, but his grandparents had loved it down here, and he remembered winters coming to Sarasota and being able to play in the Gulf where you'd freeze a limb off if you got close to the Atlantic. Seventy-degrees and sunny here, and in the thirties with a dreary sky and slush on the ground in New York.

This was where he wanted to be, and he knew the other guys would quickly learn to love it.

How perfect that they'd found Arden to work for them? Even more proof this was meant to be.

Like they were on the right track.

"Okay?" Steve asked.

Only then did Trace realize Steve had been talking to him. "Huh?"

"Move the first load in tomorrow morning?"

"Oh, yeah. Sorry. Daydreaming."

"Save it for the bullpen, stud," Steve teased. "Let's head back to the hotel."

He realized Ken and Hal weren't there. "Where's the others?"

"Man, you really were out of it. They just left. They're going to stop by the storage place and book a truck for in the morning."

"Wow." He glanced at his phone. "Sorry. Guess I wasn't paying attention." He shut his laptop and shoved it into his backpack.

Steve frowned. "You all right?"

"Dying to get back to work, that's all." It was his car, so Steve had been stuck there with him. Ken and Hal had ridden in Ken's car, and it was now gone.

They locked up the house. "We need an alarm system," Steve said as he looked around. "A good one, not one of those fifteen-dollars-a-month cheap-ass ones. I mean, yeah, gated community and all, but I want one. We're going to be setting up sensitive data. We don't need shit being trashed by some stupid kids skipping school or something."

"I have a company in mind. I'll call them in the morning and make an appointment." He set his backpack in the backseat and they headed out.

"Kind of cool she rides a motorcycle, huh?" Steve asked.

"Yeah. And that's a big bike, too, considering how short she is."

Steve dropped into a version of a British accent that many people who didn't know him frequently expected him to have. "She's an enigma, isn't she?"

Trace rolled his eyes. "She's our AA, and maybe she'll help us make history."

Steve nudged him with his elbow, smiling as he dropped the accent. "Let's hit that dungeon this weekend."

Trace frowned. "We don't have anyone to go with. I don't want to be some creeper."

"Nah, they have a rope class on Saturday. Suspensions."

"Really?"

"Yeah."

"Thought you weren't interested in going when Hal told us about it?"

Steve shrugged. "Been thinking about it. Looked up their website. It'd be nice to have a social life for a change. And I'm not talking about actively looking to date, either," he quickly added before Trace could protest. "I mean we can't spend all our time working just because you're a damn workaholic who gets off on it. We need time to recharge a little every week. And we need friends we don't have to worry are after us for trade secrets, or think they can sponge off us. How long since we could trust people, other than each other, to be real friends?"

Trace didn't answer, at first. "You have a point."

"Yeah, I do. Nobody freaking *knows* us here. No paparazzi hanging out and stalking us after we leave the building. No one snapping pics of us and posting them on Twitter or Facebook or Instagram. We're anonymous again. Doesn't that make you...I don't know...tingle just a little?"

"Tingle?"

"Come on. How many times did we hole up in one of our places at night and call for GrubHub takeout because we didn't want to deal with the bullshit going out entailed? Wasn't that one of the reasons why you pitched us moving here in the first place?"

"Yeah." Trace ran a hand through his short blond hair. "Okay, yeah, I guess. If I'm not too worn out from moving. We have a lot of shit to take care of."

"Our timetable to have the house set up is next week, so quit that bullshit. I'm not giving up the hotel room until my bed's set up and the kitchen stuff is

arranged. I'm too fucking old to sleep on the damn floor on an air mattress."

Trace smiled. "Those were good times."

"Yeah, they were, but we were broke college students. We don't have to live like broke college students anymore."

* * * *

Arden had actually done the adult thing and asked if the men minded if she gave the restaurant two weeks' notice before she officially started with them. Fortunately, they were okay with that. Sue was still out with her daughter, who it turned out needed surgery for her broken arm. Plus the restaurant had been good to her, all things considered, and had kept a roof over her head ever since she'd moved to Sarasota. They'd known she'd be leaving them once she started working full-time at the end of the semester, so it wasn't exactly a shock to them.

Although it was a shock to her to think about her fortune changing and improving so radically within a twenty-four hour period.

As she returned to the hotel room, she felt a little—well, a *lot* stunned.

Usually when things dropped onto her head, it was bad things and she was constantly shifting course to keep her nose above the water line.

She wasn't used to *good* luck.

It kind of scared her.

I've worked my hind end off for this.

In her mind, she could almost hear Granny whispering to her, *You deserve this good fortune, child.*

Now if she could only convince herself of that.

Ken had already e-mailed her the forms to fill out and send back to him, employment forms, tax paperwork, NDA, a written salary contract with the terms they'd discussed, and, even better?

Health insurance.

Paid for.

As in, while she'd have co-pays, they were paying her full premium. Once she was working full-time after graduation and they gave her a pay raise, it would change to her making a contribution.

After a year with them, she'd have a 401(k).

She'd never had one of those before and wasn't even sure what the heck

she'd do with the dang thing.

Once she'd finished filling out the forms and returned them to him, she stretched out on her bed and started studying. Now more than ever she couldn't afford to get distracted. A degree, a better life for herself, standing on her own two feet. Eventually, she'd be able to thumb her nose at her family, but until then she'd work her ass off and not lose sight of her goal.

She'd already given up too much not to keep going.

* * * *

Hal was busy making notes on his phone while Ken drove them back to the hotel. The truck was arranged, and they were all set to start moving in the morning. Hal's mind bounced all over the place as he processed the day's events and tried to capture his thoughts about the features he wanted in the notes app on his phone.

Then there was his newest distraction.

"I like her," Hal said. "Arden. She seems sharp, driven. Just an instinct."

"I think we lucked out," Ken said. "Perfect timing."

"Yeah." He looked up from his phone. "God, I'm horny."

Ken stared at him. "Dude, *really*?"

"What?"

"Okay, I know you've been feral for a couple of years now, but those kinds of left-field comments you *cannot* say around her, a'ight?"

"No, I..." He grumbled. "Sorry. Just...venting."

"That what you callin' it now?"

"Hey, not like I'm getting *my* dick sucked by Steve every night like you are, a'ight?"

Ken looked shocked. "What?"

"Oh, dude, *please*. If you two aren't fucking, then I'm Dick Cheney."

A guarded air suddenly surrounded Ken. "Why you think that?"

"Uh, because you guys have been the epitome of chill the past couple of months, especially since we've been at the hotel. *Hello*, you're rooming together. Tell me I'm wrong if I am, but I don't think I am. I've never seen two guys act more like they're getting some on a regular basis than you two."

"What if you aren't wrong?"

"I don't give a shit one way or another, but don't keep it a secret, for

fuck's sake. Lucky bastards. I mean, I know you're not into me, and that's okay, it doesn't hurt my feelings."

Silence filled the car for the next several minutes. "I wouldn't turn you away if you decided you wanted company some night," Ken said.

Hal's heart raced—he wouldn't deny it'd been a fantasy of his for a while. It just never seemed to be the right time to broach the subject. Back in college, Hal was still figuring things out and felt too terrified to screw up their relationship as friends and as business partners.

"Really?"

"Yeah. No pressure, no strings. Only thing is you gotta be neg across the board, and involved with no one else while we're doing this."

"What about you and Steve?"

"I meant nobody but me and Steve. Closed group."

"You'd be okay with that?"

"Uh, let's see, a guy I trust and think is hot wants to sleep with me. Nah, I ain't good with that. What's wrong with you? Of course I'm okay with that."

"You think Steve would be okay with it?"

"I know Steve would be fine with us being fuck-buddies, yeah. I can't speak for Steve if he'd want to have that kind of relationship with you, though. He's bi, but he tends more toward women, usually."

"How'd you two start, then?"

"We've always kind of fallen together, off and on, for a while now. Didn't get more intense until recently."

"When are you going to tell Trace?"

"Does it need to be told?"

"We'll be living together again, so yeah, a heads-up would be nice."

"Well, we'd kind of thought about mentioning it at some point. Just hadn't decided when or how."

Hal shrugged. "Just tell him. Or I can tell him for you. He's not a jerk—he won't care."

"Now that boy, I wouldn't mind having him at least once. Not that I think he'd want it."

"I don't know. He might be a little more flexible than you think."

"Still, I'm not going to go there unless he expresses an interest."

"God, can you imagine if the four of us did go there?" Hal laughed.

“We’d never leave the fucking house. At least, not for a couple of weeks.”

“Thank god for GrubHub,” Ken said.

Chapter Six

With help from Allie and her husband, Dale, it took Arden less than an hour to clear out her apartment Saturday morning. After six years living there, Arden wasn't sure if that was a good thing or a bad one. At least she didn't have to change her address for her mail, because that all went to a PO box anyway. All she had to change was her insurance address for the motorcycle. Eventually she'd need to change the registration address for the bike and her driver's license, but she'd wait to do that until she saw how long she'd be living at Allie's. She might be living somewhere else in a few weeks, or she might be there for a year or more.

Dale turned out to be a nice guy, and admitted he knew Allie's plan was to keep his parents from overstaying their welcome. In fact, he was fine with that, because he admitted he was too nice and not firm enough with his parents.

Even better? Allie and Arden were working the same shift Saturday night, so Arden got to ride with her and for once didn't have to take a change of clothes or worry about if she'd get soaked riding home later.

She'd even started to feel a little easier about these recent developments. Ken had sent her more information, and she would be going over to their house tomorrow morning to do some work with them. She hadn't given them all the details of her recent residency change, just that she'd been in the middle of moving.

But apparently the men were in the middle of moving everything into the house, so it worked out perfectly.

That night as she settled into her bed in the RV, Arden couldn't help smiling.

You were right, Granny.

Sometimes good girls did come in first, no matter what her parents thought. She tried not to think about her family, but in times like these, where she wished she could call them and boast, she knew it was best not to.

Her two younger sisters, now twenty and twenty-two, had been thoroughly indoctrinated by her parents and were now on a path that would likely lead nowhere. Their shares of the inheritance from their grandmother had already been put into her father's anemic car dealership to help keep it

going, as had her brothers' shares.

She'd been the only one to resist, taking Granny's recommendations to heart to go to school, the money she'd received just enough to pay her tuition without her needing student loans.

It'd caused a deep rift between her and her parents.

Then again, the rift had already been there, but bucking them, refusing to give in and give over her share of the money, had deepened it. Her father didn't believe in girls going to school, and despite her mother having been raised by a strong woman who'd made her own way and emphasized how important schooling was, her mother's deep-seated insecurities had allowed Arden's father to turn her into a dependent, self-doubting emotional mess.

Her Granny had been fierce and fearsome, running a local hardware store even after her husband—her mother's step-father—had died when Arden's mom was only five. She'd run it up until she'd turned eighty, when she'd finally sold it.

And Granny had never liked Arden's father.

Arden grew up helping her Granny run the store, the only one of the kids who'd loved doing it. Granny could curse someone out in a G-rated way that would leave people thinking she had the mouth of a sailor when she really didn't. Even more evidence of her strength.

All these lessons Arden had taken to heart despite the teasing from her own family. Her father had always looked down on Granny and assumed he and her mom would be inheriting everything once she died.

To his shock, Granny had left her parents nothing, splitting it all among the kids.

And now...

Now, Arden was on the outs with her family, her father's hateful words that she'd just be wasting the money on a degree she'd never achieve or never find a use for spurring her on every bit as much as her grandmother's memory.

I will prove them wrong.

Sunday morning, there was a U-Haul truck backed into the men's driveway when she arrived, so she parked at the end of the street like the men had. The garage door stood open and she spotted Hal in there, sorting through boxes.

"Hey."

He looked up, his expression brightening when he saw her. “Hey, Arden. Guys! She’s here.” He stood and brushed off his hands before shaking with her.

Ken emerged from the house and also shook with her. “Perfect timing.” He led her inside and the change from the other day was more than dramatic. In the dining room, several desks were set up but looked like they hadn’t been positioned yet.

“We’re still getting everything out of storage, including two more desks. One will be yours. Where do you want yours set up?”

“You’re giving me a choice?”

“Sure. We live here. We can always take our computer and move to our bedroom or something. For now, you’ll be working in our space, but we want you to feel comfortable.”

She looked at the sliding glass doors and how they faced west. At least the blinds would cut the worst of the afternoon sun. Then she looked up to see where the room’s AC vent was located, because she didn’t want to be sitting directly under it and freezing every day.

“Probably that corner there.” She pointed. It was a natural nook formed by the short wall that made up part of the doorway leading into the living room. “Facing into the room, not against the wall.” She’d be able to see into the living room as well as the kitchen. “What about electrical sockets?”

“Electrician’s coming Monday to run us extra circuits,” Ken told her. “That’s another reason we wanted to hammer out the desk arrangement today.”

“Coming through,” Steve said, carrying one end of another desk, Trace on the other.

Arden and Ken stepped out of the way for them.

“Arden, feel free to use the pool and hot tub any time you want,” Ken said.

“Thanks. I really appreciate that. You guys can call me Denny.”

Ken smiled, and something about it warmed her insides in a way she hadn’t felt in too dang long. “I like that. Denny. It’s cute.”

By the time she got out of there a couple of hours later, she felt even better about accepting the job. They’d started talking tech, liking her questions and apparently enjoying the heck out of explaining not just the hows, but the whys of some of the choices they’d made on their previous

platform.

When she made her way back to her new home, she realized that for the first time in a long time, she really felt like she was exactly on the right path. Even before, there'd always been the little doubts she could never totally stamp out and silence.

Not anymore.

Now, she knew everything had led her to this point, to this time, to those four men. If she hadn't been a waitress, she never would have met them, or Allie.

Everything in its heckin' good time.

* * * *

The large sectional couch wasn't exactly where they wanted it yet, but that didn't stop Trace from collapsing onto it. "We calling it quits for the day yet?"

"You tired?" Hal asked from the doorway leading down the hall where their bedrooms were located.

"Exhausted."

"We still got several truckloads to move."

"We don't need to move them all today."

Ken entered from the dining room. "Teach y'all to stay out so late."

"You were with us. How come you're not exhausted?" Trace asked.

"Good genes," Ken said. "And we didn't go down to the bar after we got back, either."

Trace still felt...off-balance after last night. The club, Venture, was far better than he'd expected it to be. Clean, well-lit for the rope class before the lights were dropped and the play session began. The staff was nice, the prices reasonable, and they'd all had good conversations.

Except it reminded Trace of what he didn't have in his life—a person to share it with. Not a girlfriend, and not a submissive.

"So why were you two so eager to get back up to the room? You fucking around now?"

He'd only meant it as a ball-busting joke, but the flash of shock across Ken's face drove the truth home.

Trace sat up. "You are, aren't you? You guys are screwing around

together?”

Ken crossed his arms over his chest and straightened. “Yeah. Is that a problem?”

Hell, he knew Steve was bi, and thought maybe at one point he and Ken had probably screwed around, but...

“I don’t know. Is it?”

“We’re friends-with-bennies.”

Hal, of course, picked that moment to walk in. “What’s going on?”

“Did you know Steve and Ken are fucking around together?” From the sudden red in Hal’s cheeks, Trace realized yeah, he knew. “Why didn’t anyone tell me?”

“Not that it really matters,” Hal said. “And I didn’t know for sure until the other day. Lucky bastards.”

“What?”

Hal flopped down onto another section of sofa that was still not in its final resting place. “Dude, in all honesty, I’m thinking about taking a swing on the bi side. I really don’t need or want a deep relationship right now. I want to get our next project going. What’s the harm in busting a nut with friends?”

Trace felt his face heat and hoped no one noticed he was now sporting wood. “Don’t let me stop you.”

Ken stepped forward. “Look, this don’t change anything between us. Like he said, what’s the harm? This has nothing to do with the business side of things. And before you go getting your nose outta joint, I wouldn’t tell you no if you hit on me, just like I wouldn’t tell Hal no. I trust all of you, just like I hope you trust me. Now, is this a problem?”

Trace scrubbed his face with his hands. “No, I guess not.”

“Is what a problem?” Steve asked as he walked into the room.

“Secret’s out,” Ken said. “And so are we.”

“Ah.” Steve turned to Trace. “I’ll tell you same thing I told Hal—I thought that four-way we had was hot. I’d do either of you. So don’t feel weird on my part. Not like we haven’t seen each other naked before. And we’ve seen each other come.”

“It doesn’t weird me out,” Trace said, weariness hitting him. “I’m...just exhausted, that’s all.”

“You sure?” Ken asked. “We’ve been friends too damn long to ruin

things now.”

“I’m sure. I trust all of you. If I didn’t, I have no business being in business with you. You’ve never formed a voting block against me before.”

“That’s right.” Ken walked over and extended his hand to him. “Open-ended offer, you ever feel like taking me up on it.”

“Or me,” Steve added. “I’d do ya.”

Trace shook with him, the tension now eased once more. “Nothing against either of you but I’m not there yet. I’ll keep it in mind. And no, it doesn’t bother me if you all...whatever.”

But later that night, as he lay in bed in the hotel suite with Hal softly snoring in the next bed, Trace couldn’t help but think what it might be like sucking Steve or Hal’s cocks. The night with the waitress had more than lingered in his mind—he’d fantasized about it countless times since then, pumped gallons of cum through his own hand wanking to it.

Work first. Fucking around can’t happen until we’re finally up and running. I need to focus.

Chapter Seven

Over the next three weeks, Arden settled into a routine. School, work, and going over to the “war room,” as she was starting to think about it—because that’s what the men called it—to work with the men in the time that she’d been going to work at Kraiges Technologies. Once she finished her last day at the restaurant, she got her weekends back and worked only with the men.

It also meant she’d been able to go to Venture the previous Saturday night. She’d hooked up with Landry, a well-respected Dom, and he’d given her a good ass-beating that had left her smiling the whole weekend.

The men had moved out of the hotel and were now living in the house, even though the common areas still weren’t completely arranged the way they wanted them, and there was constant and friendly bickering over where everything should go in the kitchen. It seemed like the living room had been changed around every time she arrived. Some of their furniture was out in the garage, without room for it, and the large dining room table that had been in Ken’s apartment was set up in what was supposed to be the master bedroom. Except it was used more for meetings than it was for eating.

They’d purchased a nice lanai set, too, and it wasn’t unusual for them to open the sliders in the war room and make it one large space, some of them working out there and some of them in the house, on the days it wasn’t too dang hot for that.

And they’d invested in a high-end grill. Trace loved to grill, while Ken loved to bake. Both Steve and Hal were passable cooks, and the men always made sure she had lunch or dinner, or sometimes both depending on how long she was working and when she’d arrived.

Then they broadsided her. While she sat cross-legged on the large ottoman on the lanai and was eating a bowl of pho, Steve plopped down on the sofa closest to her.

“So when’s your graduation?”

“I told you, I’m not going.” It was now a lie to say it wasn’t in her budget, because between the money she was saving on rent and utilities, and the pay she was making, she had the money.

“That wasn’t my question.”

Ken walked out. “We doing this now?”

“Yeah,” Steve said.

“Good.” He also sat down.

“Doing what?” she asked.

Ken smiled. “We’re going to your graduation.”

She shivered in a good way because of how he said it. If she didn’t know any better, she’d label it Dom-tone. “But I’m not going.”

“Oh, yes, you are. You tell us how much you need, and consider it our graduation gift to you. And we’re all going to cheer for you when you walk.”

She hadn’t told them the details about her family, only that she wasn’t close to them. But the men had quickly grown to be more than employers, definitely into friend status.

“You don’t have to do that,” she tried to protest, but felt it falling on deaf ears.

Ken leaned in and arched an eyebrow at her. “Was that what I said?”

She swallowed hard. “No,” she said, biting back the *Sir* that wanted to happily follow along after it.

He smiled. “Then I expect you to tell us what you need before you leave here today. I’ll send you a direct deposit for it. And give us the time, date, and location so we can mark it on our calendars and be there.”

“Okay. Thank you.”

“Hey, you’ve been a huge help. It’s the least we can do.”

“I don’t feel like I’ve done much.” In fact, most of what she’d done was try to break what they’d built so far, per their request.

“The last time, we screwed up and designed from the front-end back. Now we know the kinds of features and requirements we need to have in place that are difficult to integrate after the fact. So we’re building this from the ground up, the administration end first, before we start designing the front end.”

“Have you decided what the site will be yet?”

“No,” Steve said. “We’re still brainstorming that.” They knew it would be some sort of social media site, but they hadn’t yet decided where to focus it. They didn’t want to focus on music and bands this time around, because they’d already done that. And that was the least of their worries, though, because this time they were designing the backend so that they could actually market it to anyone who wanted a turn-key social media platform. All the

client would have to do would be customize the graphics, layout, and demographic specifics. And they were developing a UI with options to allow a site creator to set it up on their own.

The success of the live site would help determine the success of the delivered software solution, so getting it right was imperative.

For the first time in her life since losing her Granny, she finally felt like a valued member of...well, not a family, but a team. The men were definitely like a family to each other, and she could feel that. More than just friends. But she'd never presume she could ever call herself that with them.

Friends, though—definitely.

* * * *

The next Saturday, Arden headed to Venture. She'd arranged to bottom to Gilo's wife, Abbey, since Landry wouldn't be there tonight.

