



Angry Lion's Naughty Little Neighbor (Company 417 Shifters #60)

Author: Amelia Wilson

Category: Fantasy

Description: Who the hell does my jerk next door neighbor think he is, always bugging me about noise and about my parties. I'm allowed to find some happiness in this life, and I'm allowed to deal with things the way I want to! I don't need some really hot fireman to tell me what to do! Wait... did I just call him really hot?

KELSEY

"This man has the body of some sort of a... Well, what's the word for a body that's perfect, a body that's so damned arousing that I can't think clearly when he's around. Of course, I can yell and shout and throw tantrums... But now I can't do any of that. Now this hot man has done something I can't just ignore!"

Aaron saved my life.

He's the handsomest man I've ever seen.

And he's experienced.

He's strong and mature.

He doesn't put up with any of my crap.

But I got myself into trouble, exactly the kind of thing he warns me about, and he saved me!

And suddenly I don't want to be a party girl.

I don't want to be out of control anymore.

I just want Aaron

Aaron Makepeace isn't happy with Kelsey, his party girl neighbor. He lives a carefully organized and arranged nice and quiet life, and a girl throwing crazy parties next door isn't his idea of organized, quiet, or arranged. Kelsey isn't interested in slowing down, though. She's young and excited about life!

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Chapter One

Kelsey

Wait... wait. What's... what's happening? That question makes it through my muddled mind pretty clearly but the problem is that the answer takes too long.

Tommy is still talking to me and so is that other guy.

I don't know his name, so it makes no sense at all that he's got his hand under my shirt. Over my bra but still under my shirt.

Tommy is unzipping... Wait, what? He's unzipping his pants and...

and how am I naked from the top up now? Holy crap, I drank so much.

Damn it, I really don't want to sleep with Tommy.

I mean, I've slept with him before, too many times, but I don't want to sleep with him right now and I don't even know the other guy.

Holy crap, he's unzipping, too.

Wait... Wait...

"I don't... I think... I don't..." Damn, my voice sounds so far away. Why do I always fucking do this? Why do I drink or smoke or swallow pills or... Why do I do

all that until I can't function? Holy crap, I'm going to sleep with two guys tonight and I don't want to sleep with either of them. "I... I don't..."

"Shhhh, Kel. Relax." I think that's Tommy's voice but I'm not sure.

"Okay but I don't want..." That's as far as I get. I think I'm about to fall asleep now.

I hear the other guy, I know it's not Tommy's voice. "Was that a no, man?"

Tommy says, "No way. Kelsey doesn't even know that word. She just doesn't want us to think bad about her tomorrow or tell people anything about it."

No! No! You ever do that thing when you scream in your mind? You say your response as loud as you can but just in your mind. You ever do that? Well, I'm shouting to let them know that I know the word and I don't want to sleep with them but, of course, I'm completely silent.

Yeah.

This is my life.

Look, I really want to tell you that I wasn't always the kind of girl who ends up screwing two guys at once in a drug and/or alcohol induced haze.

I want to tell you that this is just a one-time thing but I can't tell you that.

For a couple of reasons. I mean, first of all, I don't even know how many times this has happened.

I've been blacked out for way too many parties.

And as for screwing guys...

Yeah, I don't want to talk about that right now but this circumstance, except for two guys being involved, isn't rare.

Also, it doesn't take a whole lot for me to sleep with a guy when I'm cognizant of everything.

See, I've been partying since I was in eighth grade.

I've been partying ever since my dad died.

My mom died when I was little, and my older sister did her best with me but what the hell is a nineteen-year-old girl gonna do suddenly stuck with a fourteen-year-old girl.

Dad died and when he did, I went into his den and drank his bottle of whiskey.

It was a very special bottle. Cost fifteen hundred dollars or something.

The deal was when I graduated high school, he was going to drink a glass with me.

He'd already done the same thing with Danni, my sister.

That bottle was tequila and similarly expensive.

Yeah, I finished that bottle off later that week.

You would have thought that still having half the tequila bottle after a year would have told me that Dad didn't keep booze in his den in order to get drunk.

Well, I wasn't in a position to really hear anything at all.

I drank the whiskey as a sort of emotional thing trying to feel close to my dad.

That month, I drank all the booze in his den, and I don't know when it stopped being trying to feel close to him and when it started being not wanting to feel.

Anyway, that was seven and a half years ago.

You can probably tell from the cost of the alcohol, but my dad was very wealthy.

I got the trust fund when I turned twenty-one and bought this house for myself.

I'm lucky because I got a lump sum payment that allowed me to get the house and a car but the rest comes in a monthly stipend so I can't actually waste all of my money.

Well, my sister still lives in the place where I grew up.

I guess if I had to work like a normal girl, I would never put myself in this sort of a situation.

"I don't want to..." I can't finish.

"Shhhh," Tommy says.

"Put your dick back in your pants, boy. You've got five minutes to get everyone the hell out of this house. Five minutes."

This new voice shocks me into semi-consciousness for a bit and I try to focus on the guy talking, but my eyes are having trouble focusing now and he's moving anyway. I see him walk toward the guy whose name I don't know and the guy yelps and takes off.

Tommy steps back and tries to act brave. “Listen, man, I don’t know who the hell you think you are, but we’re all consenting adults here, and you are at a private party.”

I fade out there for a minute and then, I hear Tommy start to freak out. “Jesus! Jesus! Okay, man, okay!”

He takes off and starts yelling at everyone to get the hell out. I hear a lot of grumbling and complaining, and some things crashing around and breaking sounds, then it starts to get a bit quieter and I drift off again.

When I come back around again, I’m being picked up by this new guy. He turns and heads through the living room with me in his arms.

I see that there are some stragglers. I’m still trying to keep things steady and not have them fade in and out. The stubborn partygoers try to stand their ground with my new, uh, protector? I guess that works. They try to stand their ground but he’s having none of it.

“Get your scrawny little asses out of here now.”

“What the fuck are you going to do about it, asshole?”

I hear the vague challenge and kind of smile at it, like I’m watching a movie moment inside my head. It just hits me as funny.

But my rescuer absolutely does not. “I will split you in half, little man.”

He says that with a voice that’s all quiet and deep, and even out of it as I am, I can hear the confidence in his voice. This man really knows that he can take care of this guy without breaking a sweat.

My party guest, another guy I don't even know, hears it too and takes off.

I fade out again.

I come to as we are walking up the stairs to the landing for the second story. I feel a bit more stable, for a brief moment, long enough anyway to realize that I'm basically naked in this guy's arms. I only have my panties on.

Now, I remember that Tommy and his friend had been undressing me and, well, I didn't have the ability to really stop them. I wasn't even that aware of what they were doing until I heard Tommy unzip his fucking pants.

I feel a wave of humiliation and then, I feel sad.

This guy isn't my rescuer, he's just someone who wanted the little drunk all to himself.

I want to struggle and fight and make him put me down, but I have zero coordination right now.

I don't even know this guy. I try to focus on his face and my vision swims.

God, how horrible to be like this. A wave of anger at myself and the whole mess that was currently my life.

Why was I so fucking stupid? He finds my room and walks in.

I try to resign myself to the coming nightmare.

Actually, as unwanted sex goes, this guy won't be as bad as some I've slept with.

That voice of his threatening to split a guy in half was sexy.

But it's so terrible to realize I don't have a protector at all, and I hate that I've found another terrible way for me to be humiliated.

Then, I'm dropped down onto my bed. The covers are pulled back and then, arranged gently over me. I almost cry as he turns out the light and leaves me to my dreams.

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Chapter Two

Aaron

I'm a shifter. I'm a lion shifter. More specifically, I'm a lion shifter, and I have a role of authority in my pride, which is a lot like being a remote field officer for a regimented army.

We're not an army. We're not in any way preparing for battle or anything but the fact remains that the number one thing a person might say about a lion shifter is that they enjoy life most when there as very clear, very structured roles and rules.

Shifters tend to say that we're the middle management of the shifter world.

They're wrong about that. We have a structured society, and the society is regimented and organized.

We're not an army but when the lion shifters go to war, we're ready immediately.

That's what happens when you run your society in a way that makes sense.

Things are predictable. Things are manageable.

Things are as close to perfection as things can be.

We like things to be as close to perfection as they can be.

Who wouldn't?

There's one thing we don't handle well, damn it. We don't do a very good job of figuring out how the hell we're supposed to deal with a girl loudly destroying her life in the house next door. We don't...

Okay, screw the we thing. I don't know how to deal with it.

It's a damned good thing her music was particularly loud tonight, which is what got me over there and put me in a position to protect her.

Part of me thinks I should have brought her to my place instead of leaving her in an empty house but I locked all the doors, closed the three open windows, and glanced out the window of my place toward her place occasionally.

