

CHAPTER ONE. One of my best moments of my working days is when I'm driving home from work. I would wind my car window down and it's usually quite breezy this time of the year in my city. The wind would rush into the car and my face will be awash with the strength of its beauty. I'm an avid admirer of anything beautiful and my tastes are usually considered elitist by friends and family alike. I love my wine very old, my music jazz, my paintings renaissance and my women very gorgeous. I have been called vain, I have been superfluous, but no one has argued that I have got class and I intend to keep it that way. This particular Saturday evening (it was the end of the month and we were busy at the office trying to close our accounts and file in all the necessary reports), I was enjoying my Diana Ross's album as I drove home. The soft wind was tussling my hair and I was thinking about catching a game of hockey on my cable television when my phone began to buzz. The caller ID indicated Rosalind. I picked the call by pressing on a call button on my dashboard. Rosalind's soft but husky voice filtered into my car. "Hello Darling," she cooed. "Hello Rosalind. How was your flight?" "Got back a couple of hours ago. I've been unpacking." Rosalind was the fashion editor of Vanity Fair, so she got to travel to exotic places around the world. "I'm thinking of coming over in a couple of hours..." Rosalind said, the unspoken request hanging in the air. I smiled. Classy women knew never to badge in on their boyfriends unannounced. "That would be splendid. I will make us some macaroni and cheese, or we could order Chinese." "See you soon," she beamed. Four hours later, Rosalind knocked on my door. Well, classy doesn't exactly translate to being punctual, I shrugged as I pulled the door open. I always smelled Rosalind before I saw her signature flowery and sensual Elizabeth Arden scent wafted into the room just before she did. She cat-walked into my wide arms, her beautiful face aglow with her happiness which I was sure was mirrored in mine. As she leaned into me, I put my arms around her and dipped my head as I sought her lips. They were puckered, soft and succulent just as I remembered them. We hugged and kissed for five minutes before I pulled away. "I think I should put some food into you before I ravish you all night long," I whispered. "You make eating sound so sensual," she drooled. I had already laid the table with a three-course meal. Some caviar as appetizer, spicy spaghetti as the main course and fruit cake for dinner—everything had been prepared by me. I was borne into an Italian home where a man who did not possess outstanding culinary skills was not man enough. And trust me, my masculinity was never in question. A bottle of red wine was cooling off in an ice bucket and the display of ceramic bowls, glass wares and polished silverware was indeed a sight to behold. "You always know how to make a woman feel like a queen!" Rosalind enthused as I pulled out a chair for her at the table. Genevieve had said the same two nights ago and Belinda, last week. Yes, I was a classy man, but like my fathers of old, I did not believe in monogamy. All my ladies knew about this and they did not try to attain to more. I was quite a catch by any standard. I was good-looking, tall with a chiseled body from weekly hours at the gym. I had a nice apartment in the heart of the city and a nice ride to get around. I also knew how to take care of my ladies. Beauty appointments at the spa this weekend, a fun get away at Monaco the

next or a shopping spree at Victoria's secret. All that I asked in return was that they looked good and give me great sex in return. They also have to be highly placed women, making waves in their field of career and commanding respect from men and women alike. My job as the Managing Director of a stock-broking firm enabled me to live the kind of life, I have always craved for myself. I started from the bottom literally. My parents had owned a food chain back home in Italy. In the good old days, right in the middle of my teenage years, we had lived large until my dad and his brothers had lost almost all they had in the stock market crash. They had had to sell almost everything they had to stay afloat, and we