What she would love to do was find a guy of her own, a Dom, didn't even have to be a heavy player. The heavy play was fun, but she loved everything from sensual shibari to heavy impact, and everything in between. She didn't need heavy play the way some people did.

Or...maybe four guys who could probably rock her world.

Yeah, no. They were her *bosses*. Plus Ken was gay.

Can still fantasize about them.

That she could—and did. To the point she'd broken down and bought a new vibrator because she'd worn her old one out.

Every once in a while she got little flashes from the guys, little hints of a dominant personality, and it always tweaked her fantasies later.

For tonight, she wanted the stress relief of a good, hard beating.

Later, she'd go home and use her vibrator and think about “the guys.” Ken, Trace, Steve, and Hal. All of them gorgeous, all of them with different personalities. She'd been a little mortified yesterday when she'd had trouble with her new Kindle Fire. She'd been trying to e-mail herself a documentation PDF the guys wanted her to read through, but she couldn't find it despite sending it to herself four times and confirmed she'd whitelisted her e-mail address in her Kindle account.

Hal had offered to help her, and before she knew it, he was playfully teasing her about her e-book selections, many of them *ménages* and a lot of

them BDSM fiction. She'd suffered the red cheeks, though, because he figured out how to access the file for her and apparently could tell she didn't want to discuss the rest of her library.

She had her own makings of the perfect reverse harem setup, and just her luck, they were totally off-limits.

My freaking luck.

Overall, she couldn't complain, though. The pay was good, they were nice guys, and she enjoyed the work.

Tonight, however, she needed to shut her brain off.

As she stripped completely naked and climbed onto the bench, Abbey leaned in. "Any last requests?"

"Just what we talked about. The more marks, the better."

"You got it."

Gilo was apparently going to top Abbey when they finished, because instead of being dressed down in his gimp outfit, he wore jeans and black boots and stood watching from where he leaned against a nearby wall, arms crossed over his chest and an amused smirk on his face.

Heck, if I give him some girl-on-girl fantasy fodder, good for him.

She liked Gilo and he seemed like a nice guy, but without the couple saying as much, Arden had received the impression from him and Abbey that Abbey was territorial about who he played with. Meaning no one but her.

And Arden was fine with that.

All she cared about was the way her ass was already starting to sting as Abbey used a lightweight acrylic paddle on her, quickly throwing her into subspace. Arden didn't know how long she lay there enjoying every impact, even if it hurt like a motherhumper. Finally, Abbey ended with a few smacks from what Arden knew was likely a cane before draping a fleece throw over her.

Arden kept her eyes closed and surfed the endorphins. She was aware of Abbey and Gilo talking nearby in hushed tones, and sounds like she was cleaning and putting away her implements. Finally, Arden took a deep breath and sat up.

Abbey gave her a smile. "Better?"

"Yeah. Thank you."

"Hey, I had fun, too. He wasn't in the mood to get his ass beaten tonight, so it worked out for everyone."

Arden stretched, feeling the satisfying way her back and neck popped and creaked as she did. She pulled the fleece throw around her and grabbed her clothes so Abbey could clean and vacate the bench.

In one of the changing alcoves, Arden looked at her ass in the mirror and smiled. Yep, she'd have bruises for several days, at least.

They'd feel even more awesome as she rode her bike to and from work and class.

She hung around for a while, chatting with friends and watching Gilo and Abbey play. She wasn't the kind of sub who needed aftercare following a scene, unless she scened with someone she was in a relationship with. Then she loved cuddling after and enjoying the wash of sensations shutting her noisy brain off for a while.

It was almost eleven when she finally said her good-byes and grabbed her helmet and backpack for the ride home.

Yep, she felt every bounce, every dip in the road, and smiled to herself as she grew wetter and wetter. By the time she'd parked under the pole barn and made it inside, she was so horny she could barely stand it. After stripping, she grabbed her vibrator and imagined it was Ken or Steve who'd been spanking her, maybe while she sucked Trace's dick and Hal banged her.

When the orgasm slammed into her, she buried her face in her pillow and moaned, gasping.

Sated.

Finally.

As she caught her breath and reality crept back in, she focused.

I have to be careful.

She didn't want to give the guys a weird vibe that she'd been fantasizing about them. She couldn't lose this job, not when she had too much to gain. For the first time in her adult life, she wasn't worried about...anything. Her grades were good, she'd graduate on time, she had a stable place to live and money in the bank.

Nothing she could do could jeopardize that.

Nothing.

Chapter Eight

Saturday night, the guys ordered pizza and stayed home. Later, once everyone else had gone to bed, Hal floated naked on his back in the pool with the lights off. It allowed him to stare up at the clear sky and watch the stars.

Fuck, I'm lonely.

Having Arden around was a special sort of torture. She was sweet and adorable and he was definitely attracted to her.

Yet, she was off-limits.

Totally.

Then again...

There was another option. Except he felt weird just out of the blue knocking on Ken's door and asking for a blowjob.

Or...more.

He startled when the sliders from the dining room opened and Ken stepped out onto the lanai. They stared at each other for a long, silent moment before Ken walked over.

"Whatchoo doin' out here?"

"Thinking. Getting pruny. Horny as hell."

Ken seemed to be considering something. Then he shoved his boxers down and off and sat on the edge of the pool, his thighs spread wide. "Well, I can take care of the third thing for you, if you want."

Hal shoved the thinking part of his brain out the door and locked it. He swam over to Ken and stared up at him for a long moment before taking him up on the offer. He'd never blown a guy before, but knew what he liked and decided to start there.

He wrapped his hand around the base of Ken's cock and slowly explored the head with his lips, teasing, tasting, enjoying the way Ken's breath sucked in sharp as he did.

"Yeeaaaah, buddy. Like that. Get me off now, and then I'll take you to bed and make your head explode."

That was a deal he could get behind without hesitation. He sucked more of his friend's cock between his lips, slowly jacking his cock at the base because he knew no way he could deep-throat his thick length.

Ken lifted his legs and draped them over Hal's shoulders, one hand on

Hal's head and the other braced on the pool deck behind him. "Fuck, that's perfect. Drain me dry, then I'm going to get you off however you want me to."

Hal cradled Ken's sac with his other hand as he sucked and jacked him. He wasn't trying to get him off fast, wanting it to last and fully into whatever *this* turned out to be.

If it meant an end to his dry spell without having to worry about a psycho stalker, *hell* yeah, he'd be willing to keep doing it.

He could tell Ken was trying not to shove him deep onto his cock from the way his hand kept flexing on the back of his head, so he picked up the pace a little, heavy sucks as he pulled off and squeezing the shaft with his hand on every in-stroke.

"Oh, *fuck* yeah, that's perfect. *That*."

Hal kept it up, wanting to make it feel good for him. Apparently he did, because before long the tastes of pre-cum turned into several spurts of cum as Ken let out a long, low moan. His own cock throbbed more from the sounds his friend was making, and he couldn't wait for the second half of this permutation.

"Yeeaaaah. *Fuck* yeah."

When Ken's hand released his head, Hal looked up at him to find Ken grinning. He untangled himself from Hal and leaned in to kiss him. "Get your ass out of the pool and let's take this to my bedroom, hmm?"

Hal bolted for the stairs.

* * * *

Trace was almost asleep when he heard voices out on the pool deck and realized it was Ken and Hal.

Then Ken made a noise that definitely wasn't talking.

Oh, boy.

From the soft, rhythmic splashes he heard, he could only imagine what was going on out there. Once that ended, there was a brief moment of quiet before a slider opened and closed, then someone or someones entered Ken's room and closed the door.

It didn't take long to answer that question either. Minutes later, Trace lay in bed and listened to Hal howling his lungs out across the hallway.

Whatever Ken was doing to the man, apparently Hal was good with it.
Real good.

And apparently Ken was *really* good at doing it, too.

He couldn't remember Hal making that much noise with the waitress that time, much less when he'd masturbated when they were all living together.

His own cock rose, interested and curious and trying to talk Trace into going and joining them.

He heard Ken's door open, the sound of Steve's voice, then the door closed and Hal's moans were suddenly muffled.

Trace closed his eyes, which didn't help because he imagined Hal now being stuffed at both ends and loving every second of it.

Fuck.

Me.

Why couldn't he break past that fear?

They're my friends. I fuck this up, it could ruin our business.

Obviously it wasn't a problem for the other three men, so the common denominator was him.

He couldn't even deny he'd had his own fantasies, especially about Ken. They'd grown more frequent ever since that night the four of them had taken on the waitress.

Why am I a chickenshit?

* * * *

Steve was nearly asleep when Hal started in. At first, he thought maybe Hal had his earbuds in, and that he was going to have to yell at the guy to turn down his porn so he would realize he was making too much noise as he wanked, when Steve realized the noises were coming from Ken's bedroom.

Well, now.

He thought about knocking, but it sounded like Hal'd hit his groove and he didn't want to interrupt.

Not like that, anyway.

He tried the knob and, finding it turned in his hand, defaulted to his usual agreement with Ken.

Unlocked meant company welcome.

Hal lay sprawled face-up on Ken's bed, his cock down Ken's throat and

Ken's finger up his ass.

Ah. That explained the noises.

"Care for company?" Steve asked, his cock hard and tenting his shorts.

Hal looked up and wore a glazed expression, a man deep in rut and needing release in the worse sort of way.

A man willing to do anything to earn it.

Ken lifted his other hand and waved him in as Hal nodded.

Steve shut the door behind him and was fully naked by the time he climbed onto the bed. He straddled Hal and pulled a pillow under his head to put him at the perfect angle and height.

Hal's mouth was already open as Steve aimed his cock at it, and Hal's moans grew muffled as Steve slowly fucked his mouth.

"That's more like it," Steve hoarsely said. "Dammit, if I'd known you were this fucking loud when you're getting some the right way, we would've been tag-teaming you long before now."

Hal let out a long, almost pitiful moan Steve fully recognized as Ken teasing him. Probably edging him, because the guy was sadistic when it came to that. There was hard and fast, and then there was long and slow. Plenty of times Ken had him begging to do anything for relief, which usually ended up with Ken's cock balls-deep in his ass after Ken swallowed his load.

Not that he minded. Mouth, ass, he was good with it as long as he got him some, too.

He stared down into Hal's hazel gaze. "Damn, buddy. You're an eager learner, aren't you? You want to fuck me while he fucks you? Bet you'd love that, wouldn't you?"

Another long, needy whine from Hal that left Ken chuckling down below, although muffled by Hal's cock in his mouth.

He looked over his shoulder at Ken. "Want to do it?"

Ken lifted his head from Hal's cock, which was accompanied by a moan of protest from the man. "Deal was, he blew me out on the lanai, we come in here and I get him off however he wanted. He picked blowjob, and wanted to see what it'd feel like with me playing with his ass."

"Ah." Steve looked down at him. "Your call, then. Want to change it up a little?"

Hal forced his eyes open and looked up at him, nodding.

Steve climbed off him and retrieved condoms from their usual drawer

and reached for the tube of lube. He opted to lie on his back so he could watch Hal's face when the man felt Ken's cock fuck him for the first time. Steve would be able to jack himself off in the process.

Everyone's a winner.

After rolling a condom on Hal, Steve let him slide his cock up his ass first and get comfy. He pulled him down for a long, deep kiss. "Damn, you should've said something sooner. We could have been having a lot of fun."

Hal started to say something but then moaned, his eyes dropping closed. Steve pulled him down for another kiss, muffling the sound and distracting him.

"You'll get it *all* in a second," Ken said. "*Damn*, this is a tight ass."

Steve pulled Hal's face against his neck so he could watch Ken. "He feel good?"

"Oh, *fuck*, yeah!"

"Maybe next time we play around, we can switch things out."

"How's his cock feel?"

"I can feel it. Not as big as you, but big enough to scratch my itch."

Hal let out one more grunt. "Dat's it," Ken gasped. "Took me all the way to the balls, man." His hands skimmed down the man's sides, up again, settling on his shoulders. "Your turn to ride."

Hal finally pushed himself up onto his arms. "Fuck, fuck, fuck!" he moaned. "Why'd I wait so long to do this?"

Steve grinned. "I don't know, but welcome to the party. Ride me like you stole me, man."

As Hal slowly started moving, Steve fisted his own cock and started stroking. With his other hand, he reached up and cupped the back of Hal's head, keeping his focus on him. "Yeah, man. Just like that."

Hal had devolved into what sounded like speaking in tongues. Behind him, Ken wore an ear-to-ear pleased grin as they listened to the man. The more Steve thought about this, the more perfect it was. He loved these guys. Even if Trace never wanted to join them in bed, that was fine. Sex when he wanted it, and his best friends around all the time?

Hell, yeah.

He was sick of dating, sick of people finding out how much he was worth and then trying to scam him. Never knowing if someone really liked him for who he was, or how much paper he stacked.

Best of both worlds, right here. Now that he and Ken had shown Hal how hot and kinky this arrangement could be, maybe he would agree dating wasn't worth his time, either. Sure, normally Steve enjoyed women, but why would he fuck up a sure thing for someone he hadn't even met yet when he had Ken and Hal?

The heat in Hal's gaze seared Steve right through to his balls. He felt himself getting close as he stroked and suspected it would trip Hal over the edge.

"Sorry, man, I need to nut." He sped up his strokes, his ass clamping down on Hal's cock as he came with a groan.

"I know that sound," Ken hoarsely said.

Hal's thrusts became jerky, erratic, and he finally finished off with his cock deep inside Steve's ass, followed shortly by Ken getting his.

As they collapsed into a sweaty heap, Steve found his voice. "Good?"

Hal held up a hand for a fist bump from both of them.

Chapter Nine

Sunday morning, Trace emerged from his room to a silent house. Steve's bedroom door stood open, and so was Hal's, but neither man was in his respective room.

Ken's door was closed.

Trace tamped down an irrational wave of jealousy.

Dumbass. You could probably be in there, too, if you weren't a chickenshit.

He headed to the kitchen to start a pot of coffee. They were forcing themselves to always take Sundays off so they didn't burn out. Last night, over pizza, they'd talked about maybe driving over to the beach today.

Or maybe they'll fuck each other's brains out all day.

Another thought hit him.

I wonder what Denny's doing?

He gave serious thought to calling her and asking if she wanted to go do something with him today.

Would that be weird? That'd sound weird, wouldn't it?

She complemented them so well, too. Not only her skills, but her personality.

Bet she'd look gorgeous with my handprints all over her freshly spanked ass.

Okay, that was *definitely* over the damn line. Thoughts like that would not only get him in trouble but possibly cost them a shit-ton of money in a lawsuit.

I should go ask the guys if they're even interested in me.

He was standing at the counter and nursing his mug of coffee when he heard the door to Ken's room open, followed by the man's low, rumbling laughter. Hal said something, then Steve and Ken both laughed.

They emerged from the hall and headed for the kitchen. "Mornin'," Ken said.

Trace nodded. "Morning."

Hal wore his "I got laid" grin and reached over to tousle Trace's hair before grabbing his mug from the cabinet. "Beautiful day, huh?"

"Yeah."

Even Steve was smiling.

This was too much for Trace to deal with. He turned to leave the kitchen.

“You okay?” Steve asked.

“I’m fine. Didn’t sleep well last night.”

Hal stepped in front of him. “Man, I’m sorry. Was I loud?”

“That’s one word for it.”

“Dude, I’m so sorry.”

Trace didn’t want to be an asshole about this. It wasn’t their fault he wasn’t getting laid. “It’s...it’s fine. Sorry I’m grumpy.”

“You can always join us,” Ken said. “Rule at night is if the door’s unlocked, the invitation stands.”

Trace mumbled something, he wasn’t even sure what, and headed for his room. He couldn’t deal with this, especially with his cock suddenly hard and aching and wanting to know why the fuck he wasn’t asking the men to do something for him right *now*?

He damn sure didn’t want to let them know about his fantasies starring Arden.

So instead, he went to take a shower and rubbed one out in there while he did, wishing on the back end it hadn’t felt so...hollow.

He was getting dressed when someone knocked on his door. “Yeah?”

Ken opened it. “You okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine.” He pulled his T-shirt on.

“Sorry we woke you up last night.”

“Don’t worry about it.”

“You sure you’re—”

“It’s fine, seriously. It’s just me.”

“This don’t sound fine.”

“Hey, I’m nobody’s nanny. And yes, if I decide to take you guys up on it some night, maybe I will. I’m going to go grocery shopping. Everyone got their lists?”

But Ken seemed to study him for a long moment. “Okay,” he said. “My list is on the counter. I’ll take you at your word that we’re okay, because we’ve known each other a long time.”

And Trace did his damndest to *be* okay...except one night it was one of the men in Hal’s room. Another night, all three of them ended up in Steve’s, and then one of them was in Ken’s room.

It was like fricking radar he couldn't turn off. And if he put on music or the TV in his room to drown them out, he couldn't sleep.

Now that he knew the telltale sounds of flesh slapping and cocks getting sucked, it was like he couldn't escape it.

It didn't help that he was noticing Arden more every day.

Maybe I do need to find a girlfriend. Or at least a play partner.

And apparently he was a damned masochist, because on Saturday night when Steve wanted to go to Venture and the others agreed...so did Trace.

* * * *

Saturday night, Trace's car was the easiest one to get out of the driveway that had room for all of them, so he ended up driving. He still didn't understand why they were going to torture themselves like this. Wasn't like any of them were going to meet Ms. Right tonight.

At a dungeon.

Not that it was a bad dungeon. It was actually a pretty nice club, definitely the nicest one he'd ever been in. And the couple of times they'd already been he'd enjoyed it.

But the four of them should be focused on brainstorming the next product they were going to deliver, not waste time sitting around storing up wank fodder.

They could get *that* from the Internet.

Besides, the only woman he really wanted wasn't available, and he wasn't in a mood to people-watch.

Non sequitur Hal popped up. "Did you know it's possible to make a guy come without touching his cock?"

Ken and Steve burst out laughing. "Where the hell did *that* come from?" Steve asked.

"Just something I saw on the Internet."

Trace snorted from the driver's seat. "It's *not* possible to make a guy come without touching his dick."

Ken chuckled from where he'd ended up sitting in the backseat, passenger side, next to Hal. "Baby, I could *totally* make you come without touching your dick. But you have to be okay with butt stuff."

Steve roared with laughter from the passenger seat. "*Dude*, you walked

into that one.”

“Shut up,” Trace muttered. “Ken just wants to fuck me.”

“*Duh.*” Ken reached over the seat and punched him in the shoulder. “You’re afraid you’ll *like* it.”

“I’m *not* afraid.”

“I can vouch for the fact that *I* like it.” Hal grinned. “Man’s got a magic mouth on him, too. While I’m not exactly experienced in the cock department, he does not leave me unsatisfied.”

“What about me?” Steve teased.

“You do not leave me unsatisfied, either.”

Steve and Hal fist-bumped.

“How long since you been laid, anyway?” Ken asked Trace. “Been a long time, right? Nobody here is judgy. All I’m sayin’ is if you knocked on my door one night, I wouldn’t turn you away.”

“Neither would I,” Steve said.

“Co-signed. Take one for the team, Trace,” Hal teased. “Group bonding, and all that.”

“What happened to consent?” Trace muttered.

The humor evaporated from Ken’s features. “*Dude.* I would *never* violate anyone’s consent. *Period.* Chill.”

“Well, everyone keeps teasing me, and—”

“Yeah, and look how you assholes teased me into going fucking bungee jumping with you last year,” Ken said. “Perfectly good goddamned bridge, and you bozos want to jump off the fucker. This isn’t any different, except there’s zero risk of death if I fuck you. I’m not good enough for you? *Fine.* We’ll make sure that topic’s off-limits for you from now on, a’ight, snowflake?”

The car’s interior devolved into a tense, uncomfortable silence. When Trace glanced back, he saw Ken had crossed his arms over his chest and was glaring out the window.

“You’re good enough for me,” Trace mumbled.

“Sure.”

Trace swallowed back his fear. “I’m sorry. I’m just...” He knew this would get his balls busted, but better that than to piss off his friends. “I wish there was a specific person I could be taking to the club tonight, and...” He knew he’d been an asshole, and maybe admitting the one chink in his armor

would help smooth this over. “Arden.”

The expected round of teasing didn’t immediately commence. He glanced over at Ken, who now stared at him.

All of them were staring at him.

Ken finally said it first. “*Arden? Our* Arden? Denny-girl, our sweet little AA, Arden?”

“Little Miss Wouldn’t Say Shit If She Had A Mouthful Of It Arden?” Steve asked.

“I wouldn’t mind a piece of her,” Hal muttered.

Now all focus shifted to him.

“*What?*” Hal asked. “Look, *obviously* I’m *not* the only one thinking it.” He pointed at Trace, directly in front of him. “He’s thinking it, I’m thinking it. Steve?”

Steve shrugged. “Yeah, maybe I’ve wanked a time or two in the shower, thinking about her.”

“She’s our AA,” Ken reminded them. “You idiots *really* gonna make the gay guy be the voice of reason here?”

“You’ve been with women before,” Hal said. “You can’t tell me she doesn’t at least interest you. I hear the way you talk with her. It’s right up against and frenching the line without crossing into sexual harassment. Hell, she’s practically glued to you.”