And I go back to work tomorrow. My concern is that the girl is going to get herself right back into trouble and I won't be around to keep her fake friends from taking advantage of her. I don't think she even knows what happened last night.

Damn it, I hate caring about that. I went over to her house yesterday just to deal with the girl.

She's thrown loud parties pretty much every damned weekend since she bought the house a few months ago.

Damn it all, I went from having nice, quiet neighbors to having nothing but irritation. It's insane, damn it. It's just insane.

And now I'm worried about this girl.

Now keeping her safe is something I'm thinking about?

Damn it all, I don't need the irritation of this girl in my life.

I certainly don't need the frustration of taking ownership of the girl's safety, damn it.

Well, I can protest all I'd like. It won't make a damned bit of difference.

I've dubbed myself the girl's protector somehow so now I get to be doubly irritated by her at all times.

But the good news is that uncertainty is the greatest torture a lion shifter can experience.

We're a special breed of human and a special breed of cat.

We like everything in its place and figured out.

Just accepting that I'm now stuck as the girl's protector takes away enough uncertainty that I can relax.

Sure, I'm not happy about the position I'm in but there's less uncertainty.

Like it or not, we shifters have a crazy sense of honor and...

Well, to put it bluntly, we're rescuers.

The men, anyway. That's not just a flippant observation.

Those who choose to work in the world of humans almost all work fire, police, and military jobs.

Damn it, now I'm stuck dealing with Kelsey just because she needs rescuing.

The bright side, though, is that I'm calm enough to sleep.

I stick to my schedule even with last night's interruption.

My alarm goes off at six and I wake up and go grab my first cup of coffee.

As I take my first sips, I stare through the window at Kelsey's house.

It doesn't look like anyone is up yet, but I hardly expected her to be.

With all that alcohol in her system, she could probably sleep for four days.

Okay, maybe I'm being a bit harsh, but that girl lives her life like she's the cat and not me. It's like she thinks she has nine lives. Even when I was young and in college, I didn't get that wild. It's like she's trying to hurt herself.

Whoa.

And there's that rescuer complex again.

Well, I can't fight it. I decide to go check on her once I've taken a shower and gone through my morning routine. Yes, I have a morning routine and, honestly, that girl could benefit from getting some order into her life. Everyone can benefit from order.

Anyway, about an hour and a half later, I walk over to her place and knock on the door. There's dead silence, so I knock again.

I knock a third time and I'm just about ready to check for a way in when the door creaks open and Kelsey is standing there, blinking in the early morning sunlight.

I'm happy to report that she's wearing a bath robe, a huge improvement on the

Emperess's new clothes look she was sporting last night when I found her.

“What do you need?”

She says it in kind of a surly tone, and I must admit that it makes me a bit angry.

“Well, I just wanted to see how you were doing.”

“What do you mean? Am I bothering you in some way?”

“No, I ...”

“Because I was asleep just nine seconds ago, so I wasn't doing anything to you.”

“I didn't say that you ...”

“Well, I'm just preempting your little speech about my degenerate lifestyle and how it ruins your quiet evenings.”

My blood starts boiling, and I fight to keep it a low simmer. “You know, Kelsey, it might do you some good to drop the hip chick act and just grow up a little. I wasn't trying to come over here and ...”

“I don't give a fuck why you came over here. You bug me every damned day about something, so today shouldn't be any different, right? Look, I had a pretty rough night, which ought to make you happy, and I'd like to rest today without having my neighbor breathing down my throat about ...”

I look at her and I want to just shake her. Who the hell does she think she is, treating me this way when I saved her damn life last night?

“I should've thrown you in the pool instead of putting you to bed.”

She stops talking and just stares at me. I see some thought being chased down but her head is too muddled at the moment to chase it down. And that is the final nail in the neighborly coffin.

I turn and walk off her porch, leaving her staring after me. I head back to my house and don't bother to look back to see if she's still standing on her porch like some Disney animatronic. I don't look because I'm afraid that some part of me wants to see her still standing there.

Damn! Why do I have to rescue every stray?

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Chapter Three

Kelsey

I stare after him, trying to wrap my head around the man.

He wasn't even that bad of an asshole this time.

I expected a much more explosive battle.

Of course, if I'm going to be fair, I only think he's an asshole in the first place because he represents authority for me.

I think about that as I make my way to the shower.

When I get there, I think it's confirmed.

He's an authority so I act like he's a jerk.

I mean pretty much anyway. He's the one coming to my place and asking me to keep the music down.

He's the one telling me I'm being irresponsible.

He's the one who makes me think about my mistakes.

He's a constant reminder of how fucked up my life is.

So, it makes sense that I resent him, right?

Who wants someone to be the mirror that shows all the ugliness?

Wow.

Wow again.

Yesterday really screwed me up, I guess.

What's that called... Hang on... Damn it all, my brain is so muddled.

Not like last night but still muddled. And it must have screwed me up because my anger toward Aaron is pretty much gone.

See, instead of thinking of him as a jerk who's always screwing with me and being an asshole, I'm thinking of him as a man stuck putting up with me.

Yeah, wow.

Wow again. Again, I guess.

But yesterday evening did scare me. Look, I've been out of control for a long time.

I think last night was the first time I felt like I wasn't in control.

I wasn't there thinking fuck everyone I'll do whatever the hell I want .

I was thinking I can't possibly stop whatever is going to happen from happening .

I wouldn't have told the boys to stop. When they kissed me, I would've kissed them

back.

Look, I'm not saying those two are saints but they were just as drunk as I was, and I have a well-deserved reputation for being good to go at any time.

I mean, I'm terribly promiscuous and easy.

When a girl is like me and somehow can't get around to the word no , lots of things are going to happen she'll regret.

Even if there's a measure of complicity shared by others, it's all on her shoulders.

Not her. Me.

If I had sex with both those boys last night, I would have been ninety percent to blame.

Me. The boys, just as drunk, had a little bit of blame but it was mostly me.

That's what I'm trying to say here. And that's why yesterday scared me so much.

If that man with the powerful voice hadn't come along and stopped the party, this morning I'd be thinking about how hopeless and terrible my life really is.

I'd be thinking about how I got myself so screwed up that those two boys fucked me without any protest from me.

And how twenty boys could have done it. I was that unable to function. Hell, maybe others would have shown up if not for that man. He showed up right in the nick of time, and...

How...

Wait a minute! What did Aaron say when he left?

I turn the water off and stand there for a minute or so.

He said... Holy crap. Aaron is the man with the voice.

Aaron is the man who kept me safe and then carried me up to my bedroom.

Aaron is the man I thought would take from me what he kept the boys from getting.

And instead, he put me in bed and left. The man saw me naked and drunk. The man knew he could do whatever he wanted to do to me and instead of doing it, he protected me. As a reward. I treated him like shit when he came to check on me!

I hurry out of the shower and put on my robe. I already feel breathless, though I haven't done anything to make me feel that way. It's just that, in an instant, my life and Aaron's actions on behalf of my life are in crystal clear focus.

And I need to make things right.

I hurry to my closet and shuffle through an overflowing shoe rack to find a pair of old flip flops. I shove them on and run out.

It takes me about three minutes to get from my bedroom to his porch.

In those three minutes, everything replays in my head several times, but now I see Aaron's face where the stranger's face was.

I see him dismissing Tommy and his buddy.

I see him staring down at me as he picks me up from the couch.

I see him scanning the room and chasing people out of my house. Then, I see him looking at me with concern as he walks me to my room and gently puts me to bed.

I also see a wildly out of control girl throwing her life away because she doesn't have any real idea of how to connect to other people. I see a girl that looked at her mature next-door neighbor as just an annoyance.

My whole life, I've pushed the best kind of people away and kept the worst close to me. Some part of me knew I was not making good choices, but I felt my freedom rested in the idea that everything I did was just a big fuck you to anyone in my life that might have wanted me to do better.

All of this happens in a flash, in just the time it takes to go from my house to his.

I can feel tears welling up even as I knock on his door.

It opens after a bit and Aaron sees me, still in a robe, and sighs.

I don't even register it. I just blurt out, "You showed up and put me to bed last night!"

He shakes his head and looks past me. "I'll leave you alone from now on, okay? It's a promise."

He makes a motion as if to shut his door, and I, without thinking, jump forward and wrap my arms around his neck.

I start sobbing. Something inside of me has broken, and I'm just thankful that Aaron is giving even this much time to me.

“I’m sorry! So sorry, Aaron! I don’t know what I’m doing. My life is just the world’s biggest shit show and I just keep making worse and worse.”

“Everyone has problems, Kelsey.”

