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I CAME HOME to find two men sitting at my kitchen table. One of them was my live-in sweetie. The other was one of our best friends. One of them was a wereleopard; the other was a werewolf; both of them were strippers. At least once a month they took off more than just their clothes on stage. They changed shape on stage in front of a live audience. Those nights the club was standing room only. I mean, you can go to other clubs to see men take their clothes off, but their entire skin and body . . . well, that was unique.

Nathaniel came to greet me with a kiss and a hug. I let my hands play in the long, thick auburn hair that trailed down his broad shoulders, the curve of his waist, the tightness of his ass, and the long muscular legs. He was five-seven now, an inch taller than when I'd met him. In my three-inch heels I was still an inch shorter than him. At twenty-one he was finally growing into the promise of those shoulders. His face was less soft than it had been, and more masculine. He would always be beautiful rather than handsome, but the bone structure had changed minutely so he just suddenly looked his age, instead of like jailbait.

He blinked down at me with the soft lilac of his eyes. On his driver's license it said his eyes were blue, because they wouldn't let him put lavender, or purple. His eyes were different shades of color, depending on his mood, or what he wore, but blue was never the color of his eyes.

His hands slid underneath the jacket of my suit, and a little lower to trace the top of my skirt. His hands hesitated a little at the Browning BDM in its shoulder holster. Guns do get in the way of cuddling.

I wrapped my arms around the bareness of his upper body, breathed in the scent of his skin. He was wearing what he usually wore in his off time in the summer, little bitty jogging shorts. Most of the wereanimals would go around nude if you let them. I wasn't quite comfy with that, so he wore the shorts to save my delicate sensibilities. There were some who thought I didn't have any of those left, but they would be wrong, and they would be jealous.

Holding him, breathing in the warmth and sweet vanilla of his skin, I understood the jealousy. Though frankly, not all of it was about sex or even having found love at last. It was about power and them wanting it, and me and mine having it. It was about me being the human servant of Jean-Claude, the Master Vampire of St. Louis. It was about body count, and me having the highest kill count among the vampire executioners in the good ol' U. S. of A.

"I would give a less favored body part to have a woman greet me at the end of the day like that," Jason's voice said.

I had to peer around Nathaniel's body to see Jason. He was still at the kitchen table nursing a coffee mug. It even smelled like coffee, but he huddled over it, as if it were something harder and more intoxicating.

Jason was two years older than Nathaniel, which made him twenty-three now. Strangely, I'd met them both when they were nineteen. Jason was my height, give or take a half inch or so. His hair was that shade of yellow blond that movie stars are fond of, but his was real, and didn't have to come

from a good salon. His hair was cut businessman short. I liked long hair, but I had to admit that Jason's face looked cleaner, better, more handsome even, without the hair to distract. He was wearing a blue T-shirt that made his eyes even bluer than they were. The color not of spring, but of summer skies, before the heat has gotten too hot, but you know it's not May anymore.

The clothes hid what I knew, that he looked even better out of them. It wasn't for lack of cuteness and desirability that Jason wasn't my sweetie. He was my friend, and I was his.

"What about Perdita, Perdy? You and she are going steady, right?"

He grinned at me. "Going steady, you're so cute."

I frowned at him. "What else do you call it?"

Nathaniel kissed me on the forehead. "You really are cute."

I moved away from him and scowled at them both. "I'm serious, what else do you call it? You aren't just fuck buddies. She isn't a one-night stand. She's a serious girlfriend. If it's not going steady, what do you call it?"

"You make it sound like I gave her my class ring, Anita. Perdy and I were lovers, and she wanted it to be exclusive."

"I thought you were exclusive."

"Except for you, I was."

"Wait, you're talking past tense. Are you saying you and Perdy broke up?"

"She gave him an ultimatum," Nathaniel said. He trailed his hand down my arm as he moved away. "I'll get you coffee."

I went to the table and took the seat that Nathaniel had started in. "What kind of ultimatum?" I asked.

Jason stared into his coffee cup while he answered. "She wanted me to stop having sex with Jean-Claude and Asher, and you."

"Wait, you aren't having sex with Jean-Claude and Asher, unless there's something I don't know."