“Yeah, but I *don’t* cross that line, and I let *her* set the limits. Key points there. Plus she knows I’m gay and doesn’t know I’ve been with women before, a’ight? She sees me as ‘safe.’”

“Still not answering the question,” Steve said.

They’d arrived at Venture. Trace parked and left the car running. Now all of them looked at Ken.

“What?”

“She’s single,” Trace said.

“So?”

“It’d be weird three of us signing on for this and you not,” Trace said.

“Signing on for *what?*” Ken asked. “You don’t know she’d be interested in anything!”

“That one chick was,” Steve said, sounding nostalgic. “Remember right after we sold Collidezkope? The night we went out and celebrated? That waitress we met at the restaurant?”

“And she was about two paychecks in the bank from having to be a hooker,” Ken said. “And we gave her a thousand-dollar tip, cash, under the table. *And* after we did she gave us her number and told us she’d be off work in under an hour and asked us to call her. In other words, *she* approached *us*.”

“But I’m saying there are women out there who, any one of us, we would be their ideal dream. Except we all live together.” Steve good-naturedly poked him in the arm. “Can’t break up the band, right? Ruin our mojo?”

“And we’d also be paying out a damned expensive lawsuit for sexual harassment,” Ken reminded him.

“Not if we’re careful,” Trace said. “We feel her out. She’s loosened up over the past several weeks. We each start taking her out to lunch, one at a time. Let her get to know us.”

“I’m all for that,” Hal said. “Hey, I saw her Kindle. She reads some pretty kinky stuff. Ménages, BDSM, books like that. Not like the idea of being poly would shock her.”

“I read about serial killers and space ships,” Ken said. “Doesn’t mean I want to go to outer space and get anally probed by a little green man, or become a chalk outline.”

“Then tell us no-go,” Trace said. “You know the rule. If one’s out, we’re all out.”

“Man, that’s not fair. Y’all gonna blame *me*, you don’t hook up with her.”

Trace finally swallowed back his pride, his fear.

His jealousy that both Hal and Steve had slept with Ken and he...hadn’t.

Yeah, he knew it was his own doing that he hadn’t, but still.

In all honesty, he’d thought Ken was just being nice, not serious.

“I’m not sitting out here all night,” Steve said. He got out and headed to the office.

Trace shut off the car and got out, prompting Ken and Hal to follow.

The Saturday night play party was in full swing when they made it from the office and into the play space. They were going to settle in at a table in the social area with people they’d already met when Steve stopped short.

“Uh, guys?”

“What?”

He pointed through the doorway to the other side of the play space. “Are my eyes deceiving me, or is that Denny?”

They all looked. Trace felt his heart pounding as they watched the guy—Trace thought his name was Landry—playing with her.

“That can’t be her,” he numbly said.

Ken walked out and returned a moment later. “Unless there’s someone else here drives a blue Honda Gold Wing just like hers, that’s her.”

Chapter Ten

Arden loved how unapologetically *vicious* Landry was as a Top. Even better, she could close her eyes and pretend it was one—or all—of the guys actually topping her.

Every cane stroke, every paddle strike, all of it quieted her mind and filled her with peace even as it left her body sore and aching.

Tonight, she knew, she'd be wearing out some batteries, for sure.

When he finally finished with her and she'd had a few minutes on the bench to savor and process it, she wrapped the fleece throw around her and headed for a changing alcove to get dressed. Laid on top of the faint reminders from her play session with Abbey the week before, it felt great.

In fact, she was humming to herself when she snapped the curtain open and then bit off a startled scream as she froze, eyes wide.

"Hey there, Denny-girl," Ken said from where he casually lounged against the doorway. "Funny running into you here."

Trace wore an amused smirk, his blue eyes filled with something that looked like deep heat, if she had to guess. Hal was leaning against Steve, and both of them wore wide smiles.

"I...I..." She swallowed. "I—"

"It's okay," Ken said. "Glad to learn you're one of us, though. How about we all go sit down and talk for a few minutes?"

"Y-you're all—"

"Kinky," Ken said. "Yep. We're all Doms."

Her pussy clenched, her clit now throbbing. "Oh."

"*Oh*, is right," Trace said, arching an eyebrow at her. "Glad to know you're open-minded."

She was clutching her backpack and helmet in front of her. "H-how'd you find out about Venture?"

"The website," Hal said. "We've been a couple of times already."

"Arden, my dear, are you all right?"

They all turned to where Landry stood just outside the doorway, an undecipherable expression in his green gaze.

"I'm fine, Lan. Thanks."

"Do you need me to escort you out?"

“Huh? Oh, no. Everything’s fine. I know them. They’re my—” She’d almost said bosses but caught herself. “Friends.”

“Are you *quite* sure? You don’t look all right.” He seemed to shoot all four men an equally dark glare without taking his focus off her.

“They just startled me. Really, it’s fine. I didn’t expect to see them here.” She grabbed Ken’s arm, since he was closest, and hooked her arm through his. “Guess we have more in common with each other than I thought. I didn’t even know they were kinky, much less members.”

“Ah. Very well.” But he didn’t move, his gaze narrowing. “You four *do* look familiar.”

Oh, sugarballs. She knew Landry was involved in IT or software or something.

“We get around,” Trace said.

But she spotted the exact moment Landry put it together, along with the fact that he silently pointed at each man in turn, as if identifying them in his mind.

“Yeesss,” he drawled. “I suppose you *do*. Let me formally introduce myself—Landry LaCroix.” He dug out his wallet and handed Ken a business card. “Seems we do have something else in common. If you ever wish to talk shop, as it were, gentlemen, feel free to ring me. Arden.” He kissed her hand and gave a little half bow with a smile before turning and leaving them.

“He’s weird,” Hal mumbled.

“No, he’s French,” Arden said. “And I’m pretty sure he just made you guys. He’s in IT. Software, I think.”

Ken untangled his arm from hers so he could pull his wallet out to add Landry’s card to it. “I know he made us. We bought a software package from his company not long before we sold Collidezkope.”

Steve gasped. “Oh, *shit*! Cris Guerrero! You mean that guy is his—”

“His other half, yeah,” Ken said. “His Master.” His focus fell on Arden again. “So...can we talk about this *now*? We don’t want you feeling weird or embarrassed later. As you can see, it’s a small damn world. We were in New York and bought software from their company out of LA, and yet, here we all are, sharing the same little dungeon in Sarasota.”

She was almost afraid to ask this. “How much did you see?”

“I think he was just getting started when we came in,” Trace said. “And can I add that we did *not* mind the view in the least.”

Heat filled her face. "Oh, my goodness, this is mortifying."

"Why?" Ken asked. "Seriously, why are you embarrassed?"

"Because you're my *bosses*!"

He took her backpack and helmet from her and handed them off to Hal, then cupped her hands in his. "Denny-girl," he softly said, "we want you to consider us not just your bosses, but your friends. Now, if you insist you're too uncomfortable, then fine, we can set up a schedule or something so you never run into us here. But isn't it a little bit of a relief to know there's a part of your life you don't have to hide from others? I know it's a relief for me."

The other guys nodded.

"Besides that, we're *here*. You like to bottom, and we are Tops. At work, *this* doesn't exist. Outside of work, we're just people. And we'll leave it open that if you ever want to talk to us about maybe playing with you, we'd all be fine with that."

The other guys were apparently letting Ken do the talking for them, because they kept nodding in agreement.

He gently squeezed her hands. "Let's go sit and talk. Otherwise, tell me *red*, and we'll walk you outside and wait with you until you're on that deathtrap and safely on your way home. Deal?"

She finally nodded.

"Was that a *red*?"

She shook her head. "No, Sir. I mean—"

He chuckled and squeezed her hands again. "Don't worry. You don't have to call any of us 'Sir' unless you really, *really* want to."

* * * *

Hal was having trouble thinking, much less talking, because his cock was hogging his brain's blood supply.

He still couldn't get the image of Arden's sweet ass being caned by Landry out of his mind.

It also shocked him a little to realize that dark feeling mixed up inside him was more than a hint of jealousy that someone besides them got to put their hands on her sweet ass.

An ass that was even more beautiful naked than he'd fantasized it was.

They were able to get a table to themselves in the social area, and Steve

grabbed Arden a bottle of water.

Hal was happy to let Ken take point, because frankly, he was the smartest one of them, especially when it came to shit like this. Ken had the tact and poise and perfect words, and when Hal felt like *this* sometimes it seemed like everything he tried to say came out sounding like *boooobiiiiieesss*.

But he was smart enough to keep his trap shut.

Apparently, so were Trace and Steve.

“How did you hook up with Landry?” Ken asked.

“We’re just friends. He’s topped me before. Abbey’s also topped me.”

“Who’s that?”

“Gilo’s wife. They’re not here tonight.”

“What kind of play do you like besides impact play?”

Her face turned pink again, and it was one of the most adorable things he thought he’d ever seen in his life.

“I like rope. Love rope. I don’t need heavy play. I like a lot of things. I’m still trying to explore. It’s only been recently I’ve had more time and the money to come here.”

They still didn’t know a lot about her family, her history. She was kind of closed-mouthed about them and he suspected there was a bad or maybe painful story there. He knew she had brothers and sisters, and that her parents were alive and living in Jacksonville, but other than that, nothing beyond the quick background report Ken had run on her when they’d first talked to her to make sure she wasn’t a serial killer or ass-deep in debt or something.

As Ken talked to her, Hal realized what he was trying to do—trying to calm her down so she didn’t leave there upset while driving that deathtrap, but also trying to make sure this didn’t scare her away from the lifestyle.

Or them.

And maybe trying to get her interested in seeing them as more than just her bosses.

* * * *

Arden wasn’t shaking nearly as badly as she had been. The longer she talked with the guys, the more she was starting to realize maybe this wasn’t horrible.

Hell, she’d been fantasizing about them. Why not think about more?

No, wait, horrible idea. They're my bosses!

"Why don't you ever swear, Denny-girl?" Ken asked with a playful smile.

"What? I swear."

"No, you say all sorts of adorable things that aren't even close to swearing."

"My Granny." She explained a little about her. "I loved her so much. She was my idol. It crushed me when she died."

"I'm so sorry."

"But at least I got to go to school. I used my share that she gave me for my tuition."

"I'm sure she'd be very proud of you."

"At least someone would have been." She didn't want to talk about her family. She still couldn't believe the men wanted to attend her graduation.

"Trace is great at forced orgasm play," Hal said.

They all stared at him. Arden honestly wasn't sure what to say to that, especially when Trace reached over and smacked his shoulder.

"You just couldn't keep it shut, huh?" Trace asked. He looked so aggravated at his friend that she couldn't help but smile. "Sorry, Denny," Trace said. "Non sequitur Hal strikes again."

"I can't believe I'm saying this," Steve said, "but in Hal's defense, we *are* talking kinky play. So it wasn't as left-field as most of his comments are. Still a stupid thing for him to say right now."

Ken took over again. "If you tell us you never want to talk about kink again with us, no problem. We can pretend like this never happened. We don't want to lose you as a friend or as an employee. But, if you ever want to consider talking to us about maybe negotiating play, we'd be happy to discuss that, too. It's completely up to you. We won't ask or pressure you for play, ever."

It touched her they were so worried about her, but she was more worried about them. "I appreciate that. Maybe at some point...yeah. Let me get through graduation, and we still need to figure out the site's main focus."

Ken nodded. "Fair enough, Denny-girl." She loved it when he called her that, and now she knew why.

She'd been right pegging him as using Dom-tone when she'd first met them. All of them.

“Can I ask a question?”

Ken shrugged. “You can ask me anything.”

“Aren’t you gay?”

“So?”

“You wouldn’t mind playing with me?”

“Nah, I’d love to play with you. Besides, I’ve slept with women before.”

Gulp.

* * * *

Arden spent another hour talking with the guys before she finally headed home. It wasn’t until she’d unlocked the RV door that she finally realized why, every time she’d mentioned leaving, the guys had engaged her in more questions.

They were worried about me being subspacey. Bless their hearts.

The good meaning, not the snarky meaning.

It was a little freaky, the indirect connection between them and Landry. Small world, indeed.

Never poop where you eat.

There was that. While playing with the guys was a very tempting idea, it wasn’t something that could ever happen in reality.

She grabbed a quick shower, then curled up in bed with her vibrator and a head full of even hotter fantasies than she’d ever had about the men before.

Fantasies can’t hurt. Right?

And forced orgasm play with Trace? With his intense blue eyes?

Yum!

All four of them were dang good-looking

It didn’t take her long to work herself up to a good, hard orgasm, between the pain in her ass and the memories in her head.

As she drifted to sleep, she wondered if maybe she should ask them about playing.

Chapter Eleven

By three in the morning, Trace still couldn't sleep. Running through his mind—the sight of Arden's gorgeous ass getting spanked, and it wasn't *them* doing it...

Then there was Ken's offer lingering in the ether.

Trace finally gave up and slowly opened his bedroom door, listening for any signs of life from the other parts of the house, but all was quiet.

Ken's room lay at the end of the hall, his door across from and just past his own. With the house's floor plan, Steve and Hal likely wouldn't hear anything.

Unless they got *really* loud.

Then again, if I have as much fun as Hal, maybe getting loud isn't a bad thing.

He took a deep breath and stepped across the hall to Ken's door, lightly rapping, nerves jangled with stress and need.

Maybe I should have texted him.

Trace was about to turn around and dive back into his own room when Ken's door swung open.

Trace stared into his eyes and found his mouth suddenly dried out.

Ken smiled, but that sleepy kind of smile he'd sport when he first crawled out of bed every morning, before the caffeine kicked in. He wore a pair of boxers and nothing else.

Ken stepped aside and opened his door wider.

Before he could chicken out, Trace stepped inside.

Ken softly closed the door behind him and headed to his bed, leaving Trace to follow. In the shadows cast by a nightlight through the open door of his bathroom, Trace could see the usual tidy order of the man's room, done in earthy, soothing tones, the walls a medium fern green, one wall nothing but books floor-to-ceiling, the comfortable reading chair and hassock near the window.

The man climbed into bed and lay back, his fingers laced behind his head. "You tell me what you want," he said, no teasing in his tone. "Even if you're not sure what you want tonight and just want to talk."

Trace felt his cock thicken as he thought about the other night when he'd

lain there and listened to Hal...howl. "I don't want you to think I'm...using you."

Ken shrugged without moving his hands. "Don't see me complainin'. If I didn't want to, I wouldn'ta let you in. Question is, can *you* do somethin' and still want to be friends later?"

"You and Hal seem okay. And you and Steve."

Another shrug. "Hal isn't hung up about labels. He likes to come, likes to make me come. Mutually beneficial dynamic for us both. Fuck buddies. Steve's bi and likes dick and pussy. He's an equal opportunity slut."

Trace found himself walking over to the other side of the bed, where he slowly sat on the edge. "You'd be okay with that with me, too?"

"Why not?"

"What about Hal?"

"He don't care. What's this really about? Is this about Arden?"

"Maybe."

"Look. I don't want you doin' something you're gonna regret. I'm not into that. I'm not gonna do some forced seduction thing with you so you can tell yourself pretty little lies later that you really didn't want it and I coerced you into it. You want me? You can have me. *You* gotta come to *me*, though. At least, this time. We can play games later, if you want. But for this first time? No games. Just us. We've known each other too damn long to be anything but honest with each other."

Trace stood, slid his boxers off, and then climbed into bed next to Ken.

Ken unlaced his fingers and rolled onto his side to face Trace, his head propped up on one hand. "Tell me what you want," Ken whispered.

"I don't know what I want." Tension wound inside him, along with need, desire.

Fear.

Ken placed his other hand along the flat of Trace's abs. "We can go slow. No games. You say *stop*, we stop. Now, how about you put my hand where you *really* want it?"

Trace remained on his back but turned his head to stare Ken in the eyes as he laid his hand over Ken's. His fingers laced with Ken's, and the other man gently squeezed.

This man was far closer to him than a brother—all of them were. He trusted Ken and knew if he kicked his fear out and let his body take control, it

wouldn't steer him wrong.

Ken would never hurt him, never screw him over. None of the guys would. And if Hal and Steve had both had fun with Ken, and each other, and Ken wanted to have fun with him, too...

Why am I so chickenshit?

Slowly, Trace pushed Ken's hand down until his fingers cupped Trace's erection and balls. Just the feel of the warmth of someone else's fingers around him made him throb even harder and softly gasp with need.

"That's better, ain't it?" Ken whispered.

Trace swallowed and nodded, already rocking his hips against Ken's hand for traction along his aching cock.

Ken smoothly sat up and stared down at Trace before he leaned in and teased Trace's lips with the tip of his tongue. Trace reached up and cupped his hand around the back of Ken's neck, holding him close as he kissed him back.

He didn't know why he'd never thought about how good a kisser Ken would be, but it made sense. There wasn't a damn thing the man did that he didn't excel at. Why would sex be any different?

Ken's hand slowly stroked Trace's cock, making him moan into the other man's mouth. He rocked his hips in time with Ken's strokes and the man lifted his head just enough he could smile down at Trace.

"That feel good?"

"Yeah."

Ken pulled away from him and leaned down to lick the head of Trace's cock.

The warm, slick heat of his tongue slowly swiping along the head of his cock made him shiver. "Oh, *fuck* yeah," Trace gasped.

Ken sat up again. "How much you want to do tonight? Not even talking fucking you, if you don't want to." Another long, slow squeeze of Trace's cock pulled a strangled moan from him.

"Sixty-nine?" Trace gasped.

"Mmm-hmm. I'm down for that." Ken released Trace's cock, shimmied out of his boxers, and then stretched out next to Trace, on his side, his head toward Trace's feet. He reached over Trace's hip to coax him into rolling onto his side, facing him. "C'mere."

Trace's hand came to rest on Ken's hip. He followed the plane of his abs

down, finding his cock lying there, thick and heavy and hot, ready.

Ken let out a hiss. “Dat’s it. Won’t bite you.” First the heat of Ken’s breath, then his hot mouth engulfed Trace’s cock again.

Least I can do is reciprocate.

A low rumble of approval vibrated around Trace’s cock as he tentatively explored the head of Ken’s cock with his mouth and Ken moaned in response. Ken’s felt a little thicker than his own, but maybe not quite as long.

“Ahh, dude, yeah,” Ken whispered. “Run your tongue around the head. Like this.” Ken demonstrated on Trace’s cock, making Trace moan again. He finally remembered he was supposed to be learning, and as Ken did something to his cock, he in turn did it to Ken’s.

“That’s it. Now you show me what *you* like,” Ken said. “Give me some direction.”

Gaining a little courage, he slowly traced Ken’s slit with his tongue, playing with it, then lightly flicking the glans. He took his time, mesmerized by how Ken imitated him exactly, the best blowjob he’d ever had. Ken didn’t have to read his mind as long as he followed along.

“That’s real nice,” Ken said. “You keep doing that. Let me get you over how you like this time. I’ll follow you.”

Trace hooked his arm over Ken’s hip to hold him in place as he mouthed the man’s cock from head to base and back again. Over and over, taking time each pass to give attention to the head again, flick, tease, taste—repeat.

Why was I scared? Hal hadn’t been lying—the man had a perfect fucking mouth.

At this rate, maybe I am bi.

There was a quirky kind of perfection to the thought that the four of them could erase any potential squabbles caused by significant others if they were all together in a quad. Maybe they could play with others just for kinky play, and then come home and the four of them get off with each other.

The more he thought about that, the hotter it made him, and the more he got into the blowjob. Ken was paying perfect attention and it almost felt like Trace was mouthing his own dick, the man imitated him so perfectly.

When he finally reached the point of no return, he moaned, trying to go as deep as he could as he swallowed. And apparently he’d gotten Ken closer to the edge than he thought, because the man’s cock erupted in his mouth and for the first time in his life Trace was tasting cum from another guy.

He didn't want to move, at first. He lay there, Ken's wilting cock still in his mouth and his face pressed against Ken's body. The solid warmth of him, the presence of someone else.

Not being alone.

Ken reached down and stroked his hair. "You okay?"

He gently released Ken's cock. "Yeah."

"We good?"

"Oh, yeah."

"You want to sleep with me tonight, I don't mind."

He didn't move immediately, thinking about it. "Yeah."

Ken turned around and, after a moment of them figuring out their positions, Trace closed his eyes with his head nestled in the crook of Ken's arm, and his arm draped across the other man's chest.

Like that, he crashed into sleep.

Chapter Twelve

Ken awakened first in the dim morning light and lay there, smiling at the sleeping man curled against him, facing him. He didn't know if Trace would feel as good this morning as he had when they'd collapsed last night, but hopefully they could talk it out if he didn't.

Steve would get an eyeful—if he showed up, as he frequently did.

Weren't many weekend mornings the two of them didn't start the day with a quick fuck or blowjob, or shower sex. On Saturdays, Ken usually went to Steve, and on Sundays, Steve came to him. Except now having Hal in the mix had changed things around a little.

Definitely fuck buddies. Friends first, but he knew they could absolutely trust the others to be neg and they didn't have to worry about wrapping it if they didn't want to.

Sure enough, the door slowly opened a few minutes later. Ken held a finger up to his lips and waved Steve in.

Steve's eyebrows rose when he realized Ken wasn't alone in bed, then a smile curved his lips.