“I’m my own problem, but I don’t know how to stop, Aaron. I just don’t!”

I trail off into blubbering and incoherency.

I stand there like that for about five minutes or five hours or five seconds or whatever.

I stand there crying and blubbering without any reaction from him.

I feel completely desolate and drained. Then, he brings his arm up and pulls me closer.

He strokes my hair with his other hand. “It’s okay, shhhhhh. ..”

I’m just getting worse. Aaron will just think that his neighbor is a complete nut and deserves to be sent to an institution.

But instead, he turns me around, walks me into his house and closes the door behind us.

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Chapter Four

Aaron

She's reached the breaking point.

No. She's past it. I suppose the only thing I can do is hope that this isn't just temporary, that she really wants to turn her life around. No, it's not the only thing I can do. The other thing I can most definitely do is stop thinking about how nice her body feels pressed against mine.

I can stop noticing how her robe isn't really designed to cover her up when her body is twisted a bit because she's turned in order to hold me while she weeps.

She's half sitting and half kneeling next to me on the couch and I've caught flashes of her breasts and glances of her ass.

Her body is perfect. I absolutely ought to stop thinking about that, too.

Yeah, I know I saw her body yesterday. But right now, she's so vulnerable and clinging to me—don't get me wrong.

She was vulnerable yesterday. In some ways, she was far more vulnerable yesterday than she is right now.

Yesterday, I could have slept with her and she might not even remember it or, at least, wouldn't remember it was me.

Yesterday she was vulnerable in a terrifying way.

Today, though, she's vulnerable emotionally and seeking a protector and a rescuer.

Today, she's here as exactly what I find desperately attractive.

She's all of that but in an emotional state that would make seduction so easy!

Damn it all, I hate those thoughts even coming to my mind but as long as I have a penis, I don't think there's any way for me to keep thoughts like that at bay.

At least there's not any way for me to completely vanquish them.

Vanquish. Yeah, look at the brave lion shifter who thinks not being a total asshole prick and sleeping with a girl who will regret it makes him a vanquishing hero.

That's a great thought for me to have even though it stings.

It's a great thought because it kind of snaps me out of concentrating on the girl's body.

That's a little bit of a miraculous thing, actually. After all, I'm only (mostly) human.

With my mind a little bit better on track, I can simply hold her without anything else.

I let her cry and keep talking about how she's screwing up and then finally, she's silent against me.

I just stroke her hair and her back. I have a feeling she might be falling asleep.

She needs the sleep, too. She needs to get through the emotional turmoil a little so

that she can approach her life now with a goal to turning the things she feels right now into decisions and then making the decisions stick.

Yeah.

Here I go.

Mr. Rescuer.

And then she makes my life a whole hell of a lot harder.

At least my sense that I'm a good guy, anyway.

She pulls back, looks at me without speaking for what feels like forever but is probably only five or ten seconds, and then straddles my lap and kisses me passionately.

This isn't a gentle, careful, tentative kiss.

This is a kiss that says she's ready to give herself to me completely.

Right now.

Right here.

And she's naked under her robe. I know exactly how she looks and it's perfect.

She's perfect.

I can't tell you how I manage to gently push her back. The hurt in her face is almost enough to stop me but I say, "I can't tell you how much I want what you're offering

me, Kelsey. If you meant what you said about changing your life, though, it's not a good thing for us to do right now."

"But you want it?" Then her eyes open wide. I realize she feels my erection pressing against my pants and then pressing against her. "You do!" she says and kisses me again.

And I feel myself responding. It's a brief second or two, but I hate that I give in even that tiny bit. I start to move my hands up to hold her to me, and then, I switch my goal. I manage to claw back some semblance of dignity and control and take hold of her waist.

I lift her up and set her on the couch next to me. Then, I hold my hands up, anticipating her next advance. She's almost shaking. "What's wrong?"

Oh, too damn much. Almost everything is wrong about this.

I want to say that but, to her I say, "This is not going to happen right now."

She puts out a hand to reach for me, but I grab it in my own and pull her arm down as gently as I can. I'm very aware that she probably reads everything as some kind of sexual game, so I disengage my hand immediately.

"Look, I'll make a deal with you, Kelsey."

She smiles and leans in. "Okay."

"I am going to give you some assignments while I'm away at the fire house on my next four-day shift..."

"That's amazing. You're a fireman. Of course you are, noble and ..."

I block her trying to lean in again and keep talking. “These assignments are going to be things to help start you on a new path. Kelsey, this is your chance to really change things, and I need to see that you are sincere when you say that’s what you want.”

She shrugs. “Okay.”

“Kelsey, I’m not playing here. You come over here and cry in my arms about how terrible your life is and that you really want to change things and then you just push me to sleep with you. That is not a step in the right direction.”

“Oh, I don’t know, I think it’s the step I want to take right now.” She bites her lower lip and lets part of her robe slip down her shoulder.

I pull it back up. “Kelsey, that’s enough. You are either going to listen to me and decide to agree to what I’m going to ask of you, or you’re going to stand up and walk out of my door right now. What do you want to do? Change things or just fall back into the same shit over and over?”

She looks briefly like she’s going to cry and then, a small angry spark flares in her eyes. “I’m listening.”

I nod and continue, “If you complete these assignments and decide, after finishing them, that you still want me that badly, I won’t resist.”

I feel strange putting this as a deal, my attentions for this girl straightening out her life, but it seems the only motivation she has right now.

“You’re a fireman, like in all of those calendars.”

“No, I’m a fireman like in all of those fires being put out. Now, do you understand what I’m telling you?”

She stares at me for a moment and I wonder if I've managed to get to her at all. But then, she smiles and says, "Okay, deal...but just one last kiss until you're back."

She darts forward and kisses me again.

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Chapter Five

Kelsey

I don't know how in the world this happened.

Wait. I mean, sure I know. I spent years out of control and then got scared when I was kind of forcefully exposed to the potential and actual consequences of being out of control.

I was rescued by a man who had about a million reasons not to bother with me but did.

Then, the man didn't take advantage of me when he could have.

Then, he didn't take advantage of me when I begged him to!

And my house is completely clean. It's the first time it's been completely clean.

The damaged carpets are replaced and the damaged tile is replaced, too.

Everything the partying broke is fixed or replaced.

All of my broken furniture is thrown out and there's something new there instead.

My yard is fixed now, too, and that includes putting up a picket fence.

See, I can use my trust fund for home improvement regardless of my monthly allotment so I just got it all done.

And I got a desk.

And a computer.

And a catalogue for the junior college about four miles away from here.

And an honest to goodness notebook with my goals, desires, wants, and dreams on it!

I have to tell you; I spend the first few hours working on that list in tears. When I thought about all the things I'd just let slip away it hit me hard enough that I couldn't function. Eventually, though, I cried myself out and got to work.

I think this may be the first time in my life I ever got to work on anything!

And I spent my trust fund money for the first time thinking about how my parents worked hard to provide this for me and how I had a father who was careful to plan for unforeseen circumstances so his children wouldn't be helpless and lost. I think that was the first time I thought about my father without just feeling anger or self-pity.

And now, I'm just... I don't know how to explain it.

Well, I can tell you part of it. I spend some money on myself (from my monthly allowance) and my hair is done. That's not all. I got every beauty treatment imaginable. My skin is glowing. My nails are gorgeous. I got a wax so my hair down there is a perfectly manicured tiny little triangle.

I'm wearing stockings and a garter belt. The lady at the store was from England and she called them suspenders and not garters. I don't know why I told you that except

that I'm nervous waiting for Aaron to arrive.

Nervous for all the right reasons for the first time in my life.

I can't even begin to tell you how much I wanted to wait for him in the lingerie.

Just the stockings and the garter belt, you know.

No bra and no panties but just that. Well, I'm wearing jeans and a tee shirt because when Aaron gets here, I need him to see that I'm serious about making changes in my life and not just a silly girl who spreads her legs instead of thinking.

I mean, don't get me wrong. I'll be spreading my legs tonight.

I can promise you that. You know why I can promise you?

Because he gave me his word if I still wanted it when his four days were over he'd do it.

He promised and I know he won't even dream about breaking a promise.

Anyway, instead of meeting him without any clothes on, I cooked dinner and told him to come over as soon as he could.

And here I am freaking nervous!

How am I this nervous? I mean, I've been with so many guys and nothing ever made me so afraid as the thought of Aaron being disappointed in me.

And that realization shocks me. It really does.

Unlike any of the guys I've been with over these last few years, I care about what Aaron thinks.

I want to impress him, and in all the right ways.

My thoughts and fears are interrupted by a knock on the door. My heart starts pounding pretty hard and I look over everything one last time before I hurry over to answer the door. When I open it, I instantly feel my nervousness increase tenfold. "Come on in, Aaron."