He smiled at me. “The look on your face, man.” He raised his fingers in the Boy Scout salute. “I am not now, nor have I ever been, having sex with Jean-Claude or Asher.”

Nathaniel set fresh coffee down in front of me and took a chair across the table on the other side of Jason, so we’d both be able to look at him. It also meant we wouldn’t be able to do more than hold hands, which was probably good; we tended to distract each other.

“But she didn’t believe you,” I said.

“Nope, she didn’t.” He took a sip of coffee.

“Why wouldn’t she believe you?” I asked.

“I’m not sure.”

“If my feeding the *ardeur* off you through sex bugged your steady girl, you should have said something.”

“I am Jean-Claude’s *pomme de sang*, his apple of blood. I am his blood donor, and I go where my master tells me to go. The *ardeur* is your version of a blood feed and you’re his human servant. Jean-Claude shares me with Asher, his second-in-command, for blood and you for sex, and it’s his right to share me. I am his. I belong to him. Perdy knows that. She got kicked out of Cape Cod because she wanted to be more than just a blood donor to the master vampire there.”

“Samuel didn’t say anything about that. In fact, his son, Sampson, said that Perdy was here to spy on him for his mother.”

“Yeah, but Sampson went home, and Perdy didn’t.”

Sampson had gone home because St. Louis got invaded by some of the scariest vampires in the world. Jean-Claude had thought it was a bad idea to risk getting the eldest son of his friend and ally killed. Besides, Sampson was a merman, and they aren’t big on offensive abilities, at least not this far inland. Perdy was a mermaid, too. Though I’d never seen either of them turn all fishy. They just looked like people to me.

“Perdy stayed for you,” Nathaniel said.

Jason nodded. “She wanted me to be hers. She’s very jealous, very possessive. I’m just not into that.”

“So you have a woman who greets you like Anita greets me, but the rest doesn’t work.”

“No, Nathaniel. She used to greet me sort of like that, but for weeks now it’s been, *Where have you been? Who have you been with? You fucked the master again, didn’t you? You fucked Asher, didn’t you? You were with Anita again, weren’t you?*”

“I’ve put you on the back burner for feeding me,” I said. “I got the impression Perdy didn’t want to share you that much, but I had no idea she thought you were doing more than just donating blood to the vampires.”

“She’s like crazy jealous, and she won’t believe me when I tell her I haven’t been with anyone else. It’s why I asked Jean-Claude to take me out of your feeding schedule for a while. I thought if I stopped having sex with the only other person I was really having sex with that Perdy would calm down.”

Nathaniel and I exchanged glances across the table. He shrugged. I asked the question. “Did it work?”

“No,” he said. He took another drink of coffee, and it must have finished the cup because he got up and went for the French press beside the sink. He took the coffee cozy off of it, then put it back on without filling his cup. He set the cup in the sink.

“I don’t want more coffee.”

“You can never have too much coffee,” I said.

He turned and smiled at me. “You think so, but the rest of us get a little OD’ed on your level of caffeine.”

“What happened, Jason?” I asked.

The smile slipped a little more. He was solemn when he turned to us. He leaned his back against the cabinets, crossed his arms across his chest, and again didn’t quite meet our eyes.

“She wanted me to marry her. Till death do us part and all that. She’s a mermaid, which means she’ll outlive me. She can live for hundreds of years, not immortal like a vampire, but close.”

“You didn’t want to marry her,” I said, softly.

He shook his head. “She’s obsessed with me. She says she loves me, but it doesn’t feel like love. It feels like smothering.”

“She’s not the right one, then.”

He grinned, and it almost reached his eyes. “Look who’s talking about the right one. You can’t pick just one either.”

“That’s different.”

“Why, because you’re a living vampire who feeds off sex, so you have to have a bevy of lovers? The *ardeur* is like the perfect excuse to never have to say you’re sorry.”

“I’d change it if I could, you know that.”

He came to me then, put his arms around my shoulders, and rested his cheek on the top of my head. “I didn’t mean to make you sad, Anita. God knows I didn’t. Please, don’t tell me you’d change it if you could. You love Nathaniel, and Micah. They love you. You love Jean-Claude and Asher, and they love you. You’re still a little confused about what to do with Damian, but you’ll get there.”