Steve silently closed the bedroom door behind him and walked around the bed to Ken's side, where he leaned in to whisper in Ken's ear.

"Do I want to know?"

"He was feeling lonely and curious."

"Want me to go?"

"Nah." He patted the mattress behind him. "Hop in. Bed's big enough."

Steve kissed him deeply, and when he shed his shorts and slid under the sheets, Ken felt the man's cock pressing against his ass.

Steve nuzzled the back of his neck. "I guess I could sleep a little longer. Maybe when he wakes up he'll want to play."

"Can't hurt to ask."

But Steve didn't nap, and he couldn't keep his hands to himself. He reached around Ken and, working by feel, located Trace's cock and gripped it. Apparently Trace wasn't completely asleep, because he softly moaned and started rocking his hips.

Ken was enjoying the hell out of this. He reached behind him and found Steve's cock. Maybe there wouldn't be actual fucking this morning—because

Ken wasn't sure how down Trace would be for that yet—but they could all jerk each other off or blow each other. As his hand closed around Steve's cock it hardened even more and Steve ground against him.

Worth it? *Ooooh, yeah.*

All four of them dropping all their inhibitions and forming some sort of hybrid little poly quad?

Absolutely worth it.

They'd seen each other at their best and worst, *seen* each other through the best and worst of times.

Wasn't it time they quit giving fucks what other people thought and simply enjoyed whatever this was? They'd worked their asses off and reaped the rewards. Time for them to enjoy those rewards and play, dammit.

Because the only way to outdo what they'd already done was to make sure they were as close as possible.

The way they were talking last night, they wanted to try to seduce Arden.

Fine, good. If she could suck his cock, he'd be on-board with that. He liked Arden. She was a sweetheart, and yeah, she was cute. He liked her as a friend and she was damned good at her job.

She'd be cuter if she had a penis, but whatever. She was adorable.

Team *Them*. *That's* what mattered.

The kind of teamwork that got them through college and through the early days where they could barely afford ramen and water and were all sharing a tiny one-bedroom efficiency, where they used the bedroom as the office, because it had a door they could close to shut out noise and focus, and they all slept on air mattresses in the living room/dining room area.

Those were good days, fun days. Days that had made them who they were now in more than one way.

Now that they'd made it this far, it'd suck to lose it or fail to move forward. All they had to do was focus and stick together.

What better way to do that than if they were all fucking each other?

If Arden became part of that—sure. As long as she didn't split them up and come between them.

It'd have to be all-or-nothing. None of this her settling with one of them and the rest having to watch from a distance.

Their success came from *them*. This was the magic sauce that had made them multi-millionaires, and Ken wasn't about to let another chance to make

even more money slip through his hands because someone decided they wanted pussy to themselves.

He'd make sure all of them understood there were more important things than how they got their rocks off. Trace had been the last one, and now that he'd enjoyed himself, hopefully he'd be on-board.

Ken knew he could retire now and enjoy a quiet life.

How boring was *that*?

He didn't earn a fucking master's degree to sit around a pool all day and play shuffleboard with retirees nearly triple his age.

The four of them had made a plan, a pact.

A promise.

He wasn't going to be the one to go back on that. On any of it.

* * * *

Trace finally woke up when he realized there was a hand that was not his own wrapped around his cock and he was actively trying to fuck it.

He opened his eyes to find Ken smiling at him. "Good morning," Ken said.

Steve's head popped up on the other side of him, and it was then Trace realized it was Steve's hand stroking his cock.

He didn't know what to say.

Apparently, Ken could sense that. "You want to stop, no hard feelings. You want us to make you feel good this morning, we're happy to do that, too. Your call. No teasing, no ball-busting, nothing, either way."

Did he really want to live in fear? He loved these three men. If someone asked him that, he'd say yes, absolutely he loved them. He didn't have to be *in* love with them to enjoy fucking around *with* them, did he?

Did he *really* want Steve to stop what he was doing?

No.

Especially not when Steve was doing it so damn well.

Trace reached down and closed his hand around Ken's cock.

Ken drew in a sharp breath. "Not saying I expect you to let me do the same, but if you wanted to fuck my ass this morning, I'd be down for that."

Trace wasn't sure he could talk and make sense, so he opted to lean in and kiss Ken.

“Oh, *yeah*,” Steve softly said. “That’s *hot*. Can I suck your cock?”

Trace nodded and rolled onto his back. Steve changed places, climbing between them, kissing Ken and then Trace before holding both their cocks. He took turns, going from Trace’s cock to Ken’s and back again, while Trace and Ken kissed.

If he’d thought Ken was amazing with his mouth, so was Steve.

I wonder what Hal’s mouth feels like.

Trace lost himself in the pleasure of someone beside himself giving his cock attention. Before long, they changed positions again. Ken climbed on top of Steve in a sixty-nine, and Trace had rolled on a condom and was fucking Ken’s ass.

Oh...fuck!

Ken and Steve were softly moaning around each other’s cocks, and for a moment Trace wondered if maybe he would enjoy it more if he were the one in Ken’s position and getting plowed?

Next time.

His hands settled on Ken’s hips and he long-stroked him, apparently doing the right thing because it made Ken moan even more around Steve’s cock. The more he fucked him, the better it felt, until pretty soon he was throwing him a damn hard fuck and realizing this was the best sexual experience he’d had in the past several *years*.

And last night was the second-best.

Steve got Ken over, and the feeling of Ken’s ass squeezing his cock was too much for Trace. He came in several hard, deep thrusts, filling the condom as he fell still inside Ken. Then Ken got Steve over, and when his moans silenced, Trace heard a slow golf clap from the doorway.

“Gee, thanks for waking me up, guys,” Hal said. He walked in, naked, his hard cock at attention. “What am I supposed to do with this?” He fisted it, slowly stroking.

Trace shut down his thinking brain and crooked a finger at him.

Hal walked over and climbed onto the bed, standing next to Trace. Trace swallowed his cock, and it didn’t take Hal long to dump his load down Trace’s throat.

Hal dropped to his knees and kissed Trace. “Welcome to the team, buddy,” he said with a smile.

* * * *

Steve was able to get untangled first and headed out to make coffee. When Trace emerged from the bedroom, Steve wasn't sure how the man was going to react, until Trace pulled him in for a kiss.

"This feels a little...weird," Trace said.

Steve smiled. "Which part?"

"We're still going to be friends, right?"

"Yeah. Duh. Friends who fuck. Best of both worlds. You don't want company? Lock the door at night. Simple as that, no hard feelings."

"Really?"

"Yeah, really. Doesn't mean you're bi or gay, either, if you don't want to label it that. Means you're attracted to the three of us as people, and that's situational. You can pick whatever label you want. Hal's heteroflexible."

"Maybe that's what I am, too."

"Although I will say one thing."

"What?"

He grinned. "I call dibs on you fucking my ass next. Whatever you were doing to Ken, he was sucking me like a goddamned vacuum cleaner."

Ken walked into the kitchen. "He was nailing me right in the sweet spot with that gorgeous cock of his." He leaned in for a kiss from Steve, then hesitated and met Trace's gaze for a moment.

Steve silently cheered when Trace kissed him.

"Now me and Steve have help with the horn-dog," Ken joked. "Bastard's been riding us fucking raw the past week."

"I can't help it I like your cocks." Hal yawned as he walked in. "You're welcome."

"You're turning into a slut, Hal," Ken joked. "Woke up the other morning to him riding my goddamned cock."

"Didn't hear you complaining then." Hal's hazel gaze sparked with mirth.

"I wasn't complaining when he did that to me yesterday morning," Steve said. "You can always have him wake me up like that."

"Or me," Trace said.

Steve bit back the teasing line he wanted to toss at his friend, except he knew it'd taken a lot for him to open up—literally and metaphorically—the

way he had to take this step with them.

“We do need some ground rules, though, gentlemen,” Steve said.

“Such as?” Ken asked.

“We can’t do this around Arden. This is our home, yes, but it’s also her office. While she’s here, we need to be careful not to do anything to make her uncomfortable.”

Hal held up his hand.

Steve rolled his eyes. “Yeah?”

“Uh, she’s kinky. We’re kinky. She knows we are, and she knows we know she is. I don’t see the problem.”

“Again—this is her office. *Our* office. I know we put the offer out there to her last night, but I’d be willing to bet come Monday she’s going to be forcing herself to come in.”

Trace snorted.

Steve wagged a finger at him. “*That’s* the kind of teasing I mean that we can’t do. I think we’re all in agreement that, yeah, we’d love to get something going with her. If that’s to happen, it needs to come—do *not* say it, Hal—from her.”

Hal grinned but kept his trap shut.

“He’s right,” Ken said. “Let’s play this smart. During working hours, it’s work. Any discussions we have along those lines with her—unless she initiates them—need to happen after-hours and preferably not in front of her.”

Trace nodded. “Deal.”

Hal sighed. “*Fine*, deal. Fucking boner killers.”

* * * *

Later that afternoon, Ken lay sprawled on the outdoor sofa on the lanai and was enjoying an eager blowjob from Hal when his cell phone rang.

His *mother*.

“Shit.” He tapped Hal on the head. “Hold up. It’s Momma.” He sat up as he answered. “Hey, Momma. What’s up?”

“Hey, baby boy. I’ve got good news for you.”

“Auntie Kay’s boyfriend finally get hit by a cab?”

“Nah, and hush, you. Sissy’s engaged. Her boyfriend, Malik, popped the

question to her last night.”

“Which one is he?” Ken was the oldest of seven, and the oldest boy, but Sissy was the next oldest and his oldest sister. He couldn’t say “Cecelia” when he was little after she was born, and “Sissy” stuck.

“He’s the one you liked. They broke up a few months back because she was being crazy, and she realized she made a mistake. Lucky for her, he took her back.”

“That’s great. When they getting married?”

“In two months. Nothing big.”

If he remembered correctly, Malik was a grad student at NYU, and broke-ass, but a good guy, a hard worker who hustled. “Look, you get her what she wants for the cake and food, I’ll pay for that. And the rehearsal dinner.” One of their aunties worked for a place that sold formal gowns and could always get nice ones at cost, so their family never had to worry about that.

“Really?”

“Yeah, really. I paid for Kimayah’s cake and food and rehearsal dinner. Now, just like you did with her, don’t let her be coming up with no 24k gold-plated shit or something crazy, but make sure she’s got a nice cake and we have decent food. Cash bar, though, unless his parents want to pay for that. Don’t need the cousins guzzling down gallons of booze on our dime.”

It sounded like she was crying. “Baby boy, I love you so much. You know how proud I am of you?”

One of the things he’d done after cashing out was to pay off Momma’s house and get repairs done to it, as well as upgrades like the furnace and kitchen. He took care of his family, and in return, she and his siblings had closed ranks around him when some of their family thought they could start hitting him up for money every time he turned around.

Another reason he’d wanted to get out of the city and away from them.

When he got off the phone, he realized he had two problems. One, his boner was now shot.

Two...

“What’s wrong?” Hal asked.

“I’ve gotta come up with a beard for my sister’s wedding.”

Chapter Thirteen

Monday morning, Arden stood under the pole barn and glared at the rain.
Fudgeballs.

This would be a miserable dang ride.

Not just because she didn't want to face the guys again right now. Sure, she knew logically it was fine, but the fact that they'd seen her like that...

Even now, it made her cheeks flame, and not the ones she sat upon.

It didn't have to make sense that she'd fantasized plenty of times already about them doing *exactly* what it turned out they *liked* to do.

They were her *bosses*.

Resigned, she donned her rain gear. For good measure, she wrapped her backpack holding her computer and spare clothes in a plastic garbage bag before stowing it in the trunk, and tucked another into one of the side cases. Maybe she could get the guys to let her into the garage and she could take her rain gear off there, or out on the lanai. She didn't want to traipse through their house wearing it.

With her rain gear on and her bag safely stowed, she climbed on the bike and headed out to work. The commute was, as she'd predicted, gross. She left plenty of extra room between her and cars, and rode even more defensively than she usually did. Not just rainy, but blustery winds hitting her from different directions practically exhausted her as she struggled to keep the bike upright when slowing down for or taking off from stops.

This wasn't just a one-and-done summer afternoon storm. It felt like one of those weather fronts that made riding miserable and no one in their right mind, or who didn't have a car, would be out riding in it.

Okay, maybe I should prioritize getting a car.

Heck, even a cheap old beater would be better than this. The men had been grumbling more and more about her riding a motorcycle, whenever it rained, or when they saw on the news that a motorcyclist had been injured or killed.

It touched her, because she knew it meant they cared. She'd gotten so used to riding the bike that, other than rainstorms and lovebug season, she really didn't notice that it wasn't a car.

They must have been expecting her, because the large garage door was

up when she pulled in. Before she could shut the bike off, Trace had stepped into the garage and waved her in, his intent clear.

So she drove into the garage.

He hit the button to lower the door and she didn't miss there was a dark and thunderous expression on his face.

"Thanks," she said after she removed her helmet.

"Don't you think it's time you get a car?" His tone sounded a little... almost snippy.

She had gone to great lengths not to discuss finances with them, or her living arrangements, or anything like that. They had her personal info so they'd likely run a credit check on her, which would show she had none. Not bad or good—just non-existent, because she'd been very careful not to get into debt like that.

"Nothing wrong with a bike." She removed her rain jacket, shaking the rain off it and hanging it from one handlebar.

"This slop is supposed to go on all day. It's like a massive blob sitting right over us. You can't ride home in this. The temps are supposed to drop twenty degrees by the end of the day, and it's gusty as hell."

Butterscotch.

She hadn't brought leggings or anything like that for extra layers. Usually this time of year she was worried about striking a balance between protection, and roasting like a chicken in an InstaPot, not staying warm.

But it was spring in Florida, meaning the temperatures could sometimes wildly fluctuate if a strong enough cold front moved through.

I really need to pay better attention to the weather.

She forced a smile to hopefully reassure him as she skimmed off her rain gear bottoms and hung them on the other handlebar. "I'll be okay, Trace. Honestly. This is kinda what I do."

He stood with his arms crossed over his chest and doggoned if he didn't use Dom-tone on her. "I'm pulling boss rank. One of us *will* drive you home tonight."

She removed her riding jacket and draped it over the seat. "That isn't necessary."

"Not arguing the point with you, Denny. We've already decided that *is* what's going to happen." He turned and headed inside.

Well, sugar.

At least her boots and jeans were dry. She'd invested in good rain gear, not cheap stuff, knowing she'd need to stretch her money a loooong way, and the Gold Wing was the best way to do that. She grabbed her backpack from the trunk, unwrapped it, and headed inside.

Hal and Ken stood talking in the kitchen, both sipping coffee. Hal wore a dark expression and Ken just flat looked amused.

"What?" she asked. She set her backpack down and reached past Hal for a mug to get her coffee.

"I think I'm going car shopping tomorrow to buy a company car," Hal said. Usually Hal was the jokester, the smiling one, the guy who laughed first and loudest, even at himself.

Today he looked like he had to attend a funeral.

"A company car?"

"Yeah." He pointed at her with his coffee mug. "So our AA can drive it when she needs to and not risk her damn neck in this bullshit weather."

She'd thought she'd gotten a handle on her blushing, but now her face flamed again. "It's *fine*," she mumbled.

"Nah, it ain't," Ken said, the amusement fading from his face. "We had the Sarasota channel on earlier, and there was breaking news about a motorcyclist getting hit and killed here in Sarasota this morning. Fortunately, they showed it was a crotch rocket, not the blue deathtrap. You know, we were about thirty seconds from heading out in all four vehicles to go look for you and bring you here."

She suddenly couldn't find her voice.

Then Steve raced into the kitchen, practically skidding to a stop. "Oh, thank god!" He threw his arms around her in a bear-trap of a hug, nearly making her spill her coffee. "You are *not* riding that fucking thing anymore!"

"Guys—"

"I already told her one of us *will* be driving her home," Trace said from the kitchen doorway.

"I have classes in the morning. How am I supposed to get there?"

"You give us the schedule before we take you home tonight. One of us will be there to pick you up in the morning and take you to school, then we'll pick you up when you're finished. If the weather's good, we'll consider letting you ride home on the bike."

"*Consider?*" She set her mug down and stepped over to Trace. "*Letting*

me? You can't order me around!"

One eyebrow slid up over a killer blue eye. "You're right—we can't." He propped his hands on his hips, his feet shoulder-width apart, and seemed to grow a foot in height before her eyes. "So safeword," he softly said. "It's *that* easy."

Her mouth went dry as something deep inside her curled up, happy and content and taking her will to protest with it.

Someone—*ones*—cared about her. Worried about her.

Wanted to protect her and take care of her.

Sure, they were her bosses and friends, but it wasn't like they were broke, or she was begging them to do it.

They were *insisting*.

And one thing she'd learned about all four men during her time working for them was they didn't say or do things they didn't mean. They didn't play games when it was about serious shit, about work or life. Teasing and joking around was one thing.

But when they set their minds to something, it happened.

Case in point? Collidezkope.

Behind her, she was aware of Ken and Steve and Hal watching and in full agreement with Trace. She knew if she turned and looked at them, they'd all be wearing pretty much the same expression, and trying to reason with any of them now would be like hitting a brick wall.

And no way could she bring herself to safeword for *this*.

For caring about her.

"Fine," she whispered, grabbing her backpack and coffee mug and heading to her desk.

* * * *

One wall of the war room was nothing but whiteboards. They made thorough use of project management software, but frequently they needed to brainstorm stuff and that went on the boards for a majority opinion before it made it into the project management software, usually after they took pictures of the boards before wiping them clean so they'd have a record.

Written in teal green, a large box currently took up one section of the whiteboard closest to her desk. Labelled *FOCUS*, it was a list of their

potential ideas.

Music was already listed there and crossed out, as if they needed a reminder. So were several other options already well-served by other sites and not likely an inroad.

There were also a few sub-heads listed, like *Dating*, *Collectors*, and *Pets* with more specific ideas below them.

She was waiting for her work laptop to finish booting as she stared at the list, the first thing she did every morning. Some of the ideas on the wall were hers.

Then her phone dinged with an alert. She pulled it out to find she had a FetLife friend request. She ended up deleting more of those than she ever responded to, because she wasn't on Fet for dating, mostly to stay up-to-date on local events.

As she deleted the notification and set her phone to silent, she had an epiphany and started searching with her personal laptop.

The men were still in the kitchen, softly talking. Ten minutes later, feeling like she'd just stumbled upon a pot of gold, she walked over to the whiteboard. She picked up the teal marker and wrote *KINKY SOCIAL MEDIA SITE*, then circled it.

Ken, who stood closest to the kitchen doorway, cleared his throat.

She turned. "That's it. *That's* the idea."

"I know we agreed not to discuss kinky things, but ever heard of FetLife?"

"Yeah, but they're ten years in and look at all the issues they've never addressed." She grabbed a pink marker and stepped sideways, where a blank section of whiteboard lay ready. There, she listed off the top of her head a multitude of issues both FetLife and Facebook had.

Then she turned to them. "We can make it so industry fetish models and content producers can easily utilize it and buy advertising or premium placement. Some of those ideas, you guys addressed with Collidezkope in later iterations. Let's hammer out all the issues right now and build them into the core code. Because if you sell the software as a networking site for car collectors, or as a dating site for Danish chefs with one eye, these are still valid issues. Set it up so all the features can be toggled on or off on the backend."

All four men had watched her compose her list. Trace sat on the edge of

his desk. “Copypasta trolls PMing people are a huge problem on Fet, but legit event organizers wanting to cross-post their event info get slapped by the system bot after three posts. I’ve always thought that was backwards and stupid. We could build in a switch to allow group owners to toggle on and off allowing copy-pasta posts, with a pop-up warning if it’s off so the poster knows why it’s flagged. Or an option to send them to moderation by default for review.”

She pointed at him. “And Facebook, you get all these reaction emoticons, but you can’t prevent people from adding you to a group without your permission.”

“And on Fet,” Steve said, “you can’t control the privacy of a group’s membership, postings, or prevent people from joining. You can only boot and ban them after the fact. There’s no privacy or secrecy options for groups.”

“Exactly.” She put the marker down. “We could set regional filters for people, so if they only want to accept PMs from people, or even only be visible to people, say, within a hundred miles of them, *boom*. Or if they only wanted people within their friends list, or friends-of-friends. Or event organizers. Or genders or BDSM roles, or ages—anything. They could define personal networks and maybe have an optional catch-all bin for requests outside that network that people could weed through, if they wanted to be visible outside the network but not necessarily ‘open’ past it. Why do you think so many people pick Antarctica as their home? Because it takes them out of a local search. We set a toggle on the user end if they want to be visible in search results or not, or again, set parameters they control. Or they can toggle the visibility of their profile details.”

Ken ran a hand over his bare skull, his brow furrowed in what she now knew meant he was deep into the potential code in his brain and running it through. “Neither site allows people to customize the UI. I hear a lot of complaints about that. We set up Collidezkope with a few options for that, but we could go even farther. I don’t mean MySpacing it, but we could allow pre-set color schemas, high-vis options for visually impaired users, or even a screen-reader option for people who use those. Flexible stylesheets and portability to mobile devices is a must. In fact, we need to design the front-end of it from a mobile standpoint. If you can read it on a phone, you can read it on a laptop.”