I can tell by the look on his face that he's impressed with what he's seeing as we step into the dining room. He looks over the set table and then, he takes a longer look around. "Wow, this is amazing, Kelsey. Everything looks beautiful."

I actually blush when he says that. "Thank you. Now, sit down and I'll go get the food. I've been cooking all day."

He sits and I rush to the kitchen. I grab the first part of dinner, some soup and rolls, and walk back to the table.

He smiles when I set the food down. "Wow, this really looks tremendous. I'm not even eating yet and I can tell you are quite the cook."

"I watch a lot of shows."

"Well, it's paid off."

I smile and dinner starts. He exclaims about each dish, complementing the flavors and the tenderness of the steak and how the risotto is so creamy and tasty. I blush harder and harder. No one has acted so proud of me in a very, very long time.

I ask him about his job as a firefighter. “Did you always want to be one? Were you a little guy in school pretending to rescue the girl from the burning tower?”

He laughs. “No, actually. I wanted to be a singer, actually.”

My jaw drops. “Really? An actual record-making singer? You sing?”

He shakes his head. “Well, I thought I was pretty good at it when I was eight. I’m not so sure now.”

Now, I laugh. My goodness, it feels so good to be with this man. “Yeah, that’s okay. I wanted to be a jockey when I was little. I was really nuts about horses.”

“Hmmm, horses are okay, but I like the wilder animals.”

I give him a small smile. “Well, yeah, I’d guess you’d be all into tigers or something macho.”

He shrugs. “Tigers aren’t all that great either. I think the king of the jungle is a good choice.”

“Oh, okay, okay. So, you could be a lion tamer or something, huh?”

He gives me a weird look and then laughs again. “Well, I’m not the one talking about working with animals. Tell me more about wanting to be a jockey. How did you pick that one?”

“Well, I fell in love with it when I saw them running at a neighbor’s property. They were just so fast, you know, and my dad worked it out so that I got some riding lessons and, of course, I, well, I was just a typical preteen girl.”

I get stuck a moment in memories of dad watching me bopping up and down as I took Nanny Blue out for a spin. He had been such a cheerleader, even though I was not that great.

“Anyway, I also, at one point, wanted to be a ballerina and an astronaut. So, that’s how things go.”

“You still have a lot of time to make any of that come true.”

I nod and let his words go by without comment.

We finish eating and I clear the plates, insisting that he doesn’t help because that would defeat the purpose of proving my determination to change. Once everything is dealt with, I sit back down. “Well, I hope you enjoyed everything.”

“This dinner was absolutely amazing, Kelsey. I’m just so impressed.”

My blushing hits a new level. “Thank you, Aaron.”

And I decide I don’t want to wait anymore. I stand up from the table and walk over to his chair. I look down at this incredible man and whisper, “We have a deal.”

He doesn’t stop me as I slide onto his lap. I put my arms around his neck and lean in.

This time, he doesn’t block me or push me away. This time, as my lips meet his, he brings his hands up to hold me closer.

I think about the fact that I’m wearing just the lingerie under my tee shirt and jeans. No panties. No bra.

I think about his hands roaming over my body once my tee shirt and jeans are gone.

But mostly, I think about how nice it feels to be with him.

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Chapter Six

Kelsey

He carries me to the bedroom like he's some kind of a prince in fairy tale. I know that seems so cliché for me to say, but that's how it feels. It is just so different from any other time I've been with a guy. In fact, I've really only been with boys.

Aaron is a man.

Maybe that's really why all of this is so different. He is mature and acts his age. He has self-control, plans, and a fucking work ethic for Heaven's sake. His job isn't just what funds his weekend parties. And all of this just makes me want him more.

But it also scares me a little.

Okay, it scares me a lot. I mean, this whole situation is based on me growing up, and that's really scary.

As he walks into my room, I'm thankful that I also gave this place a thorough cleaning.

I even hired someone to come in and do deep cleaning stuff, but the sheets are all new and there are even flowers on top of the dresser.

Oh, and the mattress is new, too. I'm freaking out and repeating myself, aren't I?

He doesn't seem to notice the state of the room, though. He's too busy noticing me, and I love that.

He sets me down on the edge of the bed and steps back to pull his shirt off.

He is, like I said, different from the frat guys and party animals I'm used to.

So very different! They'd be scrambling to get their clothes off.

Cock into pussy. That's the point. Why control yourself?

Well, he strips slowly while staring at me with his powerful eyes.

His body is toned. It's clear he works out, I mean, I guess he'd have to as a firefighter.

I feel so nervous! Usually, I'm the one leading things, pulling at clothes, getting down and dirty as quickly as possible.

Right now, I just sit and stare at this beautiful man as he undresses in front of me.

I don't know why he doesn't just tear my clothes off and jump on me, but I think he's showing me that he's willing to be vulnerable first. Or maybe he's showing me that we can enjoy each other without making this cheap and frenetic.

I like that.

But honestly, I don't know his motivations other than that he wants me.

He gets down to his briefs and it's clear that he's very excited.

He gets his briefs off and I know beyond doubt that he's ready.

For Pete's sake, he's huge, too! Scary huge!

I slip off the edge of the bed and pull my shirt up and off, and I see his eyes move over me.

He definitely stops and lingers over the fact that I'm not wearing a bra.

I undo the button and zipper on my jeans and, as I start to work them down he steps up to me and helps. He slides my jeans down my legs, the palms of his hands brushing along my skin all the way down. I shiver and gasp. It's like a jolt of electricity has traveled through me.

He stays on his knees in front of me as I step out of my jeans and kick them away. Then, he lifts me, oh so gently, onto my bed so that my ass is right on the edge. He pushes me back with one hand on my stomach.

His hands move up and down my legs and each pass makes me moan. I open my legs to invite him up, but he just stays on his knees.

The moment I feel his mouth on me; I yell out like the hot water in the shower just went ice cold.

The shock of his tongue slipping inside me grips me and I groan.

"Ohhhhhh, holy f... f... f..." No guy has ever gone down on me.

Believe it or not, no guy has ever really done anything much in the way of foreplay with me.

Like I said, we got down and got dirty immediately.

His mouth does things to me so I can't even finish crying out!

I know this is crazy but I'm so grateful that I didn't put panties on but just stuck with the garters and stockings!

Seeing my stockinged legs with him between them is very powerfully erotic.

And the physical sensations! My body has never felt sensations like it's feeling now.

Waves of intense pleasure and then, the almost painful withdrawal when he pulls back and lets things settle.

Everything becomes sensitive, even my teeth.

I know that sounds weird, but it's true. They feel like they're vibrating.

I can feel my orgasm building and it's the strangest thing.

Again, I'm used to guys either fingering me hard and fast, which is almost painful because they're just so focused on getting me going so they can have a good time they forget to be somewhat gentle, or they just start fucking me hard and fast, which can be as harsh as the fingering.

I almost never cum during sex but with a vibrator later.

I mean, I still like it or, at the least, need it. But I don't enjoy it or get off on it.

Until now.

Aaron is taking his time with me, teasing me by pulling back to just kiss my thighs, running his hands up my body as he presses his mouth to my clit. It's surreal how good this all feels. I didn't know it could be this good.

Finally, I can't stand it anymore and I beg him to let me cum.

I mean, I don't really say it clearly. I just whimper, "Please... Please...." He pauses and looks at me, and it drives me even wilder to see him between my legs with that intense gaze boring into me.

Then, he presses his mouth on my clit and goes wild.

In seconds, every muscle in my stomach and my pussy, hell, my whole body seizes up. Every bit of me is overwhelmed by spasms of pleasure as my orgasm grips me. I lose the ability to talk. I just twist and writhe on the bed and moan choked and garbled moans.

Aaron gets up and lifts me further onto the bed. My body shudders in his hands. He climbs up and I wrap my legs around his waist as he settles above me. I lift my body to meet his. Then, I shriek as he thrusts into me.

My orgasm explodes over me on an entirely different level.

"Oh, yes! Yes! This is so good!" Those are the words I intend to cry. At least I think I mean to scream them. I certainly feel that way. But I can't get any words out at all.

I didn't really mention the size of Aaron's cock before but, let me just say that he is so huge that it scared even me.

Wait... Wait, yes. I did say he was scary huge.

Well, the damned orgasm is kind of taking away my brain, if that makes any sense.

He's scary huge, and I can say that accurately because even though I regret it now, I've been with quite a few guys.

Aaron wins the contest against every single one.

Hell, he'd win against porn stars!

The explosion of new sensation from that monster sliding into me manages to make me feel something I haven't felt in quite a long time.

I feel like this is my first time again.