I shook my head and stood up, moving away from him. “Don’t forget Requiem, and London, and sometimes Richard. Oh, wait, and the swan king pops in now and then, no pun intended.” It sounded angry and bitter, and I was glad.

“I didn’t mean to say the wrong thing. I didn’t mean to make you feel bad, or to have another woman mad at me tonight. Please, Anita, please, don’t be mad. I’m upset. You have no idea how upset. Please, please, I’m a bastard, but don’t be mad.”

He held his hand out to me. His face pleaded along with his words. I’d never seen his eyes full of quite this kind of

pain. The look in his eyes was more than just losing a girlfriend he didn't want anymore.

I held out my hand, but made him take the step to close our fingers around each other. His eyes glittered in the overhead lights.

I took his hand, held it. His breath came in a soft gasp, and I thought for a second he was going to cry, but he just looked at me. His eyes that had glistened a moment before were almost dead, as if whatever he was feeling he'd locked away somewhere. In a way, to me, that was worse. I went to him, and he wrapped his arms around me as if he were at the edge of a cliff and I were his only handhold. That quiet holding on was so . . . male. A woman would have cried, or talked more, but for a man, after a certain point this is their pain.

I held him back, tried to tell him it would be all right. I whispered it into his hair, against his cheek. "It's all right, Jason. It's all right."

Nathaniel came up behind him and wrapped his arms around us both. He pressed his cheek against his friend's hair and said, "We're here, Jason. We're here for you."

Jason just held on wordless, motionless, the strength in his arms, shoulders, pressing against me, but it wasn't about sex. I'd never been pressed so close to any man and thought only, *God, what's wrong?* Either he had loved Perdy and now he was regretting letting her go, or the other shoe hadn't dropped. What else could be wrong?

We ended up on the floor of the kitchen, simply sitting in a row with our backs to the kitchen island. He still hadn't said what else was wrong, or that he was desperately in love with Perdy and how could he fix it? I kept waiting for him to share. If he'd been a girl friend I'd have asked by now, but guy friends are different. Sometimes you have to sneak up on them like some sort of wild animal, no wereanimal pun intended; all men are leery of their emotions, spook them and they'll shut down. If you're

careful, quiet, not too eager, sometimes you'll learn more. Of course, sometimes you have to club men over the head with some question to get any sense out of them, but they prefer to speak from a quiet place.

Jason had his head against Nathaniel's shoulder, and a hand on my leg. At least he, like most of the men in my life, was cuddlier than most. I appreciated that.

Jason's voice came flat, empty, as if he were afraid to let his voice feel anything. "My father's dying of cancer. My mom called last night just after Perdy and I broke up."

I exchanged a glance with Nathaniel. His wide eyes let me know that it was news to him, too.

"Jesus, Jason, I'm sorry," I said.

"We hate each other, of course, and now the cold bastard's dying and I won't have time to forgive him before he dies."

"What can we do?" Nathaniel asked, softly.

He smiled, a little weak, a little watered down, but he managed it. I thought it was a good sign. I hoped it was. "You really want to know?"

"Name it," I said.

He smiled again, but his eyes flinched, as if I'd hit him instead of told him I'd do anything he wanted if it would take the pain away.

"Perdy isn't here to tell me *don't*, or to tell you *don't*. I'm a free man again." He tried for a laugh, but it was a sound more like a sob.

"I get it," Nathaniel said.

I frowned at him. "Then explain it to me, because I don't."

"He wants to have sex with you again."

"What?" I said.

"Perdy can't tell him, or you, no anymore. You can be lovers again."

"You mean now, like in right now?"

Nathaniel gave a half-shrug. Jason moved his head off

the other man's shoulder. He dropped his hand away from my leg.

"It's okay, Anita, I've fucked this up. I know this isn't the way to approach you. But my head is so ugly tonight; I just can't seem to think clearly."

He pushed to his feet and started for the doorway.