The men were off and running, spending the next hour adding to her list

and starting new ones as they all brainstormed various features, front- and back-end.

Trace walked over to the focus list and erased it all, rewriting it in the upper corner of the whiteboard as *FOCUS: Lifestyle-friendly social media site*. Then he drew a box around it, turned to her, and offered her a fist-bump, which she returned.

“Still driving you home tonight,” he said before returning to the kitchen with his coffee mug.

Dang it.

* * * *

At lunchtime, Ken cornered her alone in the kitchen. She’d once seen a black guy on an insurance commercial who made her do a double-take because at first glance she’d thought he *was* Ken...and then the reason why Ken had struck her as so familiar upon their first meeting hit home. She’d researched the actor, because Ken could have been the man’s bigger, beefier, even hunkier-looking twin. Leslie Odom, Jr. was a talented singer and actor who’d starred in *Hamilton* on Broadway, playing Aaron Burr, and had guest-starred on an episode of *Supernatural*, among many other appearances.

Which, being one of her favorite shows, that was likely why she’d pinged on him, at first.

And other than the fact that Ken was taller, broader, and couldn’t carry a tune in a bucket if his life depended on it, he could have passed for the actor.

I get an even better real-life version to secretly drool over every day.

Not many women were that lucky.

“I need to ask a big favor of you,” he began. “And let me start out by saying that no is a perfectly acceptable answer, and I won’t hold it against you.”

“This sounds big.”

“It...kinda is.”

“Okay.”

“I have to go to my sister’s wedding in a couple of months. Up in New York.”

“Congratulations!”

“Yeah, well, this is where it gets...sticky.”

“Why?”

“Because my family does not and cannot ever know I am gay.”

“Um, ooookaaaaay?”

“If I don’t take a date, they’re going to harass me all weekend and ask me uncomfortable questions, try to fix me up with friends, and I’ll spend the next several months doing damage control trying to fend off people and making excuses. If I say I have a girlfriend, or at least someone I’m dating, and she couldn’t come, then I’m going to face months of Momma and my siblings making snarky comments that she must think she’s too good to socialize or meet my family. I can’t use the excuse that she couldn’t afford to fly up, because, duh, they know I can pay her way.”

“Wow.”

“Yeah. Now, in the past, the boys have always arranged someone to go with me when I needed to attend an event, but that was when we were living up there, and it was usually just one evening or afternoon, a couple of hours. This will be a whole weekend thing. And it wouldn’t make sense for me to take someone from New York since I’m living in Florida.”

She was starting to understand where this was going. “I can’t afford to —”

“I’d pay for everything, including wardrobe for you. We’d need to share a hotel room to sell the act.”

Well, there went her only excuse.

He watched her, waiting.

“They won’t have a problem with me?”

“What do you mean?”

“That I’m white?”

An evilly playful smile curved his lips. “At first, probably, but that’s nothing.” The smile faded. “I *seriously* will lose my family if they learn I’m gay. Very likely it would turn violent if I was near my brothers or some of my cousins. I wish I was exaggerating, but I’m not. I can’t lose my family. They might drive me up a wall and I don’t agree with them on a lot of things, but they’re my family, and I love them. Please?”

She nodded. “Okay.” Heck, they’d insisted on her going to her graduation so they could attend. The least she could do was this.

His smile returned. “Thank you, Denny-girl!” He swept her up into a hug, quickly releasing her like she’d shocked him. “Oh, man, I’m sorry—”

She laughed. She'd hugged all of them before, plenty of times, but they usually waited for her to initiate it. "It's okay." She opened her arms to him and he hugged her again.

Besides, she used it as fantasy fodder for when she was alone at night.

"You have no idea how much this means to me, seriously."

"Well, it's not like I have a boyfriend to object."

He looked like he started to say something and stopped himself, then smiled. "Any boyfriend you do ever have will have to make it through the four of *us* first to make sure he's good enough for *our* Denny-girl."

And on that note, which left her wide-eyed and totally brain-scrambled, he left the kitchen.

Holy sugarballs.

Chapter Fourteen

Trace knew Arden wasn't happy about them insisting on driving her home, but the fact that it was even windier than it had been that morning, still raining, and was now much colder helped win that battle for them.

He'd already plugged her address into his phone to map it and realized he wished he'd looked at her neighborhood with Google Earth before now. He knew she was renting from a friend and former co-worker of hers, but they didn't know anything about her living arrangements beyond that.

In some ways, she was extremely closed-mouthed. He tried not to pry because he didn't want to make her uncomfortable or shift things into territory that would put them in a vulnerable position for a lawsuit.

But Saturday night had changed a few things, and the way he'd laid down the law to her earlier meant she was willing to at least listen to them. He wouldn't push her too hard or fast, but little tiny nudges in the direction they wanted her to go wouldn't hurt, right?

That's what he told himself.

It was pouring when they pulled up in front of the house.

"Pull around the side," she said, pointing to a gravel driveway he'd thought was for the house next door.

When he rounded the back of the house, he spotted the huge RV.

"You can pull up under the pole barn," she said. "I park the bike there."

"This is where you're living?"

"Yeah. It's really nice. Allie likes having me here because it means her in-laws can't come down and visit."

"It's an RV!"

"It's a really nice RV."

"But how do you go to the bathroom and take a shower?"

"It has its own septic tank system. I have a key to the utility room so I can do my laundry there. This is the nicest place I've ever lived in. Want to come in and see it?"

The Airstream did look to be high-dollar. "Sure."

She unlocked the side door and let him in. Sure enough, it was definitely a premium coach.

She set her things on the dinette table. "Her parents gave it to them after

her dad had a heart attack. Her husband doesn't like to drive it, says it's too nice. So they built the pad and pole barn and parked it to use as a guest house."

"This...is nice." It wasn't a *building*, though. With hurricane season coming up, all it'd take would be one ill-placed downburst wind to take it and her out. "Real nice."

That thought made him sick to his stomach. Here he thought they'd keep her safe by getting her off the bike, just to realize she wasn't even living in a real *house*.

"Right?" She smiled, looking pleased.

"What time do we need to leave here in the morning to get you to class?"

"Seven. I wish you hadn't done this. I feel badly I'm putting you out."

He turned to her and invoked Dom-tone again. "*Stop* apologizing. You mean more to us than a couple of hours of our time, Denny. You're part of our team, but even more than that..." He stumbled over what he wanted to say. "You're our friend. More than just a friend to us, like family. Let us do this for you. Not like it's a burden."

She hugged him, and he had to force himself not to hold her longer than she wanted to be held. "Thank you."

"I don't know which one of us it'll be, but one of us will be here no later than seven to pick you up." He smiled. "I have a feeling there will be a fight to see who gets the honor, and it'll fall to the last man standing."

When he arrived home, he yelled as he slammed the front door. "House meeting. *Now!*"

He waited for everyone in the war room. Ken had already been working there at his desk. Hal hurried in, a towel draped around his waist, and Steve finally joined them.

"What's going on?" Hal asked.

Trace told them about Arden's living situation.

Ken leaned back in his chair, hands laced behind his head as he stared at the ceiling for a moment. "We ask her to move in."

"That's what I want to do," Trace said. "Hal?"

"Uh, can we go get her and her shit *now*?"

"No, we need to talk to her tomorrow. Steve?"

"Dude, let's think this through. I can't believe *I* have to be the voice of reason this time instead of Ken."

“What’s there to think through?” Trace asked. “We all lo—like her.”

Steve scowled. “What were you about to say?”

“Nothing.”

“Don’t you bullshit me. That wasn’t a nothing. Yeah, she makes me hot, okay? Not gonna lie. But do we *really* want to do this? How are we going to know she doesn’t feel compelled to agree if anything does develop? I don’t want her coming back a year from now saying she felt pressured and like she couldn’t say no.”

“Not saying we have to sleep with her or even play with her,” Trace countered. “In fact, we tone it way back.”

“How we do that with Howling Hal over there?” Steve jerked a thumb his way.

“Ball gag?” Ken suggested.

“That’s not funny,” Steve said.

“Actually, kinda is,” Hal said. His smile faded. “By the way, I’m picking her up after school tomorrow. I don’t care who goes and gets her and takes her there.”

“Why you?” Trace asked.

“Because, oh, FYI, I’m taking the business checkbook and going car shopping in the morning. Technically it’ll be the company car, but it’ll be hers to use. I’m done screwing around with this.”

Hal looked more serious than Trace ever remembered seeing him. “I damn near had a fucking heart attack this morning over the news. I was almost in tears thinking maybe she was gone.” He looked to each of them in turn. “Don’t you assholes lie to me and tell me you weren’t thinking the same fucking thing, because I saw your faces.”

“Fine,” Ken said. “Do it.”

Trace nodded. “Yeah, go ahead.”

“Okay, now with that non sequitur handled,” Steve snarked, “can we get back to *this* discussion?”

“I’m putting it out there to her tomorrow when she gets here,” Trace said. “She either says yes or no. I won’t pressure her about it. But I’m putting the offer on the table so she knows she has a place to go. If she says no, maybe she’ll keep it in mind and eventually turn it into a yes.”

Ken finally nodded. “A’ight. Do it.”

Hal firmly nodded. “Yep.”

“Steve?”

Trace watched his friend, and he knew reluctance when he saw it. “I don’t want to bork what we have with her,” Steve said. “I still say this is a mistake, but I won’t be the odd man out.”

“All right. Settled. Hal’s getting her a car, and I’ll ask her about moving in.”

* * * *

Despite having ridden Hal to exhaustion the night before, Steve made sure he was up way earlier than he needed to be to get out of the house to get Arden. Steve wanted to sound her out on the ride to school to see if he needed to change his vote from yes to no on asking her to move in.

As Trace had instructed, he pulled into the gravel driveway and around the back of the house. Yes, the RV was nice, but it wasn’t a house.

Their house.

She emerged with her stuff in her hands, locked the door, and quickly slid into the passenger seat. “Hey! You drew the short straw, huh?”

“Nah, I volunteered. Hal’s going to pick you up after class. Ken will get to hog you in New York.”

“That really sucks about his family.”

“Yeah, but we’ve helped him out for years. He’s family to us. Kind of what we do.”

“So, can I ask you something?”

He felt like he’d lost control of the conversation, but went with it. “Of course you can.”

“Are we okay?”

“What?”

“I mean, I know you and Ken are...really *close*. I don’t want to upset you or make you jealous or anything that he’s taking me to New York with him.”

Maybe it was just because it was so early, but what she was saying took a moment to smack him between the eyes. “Are you asking me if I’m jealous of you for him taking you to New York with him?”

“Yeah. Kinda.”

He didn’t have to force the laugh. He reached over to pat her thigh, realized what he’d done, and jerked his hand back. “Sorry. No, I’m not

jealous, Denny-girl. Don't mean that in a bitchy way, either. We all..." He wanted a work-appropriate way to phrase it.

"I'm not going to scream sexual harassment," she assured him. "Y'all saw me naked and getting spanked."

Another laugh. "Fine. As friend to friend?"

"Absolutely."

They'd hit a red light. He looked at her. "Friend to friend, I love you. I love having you around. As an employee, you're amazing and all your ideas yesterday were just more items on a rapidly growing list of why I'm damn glad we met you. I'm actually relieved Ken has someone we both care a great deal about, who cares about Ken almost as much as me and the guys do, who he can trust to take with him. That's the long answer. The short answer is no, I'm not jealous."

She smiled and pulled his hand back onto her thigh, patting it. "*I promise* it's okay. We're friends."

"Good. Because it's getting harder for all of us to draw a line between you working for us and us being your friends, and none of us want to lose you as a friend."

* * * *

One of the things she'd learned about Steve was that he wasn't a bullshitter. Maybe that's why she had such a hard time focusing on her classes. Hal had texted her earlier to text him when she was on her way outside after class so he knew to look for her, and she did.

She found him standing next to what looked like a new car, a little Mini Cooper. "What's this?"

He tossed the keys to her with a playful smile. "Your new ride. Get in." He headed to the passenger side.

"Wait, what?"

"Did you not hear me?" He stood by the open passenger door. "It's the company car, don't worry. One of your employee benefits that we added this morning was we provide you with transportation. *In. Now.*" He climbed in.

Stunned, she walked around to the driver's door and opened it. "You can't just buy me a car!"

He leaned over to look her in the eyes. "I didn't buy you a car. I bought

our company a car, and we're assigning it to you for your full-time use, for work and personal use. Our AA is no use to us dead under a damn SUV because the idiot didn't see her on her bike. *In.* Let's go. I'm hungry."

Dom-tone.

She put her stuff in the backseat and Hal seemed to take enormous pleasure in how long it took her to adjust the seat and mirrors. "How am I supposed to get the bike home?" she asked.

"Don't worry about it. We'll help you with that." But somehow, it didn't sound like he meant it.

When they reached the house, the other three men all walked out, Ken letting out a low whistle. "Damn, Hal. I know you've always wanted a Cooper. That was tricky."

"Right? Good thing she's shorter than me. I feel like a damn sardine inside it."

"Do you like it?" Trace asked.

"I-I love it, but it's too much!"

"Nah," Ken said. "It's just a start. Let's get inside and eat."

She was left to follow while trying to decipher his comment. Inside, they'd laid out a great lunchmeat spread for sandwiches. The men had discovered the joys of the Publix deli section, and they loved trying different things. No pre-wrapped imitation cheese food slices for them, no. They bought the prime cheeses and meats, custom-sliced, and fresh bakery rolls to put them on.

"Something else we need to discuss, Denny," Trace said. "We want you to move in."

"Wait, what?"

"Hear us out," he said. "What are you paying in rent now?"

This was happening too fast. "Two hundred a month."

"Okay. Same, then. Two hundred a month, you'll have the biggest bedroom in the house with your own built-in bathroom, no more daily commute, you have a pool and hot tub at your use, and we'll even let you watch us have sex, if you want." He grinned.

"Dammit!" Steve smacked his shoulder. "What are you saying? I thought Hal was our idiot?"

"What?"

"Sex?"

“I was *kidding!*” Trace dropped her a sexy wink. “Sort of.” His smile faded. “Unless that would bother you.”

She shook her head. “No, that wouldn’t bother me.” Actually, it’d be like several of her favorite Kindle books coming to hot and sexy life.

Trace turned to Steve. “*Ha!* See?”

Ken had remained unusually quiet. “It does make sense, Denny-girl,” he said. “I’d feel a lot better knowing you’re not on the road on that bike. Well, the car. Although I have no illusions that you’d keep trying to ride that bike despite what we tell you.”

“Me, too,” Hal said. “I want to add, with the hope that it won’t creep you out, that I like having you around. There would not be any expectation of you having sex with us, or playing with us, or anything like that. You ever wanted to approach us, we’re all ears. We start getting out of line, or we do anything that makes you even slightly uncomfortable? You tell us that, call us out on it, and we’ll back off. But hopefully you’ve spent enough time with us to know that we aren’t creepers.”

“And we’ll write up a lease,” Ken said. “To protect you.”

She was trying to think of a reason this was a bad idea despite her fear trying to talk her into saying no. “What about the table?”

“What about it?” Ken asked.

“Where’s it going to go?”

Ken laughed. “You’re seriously worried about the *table?*”

“It’s sort of our conference room.”

“We’ll move it to the garage and put a window-shaker out there to cool the place so we can use that. That’s an easy fix. We were going to eventually put AC out there anyway when we start using it as a server room. We prefer our sandboxes to be on-site and closed off, in the beginning.”

With all four of them looking so hopeful and expectant, she realized she didn’t have the heart to say no.

“Okay,” she said.

“Yes!” Trace said. “Group hug!”

She laughed as they surrounded her in a hug, and for the first time, she truly felt...loved. Maybe not romantic love, but perhaps even better, they had brought her into their family.

That’s what this felt like—a family.

I hope you wouldn’t be disappointed in me, Granny.

Chapter Fifteen

The men “ordered” her to tell Allie they’d be moving her ASAP. Before Arden could even process what was going on, Ken and Trace had moved the table and some stray boxes and other things out of the bedroom that was now hers, while Hal and Steve headed out to get a rental truck and boxes for her, not that she’d need a lot of those.

By the end of the evening, they hadn’t done any work, but Arden was now completely moved into the fifth bedroom. Trace and Ken had gone through the RV, top to bottom, helping pack her things and clean it out so it looked almost showroom new when Arden returned the keys to Allie.

Bonus, what little furniture she couldn’t store in the men’s garage actually fit in the house. That meant she was saving more money by not having to pay for a storage unit. Her tiny table, now tucked into a corner of the war room, made a perfect makeshift conference table, and her sofa fit into the den as extra seating for whoever wasn’t gaming, meaning no more sitting on the floor.

It felt...surreal.

Arden suspected it was no accident that when the men hurriedly rearranged the garage, they completely blocked her motorcycle in, parking it by the front wall so it’d be damn near impossible for her to get it out by herself.

Trace looked downright smug when she asked him about it. “Not like you need it right now, do you? Not when you’ve got the car.” His smile faded, replaced by that panty-melting arched eyebrow. “Safeword, and we move it for you right now. Go ahead.”

She swallowed, unable to say it.

When he knew *she* knew that he knew she couldn’t safeword for it, a triumphant smile filled his face. “That’s our good girl,” he whispered before turning and heading inside.

Daaaaaaang!

Now her clit was throbbing.

She just hoped they wouldn’t be able to hear the sound of her vibrator with her bedroom door closed and the music on.

* * * *

Not only did the men attend her graduation, they took copious pictures and video and then took her out to dinner after. They also insisted on hanging her diploma on the wall by her desk, and wouldn't take no for an answer.

She'd quickly come to see that living with the men wasn't a bad thing. If anything, she got more done now than ever before while working fewer hours. It wasn't unusual for her to get an idea and go out to the war room to work on it, and within an hour all four men were there with her, bouncing ideas off each other.

Arden also formed closer individual relationships with all the men, now able to spend more time with them outside of "working." They'd also started taking her out individually. Not really romantic outings, but to dinner, or a movie, or a concert.

Hal was joking and funny, and his off-the-wall comments frequently hid the fact that he was super-smart. Ken was as intense with his fun as he was at work, and she discovered he had a soft spot for animals when he bought them a family membership to Mote Marine and they took frequent trips there to see the marine life. Steve enjoyed the outdoors more than the other three, and they took hikes or rented kayaks, or other outdoorsy kinds of activities. Trace could be self-conscious when outside of work, but as intense as he was in the war room, he was equally gentle and kind outside it.

She hadn't returned to Venture on her own, although she knew the men had gone at least twice without her. Neither time to play, just to attend rope classes.

While the men hadn't imposed any restrictions on her like that, now knowing what she did about them, she personally felt...*uncomfortable* asking someone else to Top her when she literally had four willing Tops at her disposal. She wouldn't want the men to think she didn't trust them, when she did.

The men hadn't pressed her about it, either. Observing the men together during their downtime, whether it was tender snuggling on the sofa watching TV, or her "accidentally" spying on them having an intimate moment in the pool or hot tub, kept her mind and heart churning.

Finally, one Friday night, after they'd called it quits for their work week and were chilling out after dinner, she managed to speak up about it.

“Can I talk to you guys about something?”

Like a group of meerkats, all four men immediately perked up.

“You can talk to us about anything,” Trace said.

She *really* wanted to play, craved to get a good ass-beating. “I know we haven’t talked about that night at Venture since then.” She took a deep breath and forced herself to say it. “Are you guys still interested in talking about playing with me for a scene?”

“Yes,” they all said in unison before glancing at each other and chuckling.

Trace took over. “Absolutely,” he said. “You set all the limits. We’ll even play with you at the club and not here, if you want. It’s up to you. Whatever you feel comfortable doing.”

Four pairs of eager—dare she say hungry?—eyes focused solely on her.

It was enough to almost make her ask if she could get drunk and beg them to fuck her...

Except she wasn’t sure if that would bork their delicately balanced dynamic or not.

“Well, you guys saw what kind of play I like. Heavy. Marks. I don’t mind playing naked. Neither Abbey nor Landry played sexually with me, though. Could we do that? This first time, just...play?”

“Absolutely,” Trace said, the other three nodding. “Between the legs and breasts off-limits.”

A wistful pang twisted through her, and she fought the urge to put orgasm play on the table.

Not this time.

“I have a stipulation,” Steve said, prompting the other three men to look at him questioningly. “We take two cars,” he said. “One of us drives Denny over in her car. But just in case she doesn’t want to ride home with us, she can drive herself home.”

“Why wouldn’t I want you to drive me home?”

“I’m not saying you wouldn’t. But it’s another layer of safety. I don’t want to hand you over to an Uber. Or we can ask someone at the club to drive you home in that car, if you can’t drive, and we can drive them back. I want as many layers of safety there for you as possible this first time. Maybe next time we play you’ll want us all to ride together. But that’s *my* condition for this first time, or I vote no right now.”

Ken slowly nodded. "I'm not saying that's my feelings, but I'll agree to it."

Hal, then Trace, finally nodded their assent.

They all looked to her and she realized they were waiting for her answer.

"Okay," she said. "Sure, but I don't think it'll be a problem."

"I hope it won't be," Steve said. "But we can't undo this once it's done. I'd prefer to take it slow." A sexy smile filled his face. "Not like we don't know where you live, Denny-girl."