It doesn't hurt but I feel really vulnerable and really hyper alert.

I feel every sensation as he moves deeper and deeper.

It makes my orgasm start up all over again.

I almost weep as he starts to move in rhythm with me.

I don't know why. I look up at him and his eyes are lusty but kind.

He leans down and kisses me softly and tenderly.

I feel that sweetness in my very center.

I close my eyes and hold him to me as he moves faster and faster.

His body presses me down into the bed, and I love the weight of him pressing against

me.

His cock inside me feels incredible.

His breath against my ear makes me shiver and makes goosebumps come out on my skin.

Everything makes this moment beyond anything I could have imagined.

He groans as I move my hips to roll my pussy along his shaft. I feel him getting thicker and know he's close. I drag my nails down his back and he groans even louder.

He whispers my name and thrusts deep as he cums. I wrap my arms around him and pull him to me, not caring that I find it hard to breathe with him on top of me. It only makes me feel better. This small instance in time becomes recorded in our mingled sighs.

Okay, that's a bit goofy and over the top. I'm no poet, but that's the amazing thing about being with Aaron. Everything feels special. It feels like it deserves poetry.

It feels so much better than anything else.

It feels amazing.

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Chapter Seven

Aaron

She wakes me up with her mouth, and I let out a soft sigh and then, “What the hell am I gonna do with you, Kelsey?”

She giggles, gives my balls a light squeeze, and says, “Well, if you haven’t figured that out by now, I don’t know what to tell you. That’s the twenty-sixth blowjob I’ve given you by the way.”

I sit up. “Really? You’re keeping track?”

She bursts into laughter. She falls back and rolls on the bed as she holds her sides. “Of course I’m not!” she laughs. “You’re so easy!”

She laughs while I groan, and I say, “You keep that up, and I’m going throw you in the pool.”

She giggled and sits up. She grabs my hand and says, “Come on.” As she pulls me to the bathroom and into the shower, it occurs to me that twenty-seven was utterly believable, even a little light.

We’ve been together for just under five months.

Since I’m gone for seven days total for every fifteen days, that works out to about two and a half months.

It's fair to say those days are filled with sex.

And more! Not just sex. Today, she starts her classes at the community college down the street.

She's not sure what she wants her degree to be when she gets her bachelor's degree so for now, she's just concentrating on an associates degree.

This one will be an AA in accounting. She doesn't know what she wants to do but she knows she wants to understand money more so that's what we came up with.

We.

Yes. I'm her guide. I guess that's the best way to put it.

Actually, I suppose we have a bit of a BDSM relationship.

Well, there's no kinkiness involved but she asks me to direct her and to hold her accountable for her behavior, her goals, and her progress toward her goals.

When I talked about her with Colin, a tiger shifter at the firehouse, he told me all about BDSM and said it was pretty obvious to him that's what we were doing even if it wasn't kinky.

Anyway, I don't care. I don't need a label, and our relationship doesn't need that sort of definition in order for both of us to love how things are going.

I certainly love it. Of course I love the sex.

She's an incredibly beautiful girl seventeen years younger than me.

How am I not going to love it? She's also aggressively giving when it comes to sex.

She seems to take as much joy in pleasing me as she does when she's being pleased.

But it's not just the sex. She didn't know how to shop.

She didn't know how to cook day to day. In fact, the meal she made for me that first time, the steak and rice, was the first time she'd cooked since she bought the house.

At least, the first time apart from ready to microwave meals.

Now, she's taking classes at the community center for different recipes.

Every time I come home, she makes a new recipe for me.

She's learning how to shop and she's learning how to live like a normal person.

And she's just so damned eager to do it all.

And the way she's growing and becoming something new is impossible to ignore.

I'm proud of her all the time, excited for her all the time, and ready to go all in with this girl.

I know it's too early to think this way but I'm ready to talk about forever.

As in, I'm ready to be with her for the rest of my life. I'm ready to tell her I'm a lion.

I won't. Not yet. It's not the kind of thing you just throw out to someone.

I won't marry her without telling her. I won't do that.

It may surprise you to know that not all shifters share that opinion when it comes to pure humans.

In fairness, we have just over two decades of being known to humanity.

We have thousands of years of hiding what we were.

So, it wasn't uncommon for a shifter to marry a human and that human not to know at all that he or she married something more than ordinary.

Since shifter children don't gain any shifter abilities until they reach their teenage years, it's not something any human can tell.

A shifter can. If I walk into a room with a dozen people, I'll instantly know which, if any, are shifters. But humans can't.

A secretive nature developed over thousands of years isn't going to be easily dismissed in twenty-five. I'm not one of the shifters who wants to hide his nature from the woman he loves. Not me. I just want love that's fully aware of all the variables but still chooses to remain.

A little later, I kiss her goodbye and head for the station but I change my mind and give Garrett, my superior, a call.

I need to go wild. I need to get my head in order.

Go wild. If a shifter says that, it means to shift into animal form.

Lions retain their intellect more than any other shifter when in animal form.

Except for dragons, I suppose. It's possible dragons retain theirs more.

The point, though, is that when I shift, I become a lion but my mind is still intact.

I can still process clearly and effectively.

Wolves can do that somewhat but the aggressiveness and powerful instinct of the animal can take over.

Bears become so like their natural counterparts that there are some bears who shift and remain in animal form for years.

Tigers. Leopards. Panthers. They keep their intellect fairly well but only lions are human minds in the animal form.

But nonetheless, we shift to get centered.

We process emotions far more effectively in animal form.

When things are overwhelming or emotional, a shift is often the answer.

Sometimes, like now, there's no real confusion but it's a time of clear and obvious change.

We go wild. Every shifter does and every shifter living in human society needs it from time to time. I need it now. That's for sure.

I don't hesitate when Garrett answers. "I need to go wild. Can I do that now or do you need me there first?"

"Go ahead," he says, "we're good. Standard day, nothing special.

" Then he hangs up. All of the firefighters at Company 417 are shifters.

It's by design. The public doesn't know we are.

Most of the people in the government don't know either.

Perhaps seven or eight people know in total.

The idea is for us to be very successful and then to announce us to the world.

Well, we've been the best company for years now, hands down.

They're never going to announce it, I think. That's fine by me. I don't need people to think of me as Aaron the lion shifter. Aaron the firefighter is fine. Secrecy is so ingrained into our culture, that I believe all of the other Company 417 shifters feel the same way that I do.

In any case, we're all shifters, and that's why it didn't take any effort at all for me to get permission to go wild this morning, and I turn my wheel and head up into the hills.

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Chapter Eight

Kelsey

jump on Aaron as he walks through the door, squealing as I do.

He catches me with a chuckle as my legs and arms wrap around him.

I cover his face with kisses and I guess I'm pretty much the definition of over the top.

I don't care. I've been with him for eight months now, almost nine months, and my life is so different!

He laughs and kisses me and when I finally let him stop kissing, I say, "Guess which perfect little girl you adore just got straight A's in her first semester of college. Guess! Go ahead, guess!"

"That girl you introduced me to last week, right? What was her name? Annie or something, right?"

"Watch it, Buster!" Of course, I can't even pretend to be mad at him. I'm way too excited and way too happy.

"I knew you could do it, beautiful girl. I knew you could." I snuggle against him, about as happy as I can even imagine being. "So, where am I taking you tonight to celebrate?"

“Anywhere,” I say, “but the real celebration happens tonight in the bedroom.” I giggle again, this time because it’s like my whole life has been transformed. I get to feel a delicious sort of naughtiness whenever sex is the discussion. You know what I mean?

I guess normal girls have a sense of modesty, right?

Well, I didn’t until now. And now, I talk about sex and it makes me blush.

I missed out on that for a long time! The great news is that it feels like all the things I missed out on are coming to me now.

Aw hell, how could I know what I missed if it doesn’t come up, right? Who cares. I’m so happy right now!

Aaron decides we’re going to the bedroom first, and you better believe that’s fine by me.

He just walks us there. A few seconds after we get there, he’s flat on his back and I’m on top of him, enjoying the opportunity to move my body and to stare down at him as I do.

I study the lines of his face, the way his muscles move.

I mean, I think I’ve studied his body so much that it ought to be old hat.

Nope!

I think I can study his body nonstop and I won’t get bored for a very, very long time. I mean, everything about this man is just perfect, and I don’t see any way at all that the sight of him can ever do anything other than thrill me.

Am I just goofy and silly?

Am I just an immature, dumb girl?

Well fine. If I'm all that, I'm still as happy as I can be so I guess I'll choose being goofy, silly, immature and dumb over any of the alternatives.

Immature, dumb girl...

I may be goofy and silly. I may even be immature.