I opened my mouth to say *don't go, and yes*. I closed it without saying any of it out loud, and looked at Nathaniel. I frowned at him. He was more than just my sweetie. The *ardeur* made me a sort of living vampire who fed off sex, but with the downsides came some interesting upsides. Nathaniel was my animal to call, which meant he was like my familiar. We shared emotions, power, and sometimes thoughts. "You're projecting inside my head, aren't you?"

"You can shut me out if you want," he said.

Jason hesitated just short of the doorway. He frowned at us both. "I'm missing something."

I looked into the face of a man that I loved. "Is this really what you want?"

"He's my friend."

"You know, most guys don't want their girlfriends to sleep with their friends."

"If you'd never slept with Jason, that would be different, but you have. Why is it wrong to sleep with him tonight?"

I opened my mouth to say something reasonable, then closed it, because for the life of me, I couldn't come up with a clearheaded answer. Why was it wrong to sleep with Jason tonight? Because I hadn't planned on it? Because it felt slutty? Were any of those reasons good reasons?

Jason stopped in the doorway, caught between the light of the kitchen and the darkness of the living room beyond. "I've made you feel sorry for me. I'm not sure I want that to be your motivation for taking me to bed."

"Once upon a time, you wouldn't have cared why you got to sleep with me."

“I was a slut, I know.”

“I didn’t mean that, Jason.”

“Stay here tonight,” Nathaniel said.

He half-turned so he could see us, but his face was still mostly in shadow. “Why? Why do you want me to stay?”

I shrugged at Nathaniel, with a this-was-your-idea expression.

“Because you’re our friend. Because we care about you.”

“And you, Anita, what’s your motivation?”

I looked up at him. There was something defiant about the set of his shoulders, as if he expected me to hurt him. I tried very hard not to do that. “It just seems wrong for you to walk out the door right now. Stay, if the sex is an issue, then just stay for a big puppy pile. We can actually just sleep.”

He shook his head. “You never want to make me just sleep, Anita.”

That made me uncomfortable. “I don’t know what to say to that, Jason.”

“Say you want me.”

I started to say something, but Nathaniel touched my hand. “He needs the truth, Anita.”

“And what is the truth?” I asked, taking my hand away from his.

“Tell him how you feel, really feel about him.”

I took a deep breath and thought about the truth; what was the truth? “You are one of the best friends I have, Jason, and you shouldn’t be alone tonight.”

“Jean-Claude would let me sleep with him.”

“But you wouldn’t let him hold you while you feel miserable.”

“How do you know I wouldn’t?”

“Call it a hunch.”

He stood frozen in the doorway as if he couldn’t decide, or as if part of him wanted to and part of him didn’t. I’d made him come to me to hold his hand. Now I went to him.

I wrapped my arms around him. He stayed stiff and unyielding. I pressed my head to his shoulder. "Stay with us tonight, Jason, please."

He whispered against my hair, "Why?"

"Because you want to."

"Not good enough," he whispered.

"Because I can feel how much it would hurt Nathaniel to see you leave tonight, and know that you didn't have anyone to hold you while you slept."

"It's not sleep I want, Anita. I'm afraid to sleep. I'm afraid I'll dream. Last night was . . . bad."

I lifted my face up to look at him. "You found all this out last night?"

He nodded.

"Bad dreams?" I made it a question.

"The worst; something about the news about my dad just raked a lot of shit up."

Nathaniel's need pushed at me, almost staggering in his desire to have Jason stay. I tried to shield against him, but realized that one of the reasons I couldn't shield was that I agreed with him. A large part of me felt Jason should stay. Nathaniel was right; Jason was already on my list of lovers. Why was it wrong for me to admit that it was fun to sleep with Jason? Why was it always wrong for me to admit that I simply wanted to be with someone? Not because I had no choice, but because for once, I did?

He kissed my forehead. "I'll go home."

I hugged him tighter, kept him in the doorway. "It would be lovely if you stayed."

He looked startled. "You sound like you mean that."

I nodded. "I do."

He smiled, and it was a shadow of his usual one. "Somewhere in there did you actually say *please*?"

I smiled at him. "I think I did."

"I've never heard you ask a man to please stay with you."