* * * *

Hal was itching to get his hands on her, put his marks on her, and had been ever since the night they'd watched Landry play with her at the club. He'd fantasized about this exact moment, and had a hard time not begging her to play right that minute.

Which was why he knew they had to take this slowly and carefully.

All he knew was he felt glad she hadn't gone to the club without them and played with Landry, or even with Abbey.

He wanted her to themselves, even if it was only for play.

They'd had a discussion with Landry the last time they'd gone to the club for a rope night, where he'd quickly sussed out their situation and had given them some very sage advice.

"She's already yours, gentlemen," Landry had said. "No, she didn't say anything to me, but I watched how she looked at you that night you encountered her here. Lust and longing, definitely. But if she's living with you, it's only a matter of time. Bide that very same time showing her all the benefits that could be hers." He'd smiled. "I speak from experience."

It was Trace who ended up driving her to the club the next night while the other three men followed in Ken's car. They'd literally drawn cards for the right to do it.

Hal had called shotgun and all the way there, following Trace, he imagined everything he wanted to do to her.

"Slow your roll," Ken said to him as they pulled into Venture's parking lot. "You need to take it easy."

"What? Don't tell me you don't want to play with her."

"I do," Ken said. "We all do. We can't scare her."

“I don’t want anyone but us playing with her.”

“Not our call unless or until she decides she wants no one but us,” Ken said.

“We feel you,” Steve said. “Believe me, we want her, too.”

“Someone’s gonna get fucked *hard* tonight,” Hal growled. “Because I’m gonna be horny as hell.”

Ken chuckled. “I think we’ll need to draw cards for that order, too, because yeah. We’re *all* gonna want that.”

* * * *

Arden nervously walked into the club with the men and didn’t even try to argue with them when they paid her entry fee.

Wasn’t like they couldn’t afford it.

She was surprised, though, when Trace pulled Cali aside for a brief chat. When he rejoined them, he wore a smile.

“What?” Arden asked.

“Extra level of safety. When we’re ready to scene, she’s going to come DM for us personally.”

“Why?”

“Because we want you to feel comfortable with us.”

“I do.”

“Then humor us, please?”

“Yes, Sir.”

All four men grinned, and it finished soaking her panties.

They headed inside and she didn’t want to waste time sitting in the social area.

She wanted a spanking.

Needed it.

More than just a spanking, though. The men had her go through their toybags earlier that day to remove anything she didn’t want them to use on her, but...

She hadn’t removed anything. She wasn’t sure if that’d freak them out or not, but both Landry and Abbey had whaled on her pretty damn hard, and both had many scarier things in their toybags than the men did.

Right now, it was about an hour after Venture opened, and while it

wasn't super-busy there were others already playing. She wanted them to snag a bench on the other side of the space so they could have a longer scene. Once things got busy, the DMs enforced the time limit on each piece of equipment to keep things fair for everyone.

They ended up having to wait for Cali to finish giving a new member an orientation before she could switch places with one of the DMs to watch their scene. As the men set up and Arden eagerly prepared, she felt her pulse spike.

This was *really* happening.

Her vibrator was sooo getting a workout tonight when they got home.

"Any last-minute changes or requests?" Steve asked her.

"No, Sir. I want this." Damn, it'd be hard to remember not to call them that outside of a scene. It was increasingly easy to think about them more as Doms than friends and bosses...except that was all on her end, nothing the men were overtly doing.

If anything, the harder she pushed, the more they slowed down.

Arden climbed onto the bench and settled in, closing her eyes and wishing they were in a bed and about to make love to her.

Or spank her first.

Countless dirty fantasies of all sorts had run through her mind with the four men playing starring roles.

Now, at least one portion of them was about to be made real.

Hands stroked her back, her arms, her thighs, kneading muscles and checking for bone, muscle, fat. It wasn't long before she was being spanked bare-handed.

Subspace didn't even have to beckon tonight. She ran to it, willingly diving head-first into it as hands gave way to floggers, paddles, canes, crops.

When everything finally stopped, she moaned, whining. "No! I want more."

A fleece blanket was draped over her, and Trace whispered in her ear. "Sweetie, we've been at it for ninety minutes and we need to clear the bench."

Sugarballs! Her eyes flew open. Cali was still DMing, but now stood farther from them, watching over several scenes and not just theirs.

Trace helped her sit up and kept her swaddled while Hal grabbed her clothes. Ken and Steve were busy trying to get everything put up.

"Ninety minutes?" she asked.

“Uh-huh,” Hal said. He wore a playful grin. “Damn, sweetie. You wore us out.”

Her whole body was one sweet stinging glow, centered mostly in her ass and thighs, but she’d have marks all over tomorrow.

The men got her on her feet and moved over to a vacant sofa for her to chill out. Steve and Ken moved all their bags and wiped down the bench, quickly joining them.

Cali walked over, smiling, a thumbs-up aimed at Arden.

She nodded and gave her a thumbs-up in return.

Cali nodded and left, and Arden closed her eyes, tipping her head onto Trace’s shoulder. “That was...amazing.”

“Any complaints?” Ken asked.

She started to say yeah, that they weren’t going to take her home and fuck her senseless, but she managed to hold that back.

“Not a dang one,” she said.

Chapter Sixteen

Their scene left Arden's mind reeling in the best way possible. The men had kept to their word and weren't pressuring her to repeat the experience, either.

She needed to process it, though. It'd be too dang easy for her to want to keep scening with them, every week—or more—and let her heart go somewhere that it shouldn't with them.

The men seemed contented with each other as sexual partners, so where would she even fit in there?

Best to wait until after her return from New York with Ken in less than three weeks. Because the closer they drew to that trip, the more nervous he seemed to get.

The other three men had all talked to her privately about Ken's relationship with his family. He loved them, felt responsible for them, and desperately didn't want to lose them, regardless of how he knew they'd react if they knew the truth about him.

All three men encouraged her to do whatever she had to do to help Ken sell it to them, that nothing would be held against her for it on their part.

That all three of them felt grateful to her for being willing to help him out in a way they couldn't.

As the time drew closer for Arden to travel to New York with Ken, he took her shoe shopping and ordered her some clothes from Amazon in advance of the trip. If he wanted to spend the money on her, she wasn't going to argue with him. This was critically important to him, and she would go along with whatever he wanted to do, or wanted her to do.

It wasn't like he couldn't afford it, although she didn't want him thinking she was only friends with him—or any of the men—because they could buy her things.

Finally, the Friday arrived for them to fly up. They would arrive in the city with plenty of time to go to their hotel, settle in, relax, change, and then head to the rehearsal dinner.

At TIA, Arden sucked in a nervous breath as she sat at the boarding gate with Ken. It was hard for her to remember not to huddle close to him. She was only playing a part, not really his girlfriend.

“Are you nervous?” he asked.

“Yeah. Did I mention I’ve never flown before?”

“Never?”

She shook her head.

He draped his arm around her shoulders and she let him pull her against his side. He felt warm and solid and when he nuzzled the top of her head, she could pretend he was her boyfriend and not her gay boss. *One* of her hunky bosses.

Okay, so more than a boss—a friend with spanking bennies.

“S’all right, Denny. Gonna be a fun weekend.”

“What if I goof up around your family?” She was in no hurry to move and loved the feel of his breath against her scalp.

“Honey, you’re not going to goof up. Just be yourself and pretend I’m your boyfriend. You’re helping me head off a whoooooole bunch of garbage I don’t want to deal with. I trust you. I know you won’t let me down.”

He was the closest thing she had to a boyfriend. Well, him and the other guys. “If you need to...I mean, whatever we have to do or say to sell it to them. Please, don’t hold back. I’ll play along, and I won’t hold anything against you later.”

“You mean if I hold *you* against *me*?”

His smile couldn’t be denied a reply. “Yeah.” She sighed. “Please don’t hold it against *me* if I enjoy it a little too much, though.”

“You sound like a woman in desperate need of a good snuggle.”

“You can say *that* again.”

When his lips pressed against her ear, the good kind of shivers rushed through her. “A struggle snuggle?”

She swallowed but nodded. Why deny it? They’d spanked her ass.

They knew what she liked.

He tipped his head to the side, his deep brown eyes watching her for a long moment. “We had fun that night. All you ever have to do is ask, and we’ll be happy to help you out. But we’re not going to pressure you. *You* have to come to *us*. Or, if you want more. Just ask.”

Ooooh, this was sliding hard and fast into really sexy fantasy territory. “Believe me, I’ve thought about that a *lot*,” she said before she could suck the words back.

“About me, or all of us?”

Heat filled her face. “All of you,” she whispered.

She wondered if that would bother him, that it wasn’t just him starring in her fantasies.

A wide, sexy smile played across his lips. “I think when we get home we’re all gonna have a *lot* of fun, sweetheart.”

She wondered if he was simply teasing her.

Does it make me a slut that I hope he’s not?

* * * *

Oh, *were* they going to have some fun.

Sure, it’s the gay guy who ends up finding the perfect girl for us.

Ken would be lying if he denied he hadn’t felt a twinge of resentment when he first realized how much the others really dug her, but the more he’d let down his walls around Arden, the more he’d seen what the other three saw in her.

Arden was a sweetheart, funny, smart, giving—and in so many ways a perfect match for all of them. Yeah, he’d been with women before, but the common denominator with most of them—the waitress incident notwithstanding—had been he’d gotten to know them and the attraction had slowly built over time, due more to her personality than her appearance.

Just like with Arden.

And he’d had a hella good time scening with her that night. Plus he’d left for New York with the other three men telling him they were good with anything that happened between him and Arden during the course of the weekend.

Hal flat-out said he hoped being alone with Ken might help tip her over the edge into wanting more with all of them.

When Trace, and even Steve, nodded in agreement, he’d fist-bumped all of them and kept his fingers crossed.

He wouldn’t push her.

But he damn sure wouldn’t discourage her, either.

He could tell she felt scared as hell about the rehearsal dinner, but as they prepared, he pulled her in for a hug and held her, sensing from the way she nearly melted against him that she needed the contact.

“If it makes you feel better, pretend I’m your Dom.”

“Not hard to pretend that,” she mumbled against his dress shirt.

He made her tip her face back, so he could look her in the eye. “Not hard to pretend you’re my sweet little subby girl, either.”

“This...it won’t make things weird between us, will it?”

“Not from my end. Your call.”

She nodded. “Yeah. Let’s go with that. Please?”

“All you ever have to do is ask us, Denny-girl. I’m good with that.” *More good than you can imagine.*

He could tell she felt practically terrified when they walked into the rehearsal and she faced his large family. Most of them immediately gave him arched eyebrows and not-so-subtle silent ’tude about her being white, but no one was dumb or rude enough to say it out loud with her standing right there.

His family might be stubborn and closed-minded in some ways, but at least they were polite.

Momma was the first to hustle up to him and he nearly had to peel Arden’s fingers from his so he could hug her. “Momma, this is my girlfriend, Arden Hasegawa.”

If only he could introduce her as more, but that would put pressure on her at her expense, even if it would take every last bit of pressure off him and, for the first time in his life, allow him to relax around his family.

But...no.

Maybe...

Depending on how the weekend went, and whatever happened after they returned home...maybe in a few months he could be introducing her to them as his fiancée, let that play out for months—or longer—and keep his family off his case.

The men had all been on board with that plan, Trace even raising the possibility of maybe trying that weekend, if the opportunity arose.

Then, Ken had brushed it off as too soon.

Now?

It was starting to feel like a damned good idea with the fear of his momma’s potential wrath hanging over his head.

Except he was used to his mother’s biting snark over not discussing his love life.

After the success of Collidezkope, he and the guys were very careful about what they put out on social media, especially regarding their

relationships. So it wouldn't raise any eyebrows this weekend with his relatives that he hadn't said boo about Arden online.

And Arden only had twenty-three friends on Facebook—including the four of them. Plus, she'd retroactively set all her posts to friends-only. She wasn't very active on the site, anyway, so no chance of accidentally blowing this story with any of his family.

Momma eyed Arden up and down before extending her hand to her. "Melanie Rossi. So nice to meet you, Arden. I've heard absolutely *nothing* about you from my son." *That* side-eye she delivered to Ken.

"Now, Momma. You know I don't—"

"You don't tell me *anything*, baby boy. *That's* the problem." She hooked an arm around Arden's shoulders and started guiding her toward the front of the church. Arden cast a desperate glance back at him, and he gave her a nod and a tiny thumbs-up to encourage her to go with it.

Lord, please don't let them eat her alive.

* * * *

The rehearsal dinner lasted longer than Ken had counted on. By the time they got out of there and caught a cab back to their hotel, poor Arden looked close to collapse. He sat with her snuggled against him, his arm around her shoulders.

"How'd I do?" she asked.

He pressed a kiss to the top of her head. "Fantastic, Denny-girl. They loved you."

Okay, that was a *slight* exaggeration, but telling her that the fact they were tolerating her without to-her-face reads wouldn't exactly engender her with confidence.

They had two queen-sized beds in the hotel room, but he had stretched out in his first, the TV on. When she emerged from the bathroom, her long brown hair loose down her shoulders, he went with his instincts.

He patted the mattress next to him. "Let's watch TV."

She didn't hesitate to climb in with him, her oversized T-shirt hanging almost to her thighs and covering her more than adequately. Almost too much, in his opinion, but he wasn't about to go there with her.

Not yet, at least.

She snuggled in, and moments later, as he'd hoped, she was sound asleep.

His phone was within reach, and he took a selfie of them together to send to Steve and the guys. He knew when he and Arden returned home the other men would rightfully be hogging her free time for a few days, but he couldn't help giggling them a little.

Eat your heart out, boys. :)

Maybe it wasn't Steve or Hal or Trace in his arms tonight, but he definitely wasn't objecting to the company.

Or the way she made him feel.

Chapter Seventeen

Mortified, Arden awakened at seven the next morning to realize she was snuggled tightly against Ken's side. Had been the best night of sleep she'd gotten in a long time, but she felt badly she'd spent the night there when all they'd been doing was watching TV.

When she tried to slowly ease her way out from under the covers, he rolled toward her, draping his other arm over her, and his thick, sleep-filled voice rumbling right through her.

"Where you think you goin'?"

Oh, fuzzbuckets.

"I...I—"

"We don't need to be gettin' up yet." He didn't even open his eyes. "I'm too comfortable, anyway. We good for at least another hour. I set my alarm. Get yoself back here."

"B-but—"

"If I'd wanted to sleep alone, I'd a moved to the other bed when you fell asleep."

Who was she to argue with the man she was pretending was her boyfriend and Dom this weekend?

She sort of returned to how she'd been positioned, except he pulled her closer and let out a contented-sounding sigh. "Dat's better, baby." One eye slid open. "You don't mind me callin' you dat?"

"I don't mind."

The eye slid shut again as a smile curved his lips. "Good."

Somehow, she finally relaxed against him. From the way his breathing slowed and evened out, he did go back to sleep, but she lay there, wide awake and now hornier than all get out.

Also, now she wondered what it'd be like sandwiched between him and any of the other three men.

* * * *

When Ken had discovered Arden trying to escape his bed that morning, he'd made a snap decision that he hoped wasn't going to break their

friendship or all the trust they'd painstakingly built with her. Instead of merely pretending she was his subby and his girlfriend, he was going to *treat* her like she was.

Hopefully, by the time they returned to Florida there might be a new world order for all five of them. Ken suspected if they'd all come at her at once, she would have rebelled and bolted. Despite her kinky streak, there was also a good-girl streak in her, embedded even more deeply. If the two parts of her clashed, he suspected the good girl would render the kinky girl immobile.

What he needed to do was get the good girl to let go long enough for the kinky girl to take over and see that they could be everything she needed them to be, right across the board.

The men had all been in agreement they wanted to work toward her marrying Ken, but had thought it'd take a while.

Maybe he could speed up that timeframe.

Once his alarm went off, he still didn't release her. He grabbed his phone with his other hand and shut the noise off before staring down at her.

"How you feelin'?"

"Scared."

"You said you wouldn't hold anything against me this weekend."

She nodded. "I won't. I promise. Whatever we have to do."

"Good." He leaned in and kissed her. Nothing powerful or crushing, but a gentle, sweet tease of lips on lips, lingering, waiting until soft and sweet little sounds emerged from her and her hand slipped behind his neck to hold him in place before he finally ended it.

"Good girl," he whispered. "Go get your shower."

Wide-eyed, she nodded. "Yes, Sir."

He smiled. "I like the sound of that."

He'd remained still, where he was, glad that he'd been lying at just the right angle she hadn't felt his hardon pressing against his shorts and screaming for relief. If one of the men had been here, he'd either have been fucking them by now, or getting a blowjob.

He reached down and adjusted himself once she'd headed for the shower. Then another idea hit him a few minutes later. He got up and tried the bathroom door, finding it unlocked.

He cracked it open. The opaque shower curtain didn't reveal anything. "Sorry, baby. I need to use the toilet. I thought I could wait, but I can't. I

promise I won't look."

He thought she let out an *eep*, but she said, "That's okay. I don't mind."

Except it took him a moment standing there, smiling, before he finally softened enough to go. He flushed. "Thanks, baby," he said, tempted to peek behind the curtain but not wanting to push that hard or fast, before he left to wash his hands in the sink just outside the bathroom.

* * * *

Arden had been tempted to invite him in to take a shower with her, except she knew that was probably pushing things too far past the boundaries of the agreed-upon weekend rules.

Once she finished her shower and he stepped into the bathroom, she quickly dried her hair and got ready, donning the dress and expensive heels he'd selected for her, along with the warm, long swing coat he'd bought her against the New York spring chill. She'd even purchased new makeup and put it on not a heavy amount, just enough to give her a little help.

When he emerged from the bathroom with a towel wrapped around his hips, it took everything she had not to drop to her knees in front of him.

Holy shizzballs, he was gorgeous. She'd seen him shirtless and in shorts before, even in a bathing suit and glimpses of him naked in the pool or hot tub, but fresh out of the shower like that, and all hers for the weekend...

Yikes!

As if reading her mind, he smiled. "Like what you see?"

With no reason to lie, she nodded. "Yes, Sir."

"Oooh, *baby*." He walked over to her and tipped her chin up so he could steal another kiss from her. "See? You're perfect. This weekend is great, and I have you to thank for it."

That left her...confused. Was this real for him, or just part of keeping things hidden from his family?

Now she wasn't sure. She didn't want to be an idiot and return to Florida in love with the guy only to realize it was nothing but an act for him, and they were back to being just friends.

Worse—friends *and* co-workers, while he and the other three men could do their sexy things with and to each other.

He'd laid out his clothes on the bed they'd slept in. As she sat on the

other bed and waited for him, he dropped the towel and her throat dried up. Even soft, his cock looked large hanging against his dark, heavy sac between muscular thighs.

Ooohh...

He had done it deliberately, because he picked up his boxers and slid her a wink as he slowly pulled them up. "You look like a woman having some deliciously dirty ideas, baby."

Beyond speech, she nodded.

"Then maybe later, if you ask me real nice, I might let you see more of it and even play with it, too."

* * * *

Ken nearly started laughing from the wide-eyed shock on her face. *Damn*, she was so much fun to play with, even like this.

But he meant it, even if she likely thought he was teasing her.

They made it through breakfast and took a cab to the church with plenty of time to spare, arriving there a little after three, over an hour early. But his mom, sisters, and auntie were there already, fussing over every last detail to make sure the church was perfect.

The wedding ceremony was simple and beautiful, and Sissy looked gorgeous in her dress. Arden kept a smile on her face and kept herself glued to Ken's side first at the church, then at the reception at a nearby hotel. His relatives didn't act too bitchy to her today, and had in fact seemed to warm up to her somewhat.

As warm as they could be to a stranger they weren't exactly happy to see, but who they'd tolerate due to the circumstances.

Except that worked to his benefit, because they assumed she really was his girlfriend.

Win.

He even tolerated the jabs from his extended family, all cousins, who bitched that he'd picked a different hotel to stay in than them. Except he hadn't wanted to be too close to his relatives for that long, then able to easily drop in on him and Arden. It was too much stress on him, and he knew it'd be too much stress on her, as well. Instead, he'd put them at a different hotel closer to his old office with the excuse that while they were there he had to

drop by and say hi to some people.

Because it was work, his mom and close family wouldn't object.

Too much.

Once they survived tonight, and the brunch tomorrow, they could breathe easier. Although he wouldn't fully relax until they were safely back in Florida.

As the evening wore on, he bought Arden a couple of rum and Cokes because he could tell she needed a little liquid courage. When the alcohol hit she finally relaxed. He could almost spot the moment it happened. Through the dinner, and cake, she was all smiles and curled against him like a cat.

Once the dancing started, he stood, pulling her with him. "Come on, baby. Time to see what you got."

* * * *

Arden wished she'd taken it a little slower with the rum and Cokes, but now that it'd hit, it flowed through her and warmed not only her stomach, but her clit as well. As others started dancing around them, many of them grinding on each other, she draped her arms around Ken's neck and remembered their discussion at the departure gate in Tampa.

His hands settled on her ass and he pulled her body against his as she practically humped his thigh. Her gaze met his, unwavering.

"Can we *really* pretend? At least for tonight?" she whispered in his ear when he dipped his head to listen.

"Tell me what you want, baby. Like I said, all you have to do is ask."

"I want *you*, Sir."