I'm not dumb, though. I'm a straight A student in college!

Damn, I'm weird, though! Why else would thinking about my 4.

0 GPA make pleasure pulse out from my pussy as though he were rubbing my clit?

Why else would I spasm around his cock like some sort of a squeeze toy? Damn, he feels so good!

I guess it isn't the great report card turning me on.

I think it has to be the awareness that I'm such a different person now, right?

It has to be that. I'm not the same girl as I was.

I'm not spreading my legs for strangers as though fucking boys I don't even like is somehow going to get back at Mom and Dad for dying.

I stop of a moment and just stare at him.

Holy shit... Mom and Dad are proud of me now!

For quite a while, if they looked down at me from Heaven, they were sad and unhappy with what they saw.

I'm sure they're happy with me now. I look at Aaron's chest and then at his face.

He stares back and I can see he's a little concerned, trying to figure out what I'm thinking.

"I love you so much," I whisper. It's not the first time I've told him but it's not something we just throw around in fact, I don't think he's said it yet.

I don't mind. I kind of like feeling like I need to earn that.

Wow. Am I some sort of headcase or what?

I lean down and let my hands rest on his shoulders.

This angle makes his cock inside of me feel even better.

I love it. You know what else I love? I love the feel of his hands on my ass, holding me tightly there as he thrusts up into me.

It's kind of strange for me how I never really think about how sex feels before him. I'm serious.

I'm not saying I never enjoy it before. I mean, I enjoyed it sometimes and sometimes I didn't.

The reality, though, was that it never seemed to matter much to me whether I enjoyed

it or not.

What mattered was just... Well, just doing it.

What a sad thing, right? It's true, though.

I guess I just felt so desperate for some sort of a connection, and the quality of the connection didn't matter.

But damn! The connection now is amazing!

I'm not kidding about how it used to not matter to me.

I guess that's kind of weird. Sex was just something I did.

Maybe I'm right about the whole pop psychology crap and I wanted connection.

Maybe I only valued myself for my body. Maybe I was still trying to get back at my parents for dying by being a horrible slut.

Pleasure didn't matter whatever the reason.

But now... Wow!

I feel so stretched. I know that's kind of a cliché in this day and age, right?

I mean, I guess it's a cliché. Nonetheless, I feel like he's big enough inside of me that it really ought to hurt!

Oh, it doesn't hurt. It just feels so present, so big, and so...

Hell, I can't explain it. It shouldn't fit but it does.

It should hurt but it doesn't. I don't know why it instead feels really good but it does.

I move my body and it's different than before.

I mean before Aaron. I guess the best way to explain it is that it actually takes work.

It requires thought and effort to move my body, and that's truly a remarkable thing.

It makes me focus on what's happening, notice it all.

What's that big buzzword people use now?

Oh yeah. Mindful . It makes me mindful. It forces me to live in the actual moment.

When there's something in your pussy that's big enough to seem dangerous, it's pretty damned impossible not to think mindfully about everything involved!

It's like I'm hyperaware of the way his shoulders feel as I press my hands against them for support.

I'm hyperaware of every one of our breaths and every one of our moans.

Every sigh or gasp is somehow transmitted in high definition.

I guess this might sound like a bunch of gobbledygook but it really is like everything I experience right now I experience distinctly and sharply.

And I definitely experience his cock distinctly and sharply.

As I roll my hips and lift myself up and down, it really does feel like every single millimeter of his flesh stimulates me.

I can't get my head around that because this isn't our first time having sex.

This isn't the first time I'm on top. Why is this time right now so vivid and detailed?

Hell, I don't know.

I'm certainly not going to look a gift horse in the mouth, though!

That makes me pause. That was a statement my father used to make.

It means you don't inspect gifts. You're grateful for good things and you don't analyze them and criticize them or that sort of thing.

I guess it's because if you're going to buy a horse, you inspect its teeth.

But I'm thinking about my dad.

And that makes me think of my mom.

And now it all feels weird.

Thankfully, me slowing suddenly evidently gives Aaron a reason to take over, and he sure as hell does.

I think it's fair to say he takes over completely.

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Chapter Nine

Kelsey

In an instant, Aaron has flipped us over so that he is on top. It turns me on completely to have him be so in control.

Now, before I get a lot of angry reactions, what I mean is that I have been on my own for so long and trying to take care of myself for so long, it just feels nice to let all that go. Of course, I did everything in my power to let go anyway, but it didn't help me at all.

I look up at Aaron as he pulls my legs up against his chest. It feels so vulnerable, but the weight of him against me makes it so intimate.

I know I'm coming across as quite an airhead right now, but that's okay.

I have never been so free. I know, I know, I lived like some wild bohemian, but in the back of my mind I was always fighting so hard to be that carefree girl.

I was never actually carefree, just desperate to be that way.

Just behaving like I was carefree while I was actually filled with care and unhappiness.

Aaron has freed me. He's given me the tools to make my life structured enough that I don't have to worry about putting on the carefree act.

It's not an act anymore. I don't know if I want to say that rules are the key to freedom and happiness but...

well, for me it's something like that. It's all about being...

Seriously? I'm going to fixate on all this?

Holy crap, why the hell am I going through this?

Filled with freedom? I'll tell you what I'm filled with.

I'm filled with Aaron's magnificent cock!

I'm filled by that enormous thing and bent in half backward as he thrusts hard into me over and over.

You better believe me when I say I don't have any idea how I can be in this position and just lay here getting closer to orgasm while I analyze how my life has changed because of this man.

But he has given me the gift of being able to appreciate intimacy and that is what I'm really trying to get at, I think.

Kind of crazy to think that while I'm being fucked to within an inch of my life, right?

Well, that's what's happening. Here I am being fucked pretty damned hardcore!

That's what I'm really getting at. And let me tell you something else.

Aaron is definitely getting at something. As he starts to move faster, my hands grip the bed sheets and I start to moan. I can feel my orgasm tottering on the edge and I

know it's going to be powerful.

I urge him to go faster, lifting my ass up even higher so that he can go deeper.

I see his eyes focus on my face and I smile, in a fashion I assume is seductive and alluring.

Of course, I almost lose it completely as I think that, but then my orgasm breaks over me and my coy little smile becomes a gasp as my body is taken over by waves of pleasure.

Aaron sees the change in my face and, of course, feels my pussy gripping his cock, and starts to move so hard and fast that my body starts bouncing around on the bed.

My legs are starting to feel a bit sore, the muscles feeling the impact of the position, but I barely register anything beyond the delicious sensations of my orgasm.

I'm in the middle of this absolutely body shattering climax and I figure things are nearing the end, when Aaron pulls out and flips me over again. He pulls me up onto my hands and knees and then, he slides a hand down my back.

I gasp and groan as he touches me. Every nerve in my body is sensitive right now, and the softest touch sends new spasms through me. I feel his hands on my hips and then, I feel the tip of his cock pressing up against my pussy.

I don't know where my mind is at or what makes me think of doing it, but I wiggle my ass so that my pussy slides around on the very tip of his cock. I get hit hard as my orgasm climbs to the brink again.

Aaron's hands tighten on my hips to still me and then, he thrusts deep into me and holds still. My orgasm hits me again. I start to shudder, but his grip is so solid that I

stay pretty still even as my pussy clenches around his dick.

He then pulls out and I hate the feeling of emptiness that hits me. Thankfully, it's not that way for long. Aaron rams his big, beautiful cock deep into me again and this time, I can feel it throb hard.

He cums and the warmth fills me. I arch my back as my muscles react to yet another round of my orgasm. I'm not sure I can handle much more.

Aaron seems to be feeling the same way because as I shift, involuntarily, I hear him groan and shudder. I'm tempted to shimmy a little again and he cries out. His cock throbs inside me again.

Part of me really wants to keep the teasing and torment going, but the better part of me lets the moment go. I slide forward onto the bed and roll over so I can look up at him again.

He looks down at me and smiles. "If you're not too tired, we can get ready for our date."

I hop up and give him a big kiss. "I'm not tired at all!"

He laughs. "Wow, I think my ego just got run over by a Mack truck."

I shake my head and slip off the bed, offering him a hand up. "Come on, I'll help you and your hurt ego to the shower."

He laughs again and takes my hand but pulls me down to him. I fall into his arms and we kiss a little longer.

After a while, though, we manage to break apart and get up from the bed.

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Chapter Ten

Aaron

I'm in love.

I'm not falling in love.

I fell. I already fell head over heels and landed splat right on the ground. Well, that's violent imagery for something so wonderful but, I guess, it makes at least a little bit of sense because loving Kelsey is pretty damned scary.

The girl is just desperate to be responsible and productive, a respectable human being who contributes to the people around her.