"I don't usually have to."

“Stay with us tonight,” Nathaniel said.

I nodded. “Stay.”

“The bed will be a little crowded when Micah gets home.”

“He’s out of town,” I said.

“A new wereleopard wanted to join our pard. He’s off interviewing,” Nathaniel said.

Jason nodded. “I like Micah, you know that.”

“But he’s not your best friend like Nathaniel is, and he’s not a girl,” I said.

Jason nodded again. “Tonight, I don’t really want an audience.”

“Damian is even sleeping over with his latest vampire lover,” Nathaniel said. “We have the house to ourselves.”

Some tension I hadn’t been aware of slid away from Jason. “I love everybody, but sometimes the group thing gets a little old. It was one of the things I liked about Perdy, at first.”

“You don’t want a group orgy every night, but you don’t want to be monogamous either,” Nathaniel said.

Jason nodded. “I am so fucked.”

“Not yet,” I said, hugging him, “but we can fix that.”

He grinned at me, and it reached his eyes. “Bedroom, bathroom, living room, or kitchen?”

“The kitchen floor is hard and the tile is cold. Why not just go to the nice soft bed?” I asked.

Jason looked at Nathaniel.

Nathaniel answered the question. “Jason has made love in a bed and only a bed since he started being with Perdy.”

I frowned, then looked at Jason, still in a loose hug with me. “I understand no shower or bath sex. Mermaids have trouble retaining human form in water, but nothing but the bed?”

He shook his head.

“Standard positions, too?” I made it a question.

He nodded.

My eyes widened. "Oh, Jason, I'm sorry, I didn't know." I hugged him tighter.

He moved back so he could see my face. "With all the bad news I've had today, and you look that stricken that my girlfriend would only do standard bed sex?"

I tried to put into words what I was thinking, not always my best thing. "You love sex. You're good at it."

"Why, gee, thanks." He grinned.

I gave him a look, but kept talking. I was going to finish this thought, damn it. "Sex is one of the most personal things we do as people. To have someone who says she loves you limit how you express yourself in the bedroom is like a small death. It kills the soul."

The grin left his face, then his eyes. He stared at me, and there Jason was, that part of him that he hid from most people. Heck, that he hid most of the time. He let me see that there was a good mind and a deep thinker inside those usually smiling blue eyes. It made him look sad, and older, but I valued that look. I valued that he let me see him all the way down.

"How did you get to be so smart?" he said, softly.

"I have smart friends who give me good advice sometimes." I smiled. "Sometimes I even take it."

He smiled back and ran his hands down my back. "So, you'd really let me pick where we make love?"

I nodded.

"Just because I haven't had a choice in a while."

"Yes."

"What if I want something too freaky?"

"Then I'll say no, and you can back it down a little."

His eyes had that solemn look again. He searched my face. "You mean it."

I put my hands on either side of his face and nodded. "I try not to say things I don't mean, Jason." I put a soft kiss at the end of the sentence.

He moved his hand lower on my back to press us closer

together. Close enough that I could feel that his body was already happier than when we hugged last.

He closed his eyes and took a breath. He looked at Nathaniel. "Do you have a preference?"

"You're the guest."

Jason lifted me off the floor with a hug. We were both short enough that I was in no danger of hitting the door-jamb. "I love you guys; you make me feel less weird about myself."

"Why, because we're weirder?" I asked.

"No," he said, laughing up at me, "because your relationship works. It just flat works for you guys. You make me feel that out there somewhere is someone weird enough to make me happy."

"I'd rather not do the bathroom," Nathaniel said, "it takes forever to dry my hair."

Jason let me down, so I was standing on the floor again. "I'm leaning toward the living room."

"There are chairs, and the couch has a back and arms," Nathaniel said.

"How sturdy is the coffee table?"

"Not that sturdy," Nathaniel said.

I'd caught on. "No, not sturdy enough to have sex on."

"Start in the living room, move to the bedroom?" Jason said, making it a question.

I looked at Nathaniel. He nodded, and gave a little shrug.

"Deal," I said.

2

THEY HAD A disagreement on whether I should leave my heels on or take them off. Nathaniel voted for on; Jason wanted off. Jason's point was, "I want to go down on her, and the heels will hurt."