The outer edges of his eyes crinkled with evil amusement. "Spec-ci-fi-ci-ty," he said, emphasizing every syllable. "*Tell* me. If for no other reason than I want to claim the credit as the man who finally got our sweet little biker girl to say *cock*." His hands skimmed down to her ass again and he shifted slightly before he ground back against her.

Her heart galloped as she felt what could only be the hard outline of his cock perfectly rubbing between her legs.

Holy cow!

His fingers dug into her ass as they swayed in time to the music. "Ask me, Arden. Tell me what you want the big, bad Dom to do to you tonight,

baby. None of that purple prose. You want it, *ask* for it. Ask me nicely enough, I'll give it to you, whatever you want. Especially if you *beg* very nicely."

"I..." She bit down on her lower lip. "I want your cock, Sir."

More grinding. "*This* cock?"

"Y-yes." Her eyes fell closed as she savored the teasing sensation of his cock rubbing against her clit through her clothes.

"Nah, baby. Look at me."

Her head lolled back and she found his gaze burning into hers. "Ask me. And ask me *properly*."

"I...I want your cock, please, Sir."

"Oooohwee." He smiled, but now it held more than a little evil satisfaction. "Tell me *where* you want my cock, baby." He changed his rhythm and angle and she nearly came right there.

"I want it...there."

"*Tsk*, you were sooooo close. Start over." His head dipped, his lips by her ear, his tone dropping into panty-melting serious Dom-tone. "*Ask* me *properly*, for *everything* you want tonight, and I'll give it to you. But *only* if you ask me."

It felt like a thousand degrees in the room right now, but there was nowhere else she wanted to be except in his arms.

Well, unless the other three men were there with them.

She took a deep breath. "Please, Sir, I want to suck your cock, and want you to fuck my pussy."

One hand smacked her ass and she nearly came. "That's my *very* good girl. Anything else you want tonight, baby?"

"I need a spanking, Sir, please." She hadn't had one since the night she'd scened with them at the club.

His lips slanted over hers and it felt like the room stopped, went silent around them. The two of them alone with no one to intrude.

His hot, sweet mouth took total possession of hers, his tongue tracing her lips, slipping into her mouth before he sucked on hers.

"No more alcohol tonight," he hoarsely said. "I want you sober when we get back to the room. This don't happen unless you are. A'ight?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Me and the boys are careful, but do we need to stop and get condoms for

you on the way back?”

She shook her head. “No, Sir. I’m on the pill.”

He caught her chin in his hand and held her still, smiling. “Gonna ruin you tonight, baby,” he whispered. “You realize that, right? Just imagine if the boys were here with me. Think about *that* while I’m doing all sorts of sweet, dirty things to you better than any man you ever been with before, and imagine that times *four*. Then you give serious thought to something else I want you to think about.”

“Sir?”

He leaned in, his breath in her ear. “You could have all *four* of our cocks at your beck and call, baby. All you gotta do is ask us. Look at me right now, for example. You got us all eatin’ out of your hands and you don’t even *see* it.”

He punctuated that with another sexy grind. “Tonight is the start of your descent into Paradise. Gonna prime your pump and get you nice and ready. When we get home Monday, we’re gonna start a new chapter. If you want us, that is.”

Did she *want* them?

Heck, yeah!

* * * *

If Ken knew it wouldn’t piss off Momma and his siblings, he would have snatched Arden up and run back to the hotel with her right then.

Except she wasn’t exactly totally sober at that moment. He only wanted her if she was all in and able to make that call without regrets the next morning.

He could wait. They’d have all night.

And tomorrow, before and after brunch with his family.

And then when they got home, they’d *all* have her.

Was he meant to be exclusively with a woman for the rest of his life?

No.

Did the thought of watching the guys with her make him throb like a damn horny teenager?

Yeah.

Even better, the hot fantasy of sliding his cock up the ass of whoever was

fucking her, pinning that man between her and his own body, had already sponsored many of his own orgasms.

Or maybe one of them fucking *him* while he fucked her.

He wasn't picky, either way.

Thank god I stayed sober tonight.

He spun her around in his arms to face away from him, her ass pressed against his cock, one of his arms draped around her waist and the other resting on the front of her thigh.

So close, teasing her, the message crystal clear.

At least Momma won't hassle me about not having a girlfriend.

He didn't even have to fake how into it he was with Arden. She had his cock screaming for relief, and the first thing he was going to do when they returned to the room was put a load down that pretty little throat of hers so he could think.

Once he spent some time eating her out and making her feel good, he'd be ready to put the second load in what he suspected was a tight pussy.

My boys are gonna be sooo jealous.

He couldn't wait to tell them, either.

He nibbled the side of her neck as they danced, occasionally glancing around to see if anyone was paying attention to them. A couple of his cousins could likely be expected to leave passive-aggressive if not downright nasty comments on his Facebook profile next week for him bringing Arden, but he didn't give a shit about them. They would hate on *any* woman he dated who was lighter than him or them.

They were also missing the forest for the trees, which was *exactly* what he wanted to happen.

Let them spin their wheels of righteous indignation that how dare he put on such a show with a white girl. They'd never know what he'd been doing for the last several months with the guys in bed.

That was *exactly* how he wanted to keep it, too.

Chapter Eighteen

Arden was totally sober by the time Ken let them into their hotel room. She wondered if he'd still be wanting to do what he'd said when he caught her hand and pulled her into his arms.

"I think someone needs to get naked for me, hmm?"

Ooookay, then.

She wasn't going to turn this down.

When she slid off her coat, he took it from her and tossed it onto the chair. She started to take off her heels, but he stopped her. "Nah, leave those on. For now."

He smiled as he took the dress from her, then her bra and panties. As he circled her, nodding in what she hoped was an appreciative way, she felt desperately glad she'd opted to shave her cooter that morning in the shower.

He stepped in and pulled her into his arms. "Someone said something about needing a spanking, too, if I recall?"

"Yes, Sir."

He reached down and smacked her ass, hard, with one hand. "Then someone better get down on their pretty little knees and do what I told them to do."

He held her hands, helping her down. Then she bowed, hands on the floor, forehead resting on them. "I need a spanking, Sir. Please, give me one."

"Mmm mmm *mmm*. Then what?"

She took a deep breath. "Then I want to suck your cock, Sir, and want you to fuck my pussy with your cock."

"Ooooh, *baby*. Such pretty begging." He reached down and fisted her hair, easing her back up into a sit, her face right in front of his fly. "Start with convincing me how badly you want my cock, baby."

Her fingers trembled as she eagerly worked to unfasten his belt and fly and lower his zipper. His thick cock lay hard and pressing against it from inside, making it tricky to get it out but she managed. He looked even larger than he had that morning and her mouth watered as she leaned in and licked the tip before swallowing him as deeply as she could.

"Ooooh, *yeah*." He cupped one hand around the back of her head, his fingers keeping her in place as she bobbed up and down on his cock. The

other he reached down and held the base of his cock, and she realized she didn't want to be anywhere else at that moment but right there.

Except...maybe if the other three men were there with them.

He only let her do that for a moment, though. He pulled his cock out of her mouth and caught one of her hands, yanking her to her feet. "Someone needs a spankin'. Then my good girl's gonna get to swallow a load."

He didn't bother undressing or zipping up. He sat on the end of one of the beds and pulled her over his lap, the fabric from his slacks and suit coat slightly rough against her flesh and creating delicious friction against her nipples.

He flicked her shoes off her feet. With his left hand planted in the middle of her back, he squeezed her left ass cheek, then the right. "Hang on, baby. This ride will get bumpy."

She buried her face against the covers as he started spanking her, hard and fast and without any warmup at all. She'd already been spinning down into subspace, but the jolt of endorphins dumping into her system slammed her the rest of the way, like the back side of the first climb on a roller coaster. Even as pain blossomed in her ass, her clit burned, throbbed as it received the occasional rub against his hard thigh.

Not once did she safeword. Every time she thought she was about to utter it, he'd pause, squeezing her ass again, fingers digging in, nails raking. Just enough time to give her a moment to regroup and suck in a long breath before he started spanking her again.

* * * *

Holy *hell*, she was so goddamned sexy, squirming against him and needy, greedy, shoving her ass against his hand and arching her back into the impacts.

God, she was perfect.

One thing that had been missing from his life was the ability to totally dominate his partner the way he really wanted to. With the other guys all being Doms, he'd let that part of himself slide to the wayside.

Now...

This was perfection.

She was perfection.

He could sate his kinky needs with her and bust a nut with her or the guys, either way. Win-win.

Finally, he lifted her from his lap and put her on her knees again, between his legs, and started fucking her mouth. He needed her, needed to claim her, mark her inside and out.

He also wanted to hear what she sounded like when she came, but that wasn't going to happen until he took care of his aching cock.

There was no finesse this time. He kept control and was careful not to gag her, but he made it clear to her he was in charge and every soft, sweet moan she made vibrated through his cock. She held on to his legs, not trying to push him away but trying to hold on closer as he pumped into her.

"Swallow." That's the only warning he gave her before he thrust deep one last time. She surprised him, though, taking him even deeper than he'd been fucking her mouth, her hands flexing and stroking his legs through his slacks.

When her gaze swiveled up to meet his, his heart squeezed and he *knew*.

Without a doubt.

No fucking way was he letting her go. They needed her, all four of them did. In different ways and for different reasons—his the most selfish of all—but they did.

Like fucking *hell* would he let her get away from them, and he knew *exactly* the way to make sure she didn't.

He eased his grip on her head and stroked her hair. "Good girl," he gasped. "Very good."

After he caught his breath he pulled her to her feet and sat her on the end of the bed. He toed off his shoes and yanked off his jacket, but that was all before he sank to his knees between her thighs, shouldered them apart, and dragged them over his shoulders. She fell back onto the bed.

"No safeword for this, baby. Gonna make you scream until I'm ready to let you stop."

He swiped his tongue up her cunt, slowly circling her swollen clit and tasting her juices. She wasn't just wet, she was absolutely soaked.

The first time, he got her off quickly, his fingers digging into her thighs and holding her in place as she squirmed against his mouth, slightly sweet and that fresh kind of salty. He eased up, circling her clit again with his tongue to let her cool off just a moment. Every moan she made collected in

his balls and started to harden his cock again.

He fucked her pussy with his tongue, played with her, tugging on her clit with his lips and lightly sucking, until he felt her trip over again. This time, she tried to gently push his face away, but he caught her wrists in his hands and held her tight even as he continued to mouth her clit and make her squeal.

He lost track of time as he ate her out, wanting her thoroughly wrung out and sated so that when he fucked her she would look up at him with a sweetly done glaze in her eyes and promise him anything he asked of her.

Because he was going to be asking a lot of her over the next forty-eight hours.

They all would.

* * * *

Arden lost track of how many times Ken made her come, but she realized her vibrator was no longer going to be sufficient after tonight.

Holy heck!

When he'd grabbed her hands and held her in place, it'd actually sent her over the edge again, every hot fantasy she'd ever had about him and the others suddenly paling in the face of the reality. Ken wasn't taking no for an answer—not that she wanted to tell him no—and it made it even hotter to know he was going to use her tonight until he was ready to call it a night.

With her sore ass rubbing against the bed, it added to the pleasure.

I wonder what it'd be like with two of them sucking on my nipples?

That thought devolved into another wash of pleasure ripping through her.

He finally released her and stood, smiling as he loosened his tie and pulled it off. His gaze smoldered as he slowly unbuttoned his shirt, flinging it away from him, followed by his undershirt.

He was hard again, too. His dark, rigid cock bobbed at attention as he shoved his slacks and boxers down, stepping out of them and then peeling off his socks.

Reaching between her legs, he shoved her thighs apart and grabbed her, pulling her ass to the edge of the bed. He fisted his cock, slowly stroking it as he smiled down at her.

“Red or green, baby? Red, I finish myself up right now, all over your

gorgeous pale tits. Green, I'm fucking that sweet cunt as long and hard as I want, until I fill you up with another load. And that's now *my* pussy, baby. I don't just mean for tonight—I mean forever. Me and the boys', that is."

She nodded. "Green, Sir."

"Good girl." He leaned over and braced himself on the bed with one arm, his other holding his cock and pressing it against her pussy, swiping the head up and down and getting it wet with her juices. He notched the thick head of his cock against her cunt and slowly pressed forward, stretching her. No withdrawal, either. She was slick, and he wasn't giving any ground until he had his full length completely embedded deep inside her.

He blew out a long breath. "Damn, girl. You're so tight! Good thing I fed you a load first or I'd already be coming." He pulled her legs around his waist and hooked his hands under her shoulders, holding her captured in place.

He kissed her and she loved tasting herself on him. "If you can get you some again, go ahead. But I've been dying to see what you feel like."

He pulled out slowly, but he drove in hard and fast, and like that, he was off. She was actually shocked when she came again, because while she wasn't a slut none of her previous partners had achieved that trick.

"Yeah!" he gasped. Relentless, he pounded her, his feet braced on the floor and her body tightly gripped exactly where he wanted her.

All she could do was hold on and enjoy it.

And she did.

He managed to fuck one more small orgasm out of her before he slammed his cock into her one last time and held still there as his balls emptied inside her, his eyes falling closed, lips slanted over hers, her hands wrapped around his biceps and hoping he never wanted to move.

This was heaven.

Eventually, he drew in a deep breath and opened his eyes, a sweet smile on his face. "Now *that's* more like it."

Effortlessly, he picked her up just like that, his cock still inside her, and carried her over to the other bed, where he lay back with her on top of him. He tucked her head under his chin and pulled the covers over them. "I wake you up in the middle of the night fucking you, just go with it, baby." He kissed the top of her head. "So damn good."

Sated and spent, she snuggled there. "Thank you, Sir. You, too."

Chapter Nineteen

Sunday morning, Arden awakened still splayed across Ken's chest, one of his arms draped over her. When she gasped, his arm tightened around her shoulders, keeping her in place.

"Where you think you goin'?" His voice sounded sleepy and sexy and her clit throbbed even as her pussy remembered every thrust his thick cock made inside her last night.

She relaxed against him and hoped she hadn't made an ass of herself last night. "Are we all right?"

The laugh rolled out of him. "Oh, sweetie, we *sooo* much better than a'ight." He easily manhandled her, shifting her on top of him, and his already hard cock easily slid inside her. "What's that?" he whispered.

This morning she fearlessly met his gaze. "Your cock, Sir."

His hands squeezed her delightfully sore ass and he rocked his hips a little, her clit rubbing against his body as he settled his cock deeper inside her pussy. "And where, exactly, is my cock, baby?"

"Inside your pussy, Sir."

Something about the contented-sounding sigh that slipped from him fired her need. "Exactly. And in case there was any doubt left in your mind after last night, let me clarify—for the record, I now co-own that sweet pussy with Steve, Trace, and Hal." He smiled up at her. "I cannot *wait* to see what it feels like fucking that tight little ass of yours with one of the guys pumping away inside your pussy."

Heat flared in her core and the thought of that—and more—filled her with insane levels of need. She tried rocking against him, but that evil smile returned. His hands clamped down on her ass, holding her in place.

"Oooh, someone liked that mental image, huh?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Bet you'd like it even better you had a third cock in your mouth, sucking on that sweet meat, huh? Maybe a fourth? Or two mouths sucking on your tits while you ride two cocks, hmm?"

Her pussy clamped down on his cock at the thought of that naughty fantasy come to life. "Yes, Sir."

One hand rose, fisting her hair and pulling her down for another kiss,

controlling it, and then it ended.

“We get home, baby, the second we’re through that door, you’re gonna strip like a good girl, understand me?”

She wasn’t sure if the heat filling her cheeks was desire or embarrassment, but she nodded as much as his grip in her hair would allow. “Yes, Sir.”

“You’re gonna enjoy being our good girl, aren’t you? Our sweet little pet?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Don’t you worry about the other guys. They’re on board. They been careful to not scare you off. We’ve wanted you even before we ran into you at Venture that night. And I don’t just mean as play partners. One of our rules is that you don’t date or fuck or play with anyone but us, and we won’t do that with anyone but you and each other. Deal?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“You gonna have a problem watching me and Steve together? Or when any of the guys get together with me, or each other?”

“No, Sir.” Her cheeks felt aflame. “That sounds hot, actually.”

“Good girl.” He loosened his grip on her ass. “Go ahead and get you some, baby. You think you can come like this for me, or you need some help?”

“I want to, Sir.” She braced her hands against his chest and started fucking him, her swollen clit rubbing against his body as his cock filled her.

His gaze narrowed. “Good girl.” But his voice sounded hoarse, thick.

Needy.

The hand that had been holding on to her ass started playing with her nipples. He never released her hair, though, a constant reminder who was in charge.

“I have a feeling you’re gonna rarely be sleeping in your own bed from now on. At least, not alone. If they ain’t keeping you busy, I sure will. Because now that you’re ours, we ain’t never letting you go without a fight. We’re damn sure gonna keep you well satisfied, baby girl.”

At war within her, the urge to ride him hard and fast and get herself off, and to keep enjoying this slow, sexy grind. As he pinched her nipples, back and forth, it fueled her need and made her softly whimper.

“Keep you satisfied, that’s what we’re gonna do. And you never have to

worry again about where you're gonna live, or worry about money. We'll even draw you up a prenup. But gonna need you to do something for me, though. All that pleasure whenever you want it, it means there's gonna be a price to be paid."

Her pulse skipped. "Prenup?"

"Did I stutter? The guys know what my family's like. They're okay with this. We'll all collar you, but I'm going to put a ring on your finger, I'm gonna marry you, and as far as anyone's publicly concerned, you're *mine*. Got it?"

She had a choice, to keep living in fear, or to seize this chance—and these men—and finally take charge of her life.

To finally enjoy her life, to *live* it.

"Yes, Sir."

"Say it back to me, baby."

"You're going to draw up a prenup, and I'm going to marry you, but I'll belong to all four of you."

"Damn right, you will. What's your family gonna say?"

Her motions slowed, a little emotional buzz-kill threatening to take the delicious edge off of this. "I don't care what they say. Can we please not talk about them today?"

His gaze searched her face. "Not today, then. But we *will* talk."

"Yes, Sir."

His hand slipped lower, between her legs, playing with her clit. "Aw, did my baby lose her place?" He teased her, the pad of his finger lightly stroking up and down the length of her clit.

"I did, Sir."

He released her hair so that hand could start playing with her nipples. "Then get your joy, baby. Because after you do, I'm flipping you over and fucking myself empty. I want you feeling me inside you all day today while we're out shopping and talking to my family."

"Shopping?"

His smile turned the kind of evil that made her panties disappear. "Someone needs a ring on their hand, and New York is a great city for shopping."

* * * *

This was the perfect solution all the way around. No more worrying about his family, the guys could enjoy her, too, he and Steve and the other guys could play around when they felt like it—there was no downside to any of this.

Not like she'd get bored anytime soon. If she did, it'd strictly be their fault for not taking care of her.

Paying attention to her body the way he had last night, he was quickly learning her tells, how she felt as she grew closer to her orgasm. Every flutter of the muscles inside her pussy, squeezing him, trying to milk his cock.

The way her lips parted and her gorgeous green eyes grew glazed, heavy-lidded.

Can't wait to tie her up and watch Trace do forced orgasm play with her while she's taking turns sucking our cocks.

He wasn't even overreacting by pushing things along this fast, in the grand scheme of things. If Arden was married to him, she'd be less inclined to leave. The attorney could work up a prenup that would protect them all and be fair to her. She'd have health insurance and wouldn't have to worry about her future.

Skip right past dating to a wedding?

Absolutely.

Especially since it meant one long-term, serious worry off his plate. His momma wouldn't be happy, exactly, but she wouldn't give him a hard time about it. She and his siblings would eventually close ranks around him and Arden against their cousins and aunties. He could deal with whispered back-biting.

But he did *not* want to lose his family. They weren't perfect, but neither was he.

Now he could have the best of both worlds.

At one point he made her pause, sadistically enjoying her needy whines as he took a close-up pic of his cock buried in her pussy.

"That's for the boys," he told her as he texted it to them. "I want them ready to jump your sweet ass as soon as we walk in the door."

He smiled up at her after setting his phone aside. "You been fantasizing about us like this, haven't you?"

She nodded. "Yes, Sir."

“Good.” He pulled her in for another kiss. “Now get you all you want, baby.”

He struggled to hold back as she fucked him, riding his cock until she finally hit her stride. Her eyes dropped closed and she bit down on her lower lip, faster, harder...until she tipped over with a sweet, needy cry that made his cock throb.

Once he was sure she was done he flipped her over onto her hands and knees, grabbed her hips, and buried his cock inside her again. She bore a few faint marks on her ass from last night’s spanking, but not enough.

Except they didn’t have time to play this morning.

“For the record, baby girl, I think I’d love to fuck you like this while watching you suck one of the guy’s cocks. There’s a lot of permutations the five of us will do. No one left out, no one getting bored.”

He fucked her hard, balls slapping against her, and digging his fingers into her flesh since he knew she loved that. “And here...you...go.” Pleasure bubbled up from deep in his balls, nearly painfully good as he planted himself inside her, filling her with his cum and holding still as he tried to catch his breath.

“How’s that?” he asked when he could finally speak again.

She cast a sultry glance at him over her shoulder and nodded.