She's done an absolute 180 since this whole thing started.

She's changed everything about her behavior but—and I think this is what thrills me the most—she's still the same girl.

She's broken her will so that she can accomplish something in this life but her spirit is most definitely not broken at all.

And I'm in love.

I realize that this morning. I don't know why it's now that it happens.

Our one-year anniversary is only five weeks away.

But I know I've been in love for the last four months at least. This isn't an easy thing to consider for me, and this is why I'm feeling restless.

It's all residual conflict, too, if that makes sense.

She's a wonderfully wild and uncontrollable girl.

She's a factor in my life I don't get to manage.

I can persuade, and I've definitely persuaded her to take control of her life.

I can suggest, and she's been absolutely thrilled to put some of my suggestions into practice in her life.

I can do a great many things along those lines, and I'm truly grateful that I can.

I can be an influence, and I love how eagerly she responds to my attempts to influence her.

I love that she listens to me and then implements ideas because she's confident in them or because she has faith in my wisdom about a particular subject.

Not because she's instructed to.

Not because I'm in charge.

Not because I have a higher rank.

For a lion shifter used to the regimented sort of social system of a pride and (in our

case) an extended pride, the idea that I earn compliance instead of receiving it because of my position is quite new.

It can be exhilarating, certainly, but it's also damned terrifying sometimes.

No, not sometimes. Hell, it's terrifying all the time.

How frightening it is to have to convince someone! How frightening it is to worry that perhaps I won't be able to get her to see the possibilities. How terrifying it is to wait for someone else to see the light in order to do something. How terrifying to give up control.

But how rewarding when she does the things I suggests because she believes they're the right things to do. How amazing it is when that happens and I see the light in her eyes grow bright as the real possibilities in front of her become as clear as day.

Wow.

I don't just love her. I'm head over heels and completely unable to avoid the reality of the situation.

Ordinarily, I might try to come up with a measured and easy way to accomplish things but instead, I just dial her number on my phone.

When she answers, I say, "I have something I need to tell you."

"Okay," she says brightly. When there's a long pause after that, she says with a little worry, "What are you going to tell me?" There's worry and fear in her voice, and that makes me feel like an asshole.

"Sorry. I. I love you and since I love you, I need to tell you everything there is to

know about me.”

“You... you love me?”

“Well, of course I do. I’ve loved you...” My voice trails off when I realize it’s the first time I ever tell her I love her. “For a long time now.”

“How can you tell me that over the phone?” she asks. “I can’t hug you and kiss you over the phone!”

“I’m going to come see you right now. Is that okay?”

“Yes but... are you sure everything is okay?”

“I’ve never felt more okay in my life. I want you to be mine forever.”

“I’m totally going to have on the sexiest lingerie you’ve ever seen when you get here!”

“No, no!” I say, “I want that, sure but wear jeans. We have to take a ride.”

“Jeans, huh?”

“Yeah.”

“Can I wear a shirt, too?”

The banter eventually ends and in about an hour we’re in the woods forty miles from the city, standing in a clearing.

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Chapter Eleven

Kelsey

Aaron starts undressing and I can't understand why.

I mean, why, in the middle of the flippin' forest, is he getting naked?

What could he have to tell me that involves being completely naked?

Does he have some outdoor fetish? Is that even a fetish, actually?

I mean, if that's what he wants, I don't mind.

Might be sexy. But why in the world does he need to tell me like this? Naked in the forest?

Now, don't get me wrong, it's a beautiful sight, but I don't know what to think.

"Aaron, what's ...?"

I start to ask him but then, he just holds up a hand, gives me a smile and says, "It's me. It's still me."

I glance over his body and I say, "I know it's you. Believe me I know. Come on, Aaron. What's going on?"

He smiles and says again, "It's still me." Then, things get fuzzy. I feel like I must be

having a stroke because the place where Aaron is standing wavers like the heat waves coming off asphalt on a hot day.

Then, “Oh, holy fuck!”

I jump back and my heart catapults into my throat and starts clawing to escape. I feel like my legs have turned to Jello.

Aaron is gone. That’s the first thing.

The second thing is something else entirely! Where he was standing there is now a super-sized panther. Sleek and muscled. Huge. Its large head swings in my direction and I can see its teeth.

It makes a low rumbling sound, and I almost pee my pants.

“Aaron, where are you?” I whisper his name hoping he’ll come save me like he has before. I feel frozen. Any ability I may have to get going and run is just switched off.

The panther makes a small huffing sound and then, just casually lowers onto its belly and sits there, staring at me.

“Aaron, I need you. Come back because...” My mind begins to work again and I remember something. It was a news segment on the announcement of shifters in our world and whether we could take it at face value or consider it to be some political ploy.

Well, this big cat switching its tail is not just a political statement, let me tell you. “It’s still me,” I whisper. “It’s me. It’s still me.”

My heart begins to work at a more normal rhythm and I take a step forward. I’m

nervous but the edge of the terror is gone. The terror isn't gone. It's just not debilitating. "Aaron. It's... it's still you." I swallow hard and take another step. "Aaron, is that you?"

The cat lifts its head and rowls . I don't say growl because it's a soft sound, not an aggressive one.

It looks at me again, and something in me feels that connection.

Crazy, I know, but it's there. I walk up to the huge thing and reach out a hand.

It presses its nose into my palm and I laugh.

"I'm going to have to think of you like those dragons in that cartoon.

" I slap his big cat face. "You should have told me before!" I swear it sounds like the giant cat is laughing at me.

"Asshole," I whisper, "I can't stay mad at you. "

I cradle his hand in my face and kiss between his eyes. His head is as big as my whole torso! That gives me an idea. I mean, he's as big as a horse. Maybe bigger. "Can I...ride you?"

It's a crazy question. I still can't be sure about anything here and I'm now thinking of jumping on board Bagheera. What's wrong with me?

But I get a nudge from the huge head and laugh again.

"Okay, then."

And I climb up onto his back. Aaron's back. Because this is Aaron.

Right.

The cat stands up and I shift forward. It strolls off into the woods and slowly picks up the pace once I'm a little more comfortable.

My heart beats faster but, this time, it's the excitement and thrill of the moment, not fear, that drives it.

How in the world does a girl survive something like this?

There is such power beneath me right now.

If this never stops and I just spend the rest of my life holding onto him as he runs until finally I just die, it will be a happy life. That's kind of scary, right?

Well, thankfully Aaron has enough sense for both of us. We run a bit and then, we round a small hill to a clearing. The Aaron panther stops.

He gets down onto his belly again and I slide off.

My body is humming.

The cat stands again and then, the air does that weird fuzzy thing and the cat is gone.

And naked Aaron is back.

I don't even say a word. I just pull at my clothes like they're on fire. In seconds, everything is off, and I'm in Aaron's arms.

He picks me up and I wrap my legs around him. We kiss, all our pent-up hunger for each other making everything rough and fast.

I feel wild and needy. I want this man. I want to feel him as if we are pressed into one person. Well, that's as over the top as it can get. Anyway, you get the point. I want him to fuck me now and I want him to fuck me hard. Sorry if that's a bit vulgar, but that's the level I'm at right now.

Yeah, he's changed me. Now, there's such a thing as vulgar.

Aaron obliges me. His strong arms hold me up easily. His cock, hard and ready, slides deep into me and I end up bouncing on top of him. His hands grip my ass cheeks and help me stay stable as I move. The truth is that he does most of the work.

I feel myself getting close and I moan and try to shift my body in an attempt to urge it along.

Aaron smiles and bites at my neck, sending ripples of sensation straight down to my filled pussy.

Suddenly, he pulls me off and drops me to my feet.

My legs shake and I start to fall. He catches me and helps me land gently on the grass.

In another life, I may have thought of making love outdoors with no blanket or towel...

well, kind of icky. My mind would've focused on the bugs and the itchy grass and a million other little unpleasantries.

I may have been a bit loose, but I never just dropped to the ground and went at it.

Okay, I was more than just a bit loose. I may have been open for business at the free sex store. I still never had sex on the ground!

But it's not icky at all.

But this man and this moment are world's away from anything I knew before. In my heart, I know that I'm also far away from the girl I used to be. Aaron is on top of me and I stare at that face as he thrusts into me.

Different. So different.

Yes, I see the lust and the desire and the heat, but I also see something I've never seen when I was with other guys.

I see love.

Schmaltzy, sweet, powerful, consuming love.

And I know my gaze mirrors his.

I gasp as he picks up the pace. I reach up to him and pull him down to me. I kiss him and wrap my legs around his hips, driving him deeper inside me.

I feel him shudder and I shiver with him.

My orgasm hits me so hard! I moan soundlessly, my body twisting beneath Aaron as he starts to explode inside me.