Nathaniel's point was, "Yeah, the heels hurt, what's your point?"

I settled the argument this way. "Whoever is doing the oral sex on me gets his preference on the shoes."

"Lose the shoes," Jason said, and there was a look in his face that tightened things low in my body without him touching me at all.

I lost the shoes. They lay on their side in the dimness of the living room. The only light was what spilled in from the kitchen doorway. I stood in front of the couch, while they moved the coffee table far to one side of the room.

Jason came back and dropped to his knees in front of me. He gazed up at me with one half of his face lit, the other in darkness. The look in the one eye I could clearly see made me shiver.

Nathaniel came to the end of the couch and took his shorts off in one smooth motion. My pulse was in my

throat at the sight of him nude in the darkened room. He let the shorts fall to the floor.

Jason's hands slid up my legs, underneath my skirt, and I was back to staring down at him. His hands caressed the hose up to my thighs, went up, oh, so gently, until he found the lace tops of the thigh highs. He traced the very top of the lace, trailing fingertips over the rise and fall of the fabric. He rolled fingers back and forth where the hose elastic had rolled down in back. No matter how careful you were, if you had any thighs at all, the hose always did that. But he treated it like what it was, not an imperfection, but something different to play with.

His fingers slid around that edge, brushing the very upper edges of my thighs. He rubbed his thumbs on that warm inside hollow that frames a woman's groin. He massaged my thighs, but it was the pressure of his thumbs that helped draw my legs farther apart. So he could reach what he wanted, and what I wanted him to reach.

Nathaniel came in behind me. Without the coffee table there was room enough between me and the couch. His arms wrapped around me, pinning my arms against my upper body. The feel of his nakedness pressed against the back of my skirt was amazing. Then he let me feel the strength in his body, as he held me, held me so tight. It sped my pulse faster, caught my breath in my throat.

"So strong," I whispered.

"So trapped," he breathed against my face. He squeezed harder, just this side of bruising my arms against me. But I didn't tell him to stop. I loved knowing that I was trapped. If he had meant me harm, I couldn't have stopped him. My gun was trapped under my arm, digging into my body. All it would take was Jason to grab my legs and I was trapped.

I hadn't much liked that I enjoyed things like this. In fact, I'd hated it. But lately, thanks in part to sharing emotions with Nathaniel, who loved bondage and submission, I was acknowledging that fantasy was okay. That I didn't

need to analyze why in real life being trapped made me fight like hell and do all in my power to destroy the ones trapping me, but in sexual fantasy I liked being trapped, a little. In a safe place, with people I trusted, it was more than just exciting.

“What are you doing up there to make her react like that?” Jason asked. His hands had gone still against my thighs.

“Holding her, very, very, tightly,” Nathaniel said in a voice that showed the strain of holding me tight.

Jason’s fingers suddenly dug into my flesh, from gentle to bruising in an instant.

I whispered, “Yes.”

“Is that the game we want to play?” he asked, and his voice had changed, too, deeper, darker, for lack of a better word.

“I do,” Nathaniel said.

Jason’s fingers pressed harder into my thighs, so that I cried out, and told him, “Enough, enough.”

“That’s her safe word,” Nathaniel said.

“I’ve already stopped,” Jason said.

“But I haven’t stopped, have I?” Nathaniel whispered.

“No,” I said, voice breathy. He was holding tight enough to be trapped, but not quite tight enough to hurt. It was a fine edge to walk, but Nathaniel knew how to walk it.

“Do I rip the panties off, or take them off?” Jason asked.

“Rip,” Nathaniel said, and it was almost a growl.

I said, “Please.”

“Please what?” Jason asked.

“Off,” I whispered.

He ripped the satin panties in one harsh move that jerked my body. Nathaniel tightened his grip on me, until it was hard to breathe.

I whispered, “Ease up.”

He eased until he was back where he’d been. Tight, but not too tight. Trapped, but not hurt. Of all forms of sex that

I'd found, BDSM took the most trust, the most communication.