He smacked her ass, making her yip. “Proper answer, baby.”

She smiled. “Yes, Sir.”

“That’s better.” He pulled her up, his cock still inside her, and held her body against his as he kissed her. “Shower, shopping, then we need to meet with Momma and everyone for breakfast. Let’s get moving.”

But...she didn’t. She stared up into his eyes, her sweet green gaze filled with worry. “What if I screw this up?” she whispered.

He held her chin. “You won’t. You were perfect Friday and yesterday, and you’ll be perfect today. Just keep being Sir’s good girl and you’ll be perfect, ’kay?”

She nodded. “Yes, Sir.” Then she tipped her head up to kiss him one more time and something inside his heart spun sideways again—in a good way.

* * * *

Ken let her take her shower first—alone. He knew if he was in there with her, he'd be fucking her again, and they didn't have time for that. While she did that he shaved, his face and head, and stared at himself in the mirror.

What the hell am I doing?

There wasn't any other more perfect way, though. Sure, he was lying to his family, but it wasn't like they lived close. They'd get off his ass about dating and getting married, and Arden would have a ready-made family of guys who'd kill or die for her.

What could be better than that?

A quick check of his messages showed a flurry of texts from the guys, both playfully cursing his good luck and simultaneously cheering him on.

Running behind. Will shop for a ring for her before brunch. We all still good with me doing that?

Almost immediately, he had three responses—*YES!*

Today he'd opted for a suit and tie again to wow his family. Arden looked like a million bucks in her dress and coat, her knee-high boots the perfect tone between sassy and functional to keep her warm. He had the taxi take them to a jewelry store over on Fifth Avenue first.

The woman who helped him spoke to Arden first, not him, despite him leading the way inside and holding Arden's hand with her trailing a nervous half-step behind him. "How can we help you today, ma'am?"

He held up a finger, pointing at his face. "*Yo. I'm the one with the black Amex, honey. You talk to me.*"

He pulled his wallet out of his pocket and dropped the credit card and his driver's license on the counter, because he suspected that would be her next ask to make sure it belonged to him. "Engagement rings. *Nice* ones. No cheap-ass CZ shit. *Real* stones."

"Yes, sir. Sorry, sir." She scooped up the card and license from the counter. "Right this way."

"Dat's better."

He recaptured Arden's hand and followed the woman over to a different display case. He loved that Arden's cheeks had turned adorably pink. He gently squeezed her hand as he studied the selections. He wanted something that suited her, big and impressive without being gaudy.

Then he spotted a radiant-cut diamond, surrounded by smaller diamonds and emeralds, the green in the stones reflecting the dark flecks of green in her beautiful eyes. He pointed. “*That* one.”

“Did you wish to see the price, sir?” the clerk asked.

“Nah. Card’s good.” He honestly didn’t care what the price was, because that card currently had a zero balance on it and he’d purchased his car with it last year. While waiting for Arden to finish her shower, he’d filed a travel notice, so the purchase should go through with no problem. But just in case, he had the app open on his phone to approve the sale in case it hung up.

The saleswoman used a sizer to see what Arden would need, and quickly returned with the right one. He took it from the saleswoman and looked at it, nodding.

Then he dropped to one knee and took Arden’s left hand in his. “I always do stuff right. Will you marry me, Arden?”

It was a perfect fit, and she was actually crying as she nodded, her cheeks now deep red. The entire store burst into applause.

“Is that a yes, baby?”

“Yes!” she gasped.

He rose and kissed her, then used his phone to take a selfie of the two of them together, for the guys as much as for himself.

If he could keep her looking that happy, sure, he’d marry her.

It’d be worth it to know there was at least one person in his life he could make smile like that.

Chapter Twenty

As Ken predicted, when they walked into the restaurant, his mother wore a look on her face somewhere between smelling someone's burrito-fueled toot and like she'd stepped in dogshit. But he'd give her all due credit that she put on a smile when they drew closer to the table, Arden's left hand in his and her following just behind him. He'd chosen to keep her on his right, so he was holding her left hand, concealing it from view.

He wanted to spring it on them all.

Hell, he was paying for this damn brunch. Fuck 'em.

"Good morning, everyone," he said. "Hope we didn't keep you waiting."

He pulled Arden's chair out with his left hand, and with his right held on to hers until she was seated. His momma and two of his sisters gasped when he let go of her hand to help push her chair in.

His momma reached over and grabbed Arden's hand, nearly dragging her across the table. "What is *this*!"

"What's it look like, Momma?" He took Arden's hand, pried it out of his momma's grasp, then flashed Arden a wink as he kissed her hand and returned it to her before sitting next to her.

"That looks like an engagement ring!"

"Well, now isn't that a coincidence?" He smiled and took a sip of water from the glass in front of him, enjoying knowing that every eye at the table was now focused on him.

Arden had turned an adorable shade of beet red.

"What is that supposed to mean?" his momma asked.

"What's *what* supposed to mean?" He was enjoying this clueless act. Especially because it would sell it that much more strongly. He could only imagine how the story would morph as it spread like wildfire amongst the cousins.

"Kenneth Lamar Rossi! Is that an engagement ring?"

"Oh, yes, it is." He smiled. "I made her leave it in the hotel safe Friday and Saturday. We didn't want to upstage Sissy's big weekend."

"You're getting *married*?" The entire restaurant paused for a moment as his momma's voice rang through the space.

"That *is* usually what an engagement ring means, Momma, yes."

As he'd predicted, she heaved herself out of her chair and practically tackled Arden in a hug, then him. "Congratulations, baby boy! Why didn't you tell *me*, at least?"

"I just asked her a few days ago. I thought it could wait a few more days to become public. We didn't tell anybody else, though. We wanted you all to be the first to know."

Poor Denny.

He knew he'd have to make it up to her. Meanwhile, the sadist in him enjoyed watching. He sat back with a smile as his mom, sisters, brothers, cousins, aunties—everyone swarmed Arden to hug her, then him. Of course his Momma's attitude had done a complete one-eighty now that Arden was joining the family.

But inside, something had eased, a tension now vanished he hadn't realized before had been so...damn near *painful*. Yes, he'd always been on his guard, but never before had it struck him just how heavily it had weighed on him until this moment, upon finding it *gone*.

He was going to marry Arden. That meant his family would never know his secret. Therefore, he wouldn't lose them as his family.

On the other side of it, Arden would gain a whole family who would eventually come to love her as much as he and the guys did. He'd just have to be careful when the guys were around his family that he kept Arden close to him and there were no hints of anything between her and them.

Or between him and the other guys.

Otherwise, this adorable, wiggling puppy pile of familial love would quickly turn into a swarm of angry piranhas who'd pick her bones clean in seconds. His family would forgive a multitude of sins, but cheating was not one of them.

Nor was being gay.

* * * *

After breakfast, Ken took them back to the room where he fucked Arden senseless with only a break for room service that evening.

She wasn't sure what would happen when they returned to Florida, but had a strong feeling sleep deprivation might be in her future.

Not that she was going to mind in the slightest.

Monday morning, Arden stared at the ring on her hand as they made their way through airport security. When she looked, she found Ken smiling down at her.

“I can’t believe this.”

“Believe it.”

“How much was it?”

“Nope. Not telling you. I bought what I wanted for you. That’s all that matters. I’m sure the guys will be buying you things, too. And we’ll all put our heads together on the wedding bands.”

“For us?”

“And for them. Fair’s fair. They can’t all marry you, but I know they’ll want something to wear to prove it.”

“Really?”

He brought her hand to his lips and kissed it. “Baby, what will it take to convince you we all love you?”

“But...I thought you were all involved with each other.”

“We are. Doesn’t mean there’s not room for you. Plenty of room.”

“Wait a minute. I don’t want to share you guys with another woman. Or other guys.”

“You won’t. I already promised you that. Just us five.”

* * * *

Ken hoped that once they were back in Florida her fear wouldn’t return and make her put the brakes on. He’d already texted the guys that morning on their ongoing group thread to make sure they were home, bathed, shaved, and looking halfway decent when they returned.

They all pestered him for details, but he didn’t have time for that.

Suffice it to say Arden now belongs to us. We have a very good girl to take care of when I get home. Buy condoms and lube.

That was met by a slew of responses, but he turned off his phone at the airport and smiled, knowing the boys would be anxiously stewing for the next several hours.

After they strapped into their plane seats, Ken clasped her hand in his and

brushed his thumb over her knuckles, the ring brightly winking in the light. He tipped his head so he could whisper in her ear.

“Bet that pussy is aching from my cock, isn’t it, baby?”

Her grip tightened on his hand, but she nodded.

He chuckled and settled in, knowing she was now probably sporting soaked panties.

When they landed, he pulled her aside at the airside terminal as they reached the public restrooms.

He nodded toward the bathroom. “Give me your carryon and bring me your panties.”

Her eyes widened.

He arched an eyebrow at her. “Is that a red?”

She shook her head, but the wild-eyed look that was hardening his cock didn’t disappear.

He nodded toward the restrooms again. “Then go do it.” He’d had her wear a blouse and skirt this morning, so this was perfect planning. He held out his hand for her carryon, and she passed it over before heading into the bathroom.

He stood there paging through his phone until she returned a few minutes later. He held out his hand and didn’t torture her too badly when she extended a tightly knotted fist to him.

There wasn’t anyone close by, much less paying attention to them, when he took them from her and slipped them into the left front pocket of his slacks. Then he returned his phone to his right front pocket.

“Good girl. Let’s go get our bags.”

He’d parked them in the long-term garage, more serendipity. Once she was safely belted in and he had the car started, he reached over and pushed her legs apart, two fingers easily sliding inside her wet cunt.

He smiled as he finger-fucked her. “Baby want to come?”

She nodded. “Yes, Sir.”

He teased her for another few minutes, careful not to let her come. Then he pulled his fingers from her pussy and pressed them into her mouth. She sucked them like she’d sucked his cock, and now he was hard and aching, this game backfiring on him.

“Keep your legs apart like that for the whole ride,” he ordered, hiking her skirt up her thighs until it almost completely exposed her. He didn’t want any

truckers they passed being able to see what belonged to him and the guys. "I'm probably going to want to play with that on the way home." He smiled. "Tired of me yet?"

"No, Sir."

"Good girl."

* * * *

That was both the longest and shortest ride of her life. Ken mercilessly teased her as they headed south to Sarasota, and she remembered what she'd promised to do when they arrived home.

When they pulled off I-75 at their exit, he sent a quick text at the stoplight before smiling at her. "They're going tear you up, baby girl, and you're gonna enjoy every second of it."

She whimpered, barely able to think, but nodded.

Apparently he took pity on her, because he laughed and shook his head but didn't correct her for not saying anything.

When they parked, he gathered everything, including her purse, and made her walk ahead of him. She'd almost made it to the front door when someone flung it open, Steve in front wearing a dark and hungry look, and Hal and Trace flanking him.

Make or break time.

She stepped into the entryway and once Ken was inside, Steve closed the door behind him before giving him a kiss. Hal and Trace kissed him hello, too.

Ken set down all their things and arched an eyebrow at her.

Face aflame, she pulled off her blouse and skirt, and Ken took them from her, followed by her bra.

That left her in her boots.

"Show them the ring, baby."

She held out her left hand, Trace taking it and looking closer. "*Dude, holy fuck! How much was that?*"

"Don't matter. It's to her from all of us. She knows she belongs to all of us, but she'll marry me. Problem permanently solved with my family."

Trace passed her hand to Hal, and then Steve.

"That's fucking gorgeous," Steve said. "The green matches her eyes."

“Right?” Ken nodded. “Go on, baby girl. Greet them properly. You belong to them, too. I got to have you all to myself this weekend. Time for you to give them some relief.”

“Ground rules,” Trace said. “Green, yellow, red. If you need to, say it.”

She nodded. “Yes, Sir.”

“You’re okay with anything we want to do?”

She glanced at Ken, and he smiled. “Come on, baby girl. Don’t be shy now after I spent the weekend fucking that sweet pussy of yours. Tell them what you want.”

She met Trace’s blue gaze again. “Sir mentioned wanting to see what it’d feel like with his cock up my ass while each of you take turns fucking my pussy.”

All three men’s eyes widened.

“Duuuude,” Hal said. “You got her to say dirty words!” He high-fived Ken.

Ken smiled. “You think that’s something, wait until you hear what she sounds like moaning around a cock in her mouth.”

Chapter Twenty-One

They hustled her into the living room, where they'd reconfigured the sectional to be like one large bed, covered with sheets. Arden felt them lift her and lay her on her back, legs spread wide and held open by Ken and Steve as Trace buried his face in her pussy and ate her out. Someone else—or elses—removed her boots.

Hal got naked and knelt by her head, feeding his cock to her. She let go, eagerly wanting this, afraid maybe it was just a really hot dream.

Except the hands kneading her breasts and pinching her nipples felt too deliciously real. The first orgasm slammed into her as Hal fucked her mouth, quickly shooting a load down her throat.

"Oh, son of a bitch!" Hal gasped. "Sorry, baby, but damn, you're great!"

"That's all right," Ken told him. "Means you can last longer when we fuck her."

The men switched out several times, getting naked, eating her pussy, fucking her mouth, until they were all naked and each man had made her come at least once.

Ken was the last between her legs. After she'd come, he sat up and grabbed the lube, slicking one finger and smiling as he pressed it against her rim, teasing her. She'd had anal before, and even had a butt plug she played with on occasion, but it wasn't as big as him.

"Get comfy, baby, because no one's going to bed tonight until we've done what I promised you we'd do. Now, you've swallowed a load from all your Sirs. It's time to make you ours like this, too." He started working his finger into her ass, Hal leaning in and licking her clit while Steve and Trace played with her nipples to distract her.

With the sensory overload, she tripped over the edge again, several times, one long, rolling orgasm that felt like it wouldn't stop. When Hal finally relented, she realized Ken was scissoring two fingers inside her ass.

"Good girl." He wiped his hand off on a towel and grabbed a condom, rolling it on before slicking himself with lube.

He sat back on the couch and the men picked her up, turning her around with her back to him, positioning her where they wanted her.

"Go slow, baby," Steve said. "Be a good girl and take him."

As she felt the thick head of Ken's cock breach her rim, he sucked in a sharp breath. "Damn, baby. Your ass is even tighter than your pussy."

Hal and Trace latched on to her nipples again, and Steve reached in to play with her clit as she slowly fucked herself onto Ken's cock. Once he was fully seated inside her, he pulled her body back against him, one arm around her waist, one gripping her throat. She closed her eyes, savoring every sensation, her body fully under their control.

"You find it, Trace?" Ken asked.

"Yep." She heard a vibrator click on, and then Hal and Steve were holding her arms, pinning her as Trace touched the vibrator to her swollen clit.

She...howled. The orgasm exploded, hard and fierce and stronger than any she'd felt before.

"Oooh, fuck yeah," Ken growled behind her. "*Damn*, that's good. I won't last long."

Trace leaned in. "Look at me, baby."

She forced her eyes open to see the other three men smiling at her. "Who do you belong to?"

"I belong to all four of you."

"That's right, baby. You're all ours now, and we're going to take damn good care of you. Tell us what you want."

She could barely speak as another wave of orgasms rushed through her. "I want my Sirs to fuck me."

He lifted the vibrator from her clit and she sucked in a shaky breath, just for him to do it to her again and making the men laugh at her moans. He repeated it several more times before finally taking pity on her. He slid his cock into her first as Steve and Hal released her arms. That allowed her to hold on to Trace, and he leaned in, kissing her as his cock stretched her.

Behind her, Ken laughed, but it sounded strained. "Ooooh, buddy, this is my new favorite thing. I can feel you inside her fucking her."

"Yeah? Well, I can feel you in there, too." He leaned past her to kiss Ken. "Guess this'll make nights even more interesting now, huh?"

"You'd better believe it."

Trace didn't last long, and it was Steve who took his place. He had a different rhythm to his thrusts, and he kissed her the whole time, moaning into her mouth as he came, adding another load to her pussy. Followed by

Hal, who helped Ken fuck her, lifting her as he thrust into her from behind while Hal rode her in front.

Overload. She exploded again, her body clamping down on both of them and taking them with her.

Exhausted and sated, she let them gently tip her over onto her side as Ken pulled out of her ass. Hal cradled her against him, Trace and Steve gently stroking her head, her arms.

She drifted off, awakened by the feel of someone carrying her, then warm water cradling her.

The hot tub.

She wasn't sure who she was now snuggled against, but she enjoyed the feel of arms wrapped around her and their lips nuzzling the top of her head.

"You are so beautiful," he whispered.

Steve.

She guessed it was Trace and Hal now cuddled close on either side of her, because Ken's voice sounded like he was on the other side of the hot tub.

"You all can have my bed tonight, if you want it. I'll take Steve's bed. Fair's fair. I had her all weekend, and—" He yawned. "She flat wore my ass out."

"That okay with you, baby?" Trace asked.

She nodded without opening her eyes. "Yes, Sir."

"What about dinner?" Hal asked.

"Pizza," Steve said, his arms tightening around her. "I ain't cooking."

"Sounds good to me," Ken said.

* * * *

Hal had honestly thought maybe the other three were just fucking with him when the messages started that weekend, like it was a joke he wasn't in on, but...

Damn.

He'd never seriously thought they'd be at this point with Arden. Definitely not this soon.

And no, he didn't have a problem with Ken marrying her. It was the perfect solution, giving her security and keeping his secret from his family. It worked.

What they'd had going between the four of them had been amazing, but

yeah, adding Arden to the mix made it perfect, absolutely. Even now, as he cuddled around her, he and Trace both had an arm behind Steve and the other draped over her and touching each other.

He looked at Ken. "Love you, man. You're a fucking genius."

Ken grinned. "Love you, too, buddy. Even if you're louder than hell during sex."

"Hey, I'm howling, you know I'm enjoying myself."

"That's true."

Steve handed her off to Hal when they got out, and they wrapped her in a large beach towel and returned to the living room. Trace fetched a blanket for her and pillows from her room and together they snuggled with her between Trace and Steve to watch TV.

Ken had ended up behind Hal and pressed against his back. "Miss me?"

He reached back and patted Ken's thigh. "Yeah, we all did. It's weird when everyone's not home at night. We are going to have to invest in some larger beds, by the way. We ended up sleeping in your room every night since you've got the biggest one."

"I don't mind."

"Good," Trace said, "because we fucked each other's brains out in it. We did wash the sheets, though."

"Then I'm not complaining."

* * * *

Trace hadn't planned to spend all three nights with Steve and Hal, but it'd just worked out that way. And he hadn't been able to give himself a good enough reason to leave the bed and go sleep by himself after sex when he had two willing partners to enjoy.

The first night, it'd been him in the middle, the next Steve, and Hal the third.

And yeah, they were going to need a bigger bed.

"Someone call in the pizza, please," Trace said. "I'm starving."

"I'll do it," Ken said. "You all look comfy."

Trace lifted his head as Ken climbed off the couch. "Hey."

"What?"

"Come here."

Ken rounded the couch and leaned in. "Yeah?"

Trace pulled him in for a kiss. "Missed you. And yeah, I guess I love you assholes, too."

Ken smiled. "Glad you do, because hate-fucking would get old after a while."

"Aw, I'm getting emotional and you pick on me."

Ken nipped his lower lip. "Because you are so much fun to pick on, buddy. And yeah, love you guys, too."

* * * *

"Is this the mushy portion of our evening?" Steve asked. "Because if it is, fine. I love you assholes, too. Nobody else would probably put up with me."

Arden giggled, and he looked down to see her smiling at him.

Kissing her was quickly becoming addicting to him. "Yeah, we're gonna need bigger beds around here."

But later, once they'd had pizza and were all yawning, after Steve carried her into Ken's room, he kissed her and stepped back. "I'll go sleep with Ken tonight so he's not alone. Four in this bed means someone's gonna roll out."

"More for us," Hal said, snuggling against her as Trace took the other side.

Except if the guys were as exhausted as Steve felt, he suspected it would only be sleep tonight, not fucking.

And even if there was fucking, he was good with that, too. Arden was theirs and not going anywhere. There was no score to be kept, no time with her to be tracked. Probably would be nights she chased them all out and locked her door, and nothing wrong with that, either.

Ken had followed them into his room to kiss everyone good-night before he and Steve retreated to Steve's room. Curled up in his bed, with Ken in his arms, he asked it.

"How bad was it?"

"I was terrified until I realized how much she wanted this. Then it was easy because I didn't have to pretend, and neither did she."

He nuzzled Ken's shaved head, loving the feel of it against his flesh. "That was a fucking expensive ring."

"Worth every penny."

“Didn’t say it wasn’t.”

Ken looked up and met his gaze. “Sorry.”

“Why?”

“I know you...” Ken sighed. “Sorry.”

Steve shrugged. “I knew you couldn’t marry me. I get it.” He smiled. “I’ll get Hal or Trace so horny they can’t see straight and propose to one of them. That’ll be fun.” His smile faded. “I know you love your family. The important thing is, none of us are going anywhere.” He laid his head back down and closed his eyes. “Love you.”

“Love you, too.” Ken sighed. “Might not get much sleep the next few weeks. Damn, once you fire her up, she does *not* quit.”

Steve snickered. “Hell, I’ll sleep when I’m dead.”

THE END

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