We writhe together on the grass, shaking with each wave until we fall beside each

other, exhausted and spent.

It sounds like a fucking porn movie, I know, but hell, it feels like one, so I guess it works to talk like that.

But it makes me laugh, and then, I feel something brush over my arm and I jump up, all my rationality making me jittery about my surroundings again.

I run around and grab and shake my clothing. I start to get dressed and Aaron just watches me.

“What are you smiling at? You could’ve at least thought to have a blanket ready.”

He laughs harder. “Well, I didn’t think things would end quite like this.”

I walk over and pull at him until he languidly complies and stands.

“What do you men end? How did you think it might end?”

He pulls me close and kisses me. With a shrug, “Not like this.”

“Explain what you mean!”

“I thought I would show you my panther and you would think about it for a few weeks before finally being okay with it.”

“Oh! You meant how telling me about this would end!”

“What did you think I meant?”

Well, there’s no way I’m going to tell him I thought he was talking about the end of

our relationship. "I'm a happily ever after girl, Aaron, you better believe it."

He brushes fingers through my hair. "I absolutely do."

"Good."

"Very good," he murmurs and kisses me along my jawline.

I sigh. What's a little grass? I mean, it's one thing I can do with Aaron I never did with anyone else. And I have a whole lifetime to do it!

Did you enjoy reading Angry Lion's Naughty Little Neighbor ? I hope so. I really enjoy writing about the Company 417 firemen shifters. You already know that if you've read any of the other books I've written.

I'm definitely a shifter-loving girl. I don't just have book boyfriends.

I have a whole wilderness park full of them!

I go on picnics with wolves, to movies with bears, and on vacations with lions.

I've been known to double date with dragons.

I wish!

I loved writing about these two. Of course, I hope you found Aaron as sexy as I did.

Any girl can go for a firefighter, I think.

They're just badass and sexy, right? When a man is more than just a tough, sexy fireman and is also a badass lion...

are you kidding me? Maybe I set my standards too high but I can promise you Aaron can live up to all of it!

I love that the whole situation starts out with Kelsey getting herself in trouble.

You know, I was never an out-of-control girl like Kelsey so I don't know why I love stories of girls who are incorrigible getting whipped into shape by sexy, strong men.

It must be something about the human female subconscious, right?

There's some archetype or something. Who knows?

I love that Kelsey was acting out and got a dramatic and eye-opening lesson about the dangers she created.

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You'd better believe I fell in love with Aaron while I wrote *Angry Lion's Naughty Little Neighbor*. That isn't going to surprise any of you out there who've read my other Company 417 books.

At the end of all of them, I just go on and on about how much I love the shifter men I write about.

Well, maybe I do that but I can't help but fall in love with every one of these hot shifters!

I always imagine I'm the lucky girl involved, and you better believe I imagined I was Kelsey even though I was a bit timid and afraid to be rebellious and crazy the way Kelsey was. If being out of control meant a man like Vance would show up to get me back on the right track, you can bet I'd do it!

Do you love these two together like I do? What do you like about the characters? Let's face it. When it comes to shifters, I'm a hopeless romantic! How about you? Anyway, I really hope you enjoyed reading about Kelsey and her lion shifter man. These two are going to have a wonderful life.

If you enjoyed this story, then I think you'll love the next tale of paranormal romance in the Company 417 Fireman Shifters series.

On vacation in the tropics, Ashley Harrison enjoyed the best holiday of her life.

She spent her days on the beach and her nights in the arms of a complete stranger, a man named Nigel Winters.

She met him her very first night and this strong, stern, powerful man captured her imagination and her time.

She gave him her virginity hours after meeting him and lay with him every single night for a week before she got on the plane to go home.

She flew home with a heart full of happiness, a mind filled with excitement and romance...

And something else.

A year and a half later, she runs into Nigel at her office.

They see each other, and right away they're back in bed together!

Actually, they don't even wait long enough to find a bed but get together in the office!

But now things are complicated. This isn't vacation.

This is real life. Last time she left with a heart full of happiness, a mind filled with excitement and romance, and something else...

a baby in her belly. What's going to happen when Nigel finds out about the secret she's kept from him?

Find out all about the two of them in *Furious Tiger's Secret Baby*, the next exciting tale in the sexy, steamy age gap shifter firefighter romance series *Company 417 Fireman Shifters* !

Here's an exclusive sneak peek:

Ashley

It's possible I'm just losing my mind because as I turn the corner, I catch the scent of a particular cologne.

It's very weak but that scent is etched in my memory, engraved in a way that I can't ever miss it.

The cologne is made in very small batches in a little town on the coast a little east of Marseille.

I know about this French cologne because of a man who wore it.

It's very rare, and it's a shocking thing to smell right now.

All at once, I'm really glad that I have a private office here because (and I'm not proud of this) I am very likely going to masturbate in very short order.

The man who wore that cologne took my virginity.

That's not a good description. Sure, it's true.

But it's not the most significant thing, and I never even told him I was a virgin.

And, of course, he took my virginity once but slept with me nine more times in a week.

At least I think he did. I don't know if it just counts as one time if we never get off the bed for two times in a row.

I didn't have any experience at all before my week with him, and I haven't been with anyone in the almost twenty months since that week.

Seven days. Sex ten times. Four blowjobs.

More orgasms than I could count. That's the sum total of my sexual experience, and I can't say that I'm in any way unhappy about it.

Well, I'm not unhappy about the seven days in a row of sex and romance.

I guess it's fair to say I'm a little unhappy about the rest of my sex life consisting of my big wand vibrator and my hand.

But I don't think there's any way for me to really explain to you just how powerful an effect that cologne has on me.

I can only smell it very slightly. I guess someone wearing it was somewhere around here and then left.

I hate to say this but if that guy works at this building, he's got a girl who's not going to be hard for him to seduce.

Not hard at all.

There are something like fifty businesses here.

Like me mostly, I guess, a one-person operation.

This building is an executive suite property.

You know what that is? I found out about it in college.

An executive suite?provides businesses with furnished, ready-to-use offices.

Or office space. You can rent a desk here in an open floor plan with fifteen desks.

It costs only a hundred bucks a month with more if you have an internet connection.

You also have to pay the phone bill for your desk.

Anyway, that's how it is. There are shared things like a break room, a coffee machine, a water cooler, and regular office things like a copy machine and a fax machine.

You also get a receptionist answering the phone.

You can also pay an hourly rate for clerical work and...

All right, you don't care. The point is I have an office of my own with a desk and a conference table.

I write business plans for clients and charge between three and ten thousand dollars to write them.

So far, not one of the plans I've written has failed to secure financing for the company involved.

But who cares?

Who cares about anything other than getting to my office and getting to privacy? I have a very comfortable desk chair, and I'm going to very much enjoy reclining and on it and... well, you get the picture.

I hurry to the elevator and step inside. I'm on the fourth floor and I press the button but I swear it's like there's some sort of conspiracy. I smell the cologne here, too! A little stronger. The elevator stops and I just want the doors to open so I can rush to the office and fantasize about...

“Nigel!” I breathe out his name and stare in shock. He stands in front of the elevator.

The man standing there in front of me is, by some miracle that I can’t understand, the very same man that made my vacation a taste of Heaven. I feel my entire body flush as he stares at me in surprise.

“Ashley, what are you doing here?”

I stare at him and see that he’s just as wonderful as all my memories of him. Tall and lean with dark hair and soft brown eyes that melted me from the very first.

I stand there in shock until the elevator dings and the doors threaten to close again.

Then, I step out and stand close to Nigel.

He looks down at me, still very obviously in shock. “Ashley.” He says my name again, as if he’s trying to test whether he’s awake or dreaming.

But I don’t bother to answer him. I just grab his hand and pull him along behind me until we get to my office.

A small, vocal part of me is screaming not to be so stupid and to just say goodbye to him. A stronger, louder part of me feels very aroused and also feels like this is some kind of gift from the gods. The stronger and louder part has no trouble overcoming the small and vocal part.

I pull him into my office and shut the door behind us. I drop my stuff onto the floor just to the side of the door, and then I turn and face my Romeo again.

I feel a hard shiver pass through me, and then, I step up to him, get on tiptoe, and kiss him hard.

I feel his reaction and it drives me wild. His body seems to come to life and his hands come up to grab me and pull me even closer. His mouth moves from mine, and he whispers my name as he kisses my cheek.

“Ashley.”

But it doesn't stay all g-rated romance. I mean, that was never the objective right now, and he's on board with the objective, too. I had one goal from the moment I saw that it was Nigel standing in front of me. I guess it was just a modification of the goal when I smelled his cologne.

Continue reading here....