Jason pushed my skirt up until he bared me to the light from the kitchen. "How rough can I be?" There was no sex in the tone of his voice; he was truly asking.

"Start easy," Nathaniel said, "she'll let you know."

I realized that Jason had never given me oral sex before. I'd gone down on him, but he'd never had a chance to return the favor. He used his hands to spread my thighs wider. He let me feel the strength in his hands, but not as hard as he'd been when I told him to ease up. The sensation of being bound by the sheer strength of him was amazing. There was no need of ropes or chains when you could feel how terribly strong they both were.

Jason's hands were harsh, but he leaned in toward me as if he were going to give the gentlest of kisses. The juxtaposition of the harsh and the gentle left my mind not knowing how to react. Then his tongue slid across me, and there was no conflict, there was only sensation.

He dug his fingers into that space inside my thighs, so harsh, I cried out. He forced my legs farther apart. Nathaniel lifted me. I could feel his shoulders and chest flex until I was suddenly off the ground. It allowed Jason to spread my legs more, use the strength of his fingers to force me wider.

Jason plunged his tongue inside me, sudden and abrupt. I cried out for him, and he leaned back enough to gaze up the line of my body.

It was as if I could feel the weight of his gaze, because it made me look down at the same time he looked up.

"God," he said, "that look."

"What look?" I managed to say before Nathaniel squeezed harder and I had no breath to talk.

"That look," Jason whispered, and lowered his mouth to my body. He kissed there as he had kissed my mouth, maybe a dozen times before. Most men don't kiss between

your legs the same way they kiss your mouth, but Jason did. He kissed me just as thoroughly, as completely, as expertly. Then he began to do things that you couldn't do when you kiss a mouth. He licked and explored, trying different things, judging his progress by the sounds I made, and how much I writhed.

He didn't just find the spot and stay on it like it was a button; he explored every inch of me, biting the inside of my thighs between attentions.

Nathaniel held me through it all, sometimes so tight I couldn't breathe, sometimes just tight enough to let me feel his strength, and then he squeezed hard enough that my gun cut into me, and it felt as if he were trying to crush me. I cried out while I had breath, then all I could do was writhe.

Jason drew back enough to ask, "Am I doing that, or you?"

"Me," Nathaniel said, and eased up so my breath came in a ragged gasp.

I managed to say, "So strong."

"I need to try harder," Jason said. He pulled down my hose and bit me, not a love bite, but bit me on the thigh.

I screamed for him.

He plunged his mouth between my legs, rougher this time. I writhed and cried out. He pressed teeth into the most intimate part of me. When I didn't tell him to stop, he worried at me with his mouth, his teeth, pulling and biting and licking. The pleasure began to build between my legs, like heat and pressure and the beginning flickers of orgasm like previews of the pleasure to come.

Nathaniel tightened his grip just as Jason pushed me over that last edge. The orgasm was one of those that came in waves, one after another as if as long as he kept sucking I would keep going. I shuddered and danced in their hands, cried out when Nathaniel let me, or gasped in breathless silence when he held me too tight for words.

Jason finished with a lick from front to back that made me cry out all over again. Still on his knees he said, "That was fun."

Nathaniel braced, changing positions just a little. "Fuck her."

Jason, still on his knees, said, "While you hold her?"

"Yes," Nathaniel said, and it held an edge of bass growl that wasn't his normal voice.

Jason looked at me, the light from the kitchen glistening on his chin and mouth. Seeing him wet from me tightened things low in my body that had just had their fun, so it started a new wave of writhing.

Jason held my thighs while Nathaniel held the rest of me. When my body quieted, Jason laughed, that sound that is all male. "Anita, are you okay with this?"

"Do it," I said, "please, please . . ."

"No," Nathaniel said, "I'm topping her tonight, it's my permission you need."

Jason hesitated as if waiting for me to protest. There was a time when I would have, but I'd been working at understanding Nathaniel's idea of sex. I'd found that some of the bondage and submission worked just dandy for me.

Jason said, "You top us both?"

"We top Anita."

Jason smiled, but his eyes held something more serious than a smile. "I always thought it would take at least two of us. Tell me what you want me to do."

Nathaniel said, "Get a condom."