moved into a tiny house in the city's suburbs. I would never forget the terrible days we had experienced, dad picking up menial jobs and mum working her ass off at a banking job. After high school, I got a scholarship to study in Stanford University, and I have lived here ever since. I worked while I schooled sending almost all I earned home. I got to survive on the minimal allowance the government was paying me as a student on scholarship. My parents and siblings didn't know how I was suffering to make their lives a lot less hard, and I will put up the best smile whenever I had to call home. My mum would always say, "I can feel the smile in your voice, Anthony. It makes me so happy." I would gulp down my emotions, barely, as I said thank you to her. I eventually graduated top of my class and got recruited by a top financial firm where I was furnished with a house and a car. At this point, I worked to bring in my entire family into the United States, both immediate and extended. This was a feat I achieved in five years as I continued to distinguish myself at work and getting promoted within short time periods. Ten years later, at thirty-six, I was working at one of the best stock-broking firms in the country, my parents were living in a house of their own, my uncles were doing fine too, and my siblings and cousins were either earning their degrees or working and married. My only single sibling was my twenty-six-year-old sister who is teaching in an arts college in Dallas. We always teased each other about getting married and settling down. \*\*\*\*\* Rosalind was a fun companion to always have over. She would dance for me and drag me to go swimming. She was an exceptional dancer and she was a lover. Her prowess in bed always left me gasping, always left me wanting more. When she left on Sunday evening, I was feeling satiated and really good. This was going to be a great week indeed. I could feel like. Well, I guess for once, my instincts betrayed me because when I got into the office on Monday morning, there was a lady shouting the place down. "I want to see your Managing Director, and I want to see him now. I can't believe how crappy your services are! You cost my company fifty thousand dollars on Friday, and I intend to have that repatriated immediately!" Her back was turned and as I was watched her gesticulating widely in front of my PA's desk, I wondered how such a petite body could house so much anger. As I passed into my office, I told my PA to send her in without turning their way. I was putting my jacket away and adjusting my tie when she stomped in. "Mr. MD, or whatever your name is, I think you and your organization fail to realize how much some of us put into setting up our businesses. We had to give everything we had to build it from the ground up, and yet you put our stock at jeopardy. What the hell were you thinking?!" "Well, my name is not MD, Tony will suffice. Can you kindly take a seat, and I promise you that we will sort this thing out." I gesticulated to the empty chair facing my desk as I sat down myself. For the first time, I regarded her closely. She had the most beautiful face I had ever seen, bereft of every trace of make-up. She had wide, full lips with the perfect dentition. Her eyes were white, round and big and she had a mass of natural curls on her head. God! She was so pretty! Not in the way I was used to. No, no, that overly sophisticated, extremely curvy and obviously sensual thing my girlfriends had about them. This lady was beautiful in a delicate way; she was barely curvy, no visible cleavage as her dress had a high neck. She was just like a breath of fresh air! "So how can we be of help to you please?" "My broker called me about a lucrative trade that was to happen yesterday. I gave him the go ahead to buy these shares for my company but alas, I woke up this morning to realize that this deal had not been made and I lost out on a fifty-thousand-dollar worth of opportunity. My practice is my life, I have invested everything I have got into this and I really need it to work. If you guys cannot handle my stock, then I would rather make the move to another competent company." "I'm so sorry about this incident Miss..." "Thelma Bunchild." "I'm really sorry about this Miss Bunchild. Please who is the personal broker?" "Alan Costner." I reached for my intercom and asked Sarah, my PA to ask Alan to see me immediately. "Would you like a cup of

coffee or tea while we wait?" "I'm fine," she replied. As angry as I know she was, I still couldn't help but admire her unique beauty. Her curls were pulled a bit from her forehead and held in place with a stylishly tied green scarf. Her forehead was creased with thin lines of worries and she kept typing furiously away on her phone keypad. Just as I was about to reassure her again, Alan walked into my office clutching his iPad and his tie had the rumpled look of one who had spent all morning pulling away furiously on it. Alan always had a rumpled tie and they looked quite askew on his perfectly ironed shirt and trousers. Everyone around the office knew that Alan was one of the most hardworking staff, and he always pulled away at his ties when he was under pressure or trying to make a big decision. He acknowledged me and Miss Bunchild while I gestured towards an empty seat. He sat down and I proceeded. "Miss Bunchild here has a complaint about her shares. That you forfeited a deal, she asked you to make costing her fifty thousand dollars." "Oh no, I did make that trade. It probably didn't reflect on your account on time due to a system error. I'm really sorry about that, but if you check your account now, you will see that you are about fifty thousand dollars richer." I watched Miss turn pink with embarrassment; then she turned to face Alan. "Oh, I should have called you before I stormed in here seeking a redress. I'm really sorry for causing you all these stress..." "It's really nothing. We should fix our server, so our clients get their updates as soon as possible," I added. Alan talked with Miss Bunchild for a bit before he nodded and took his leave. "I'm so embarrassed," she moaned, facing me, "I really should have made contact with him first. It's just that those stocks are a part of my inheritance from my late grandfather. I sold a part of it to obtain my PhD in Child Psychology and I just rented my office space on Tenth Avenue. I intend to start practicing soon. So you see why I'm guiding this jealously." "Trust me, I know what it is to put in all you have into a project and to be very frantic about it. Believe me, we have our interest at heart and we will never put your reserve at risk. I'm truly proud of your achievements, your focus and your drive and I'm very sure your practice will be a great success." I practically saw her relax and her shoulders drop as I spoke and for the first time, she smiled. And it was a very beautiful smile.

"You're a really nice person. I can almost imagine how all of these would have gone south if you had not been the voice of reason. And I'm supposed to be the psychologist here." "You shouldn't be so hard on yourself. Almost every one of us will act the same way if faced with a similar circumstance. It just goes to show how much you care about your career and that you will take no chances with your investments. It is a good thing, Miss Bunchild." "You can call me Thelma," she said giving me another beautiful smile. I was mesmerized. Not only was this lady beautiful, she was very intelligent, hardworking and smart. I wanted to know her more. I wanted her to stay a bit more. Like a thirsty man gasping for a drop of water, I found myself opening up to Thelma. This was something I never did. But I would do anything to keep her. To listen to her soft voice a little longer. "Maybe I could make you my personal therapist. I'm going through a weird phase in my life, relationship wise. I probably could do with talking to someone," I said. "Why not? I would gladly offer my services pro bono. After causing you all these troubles this early in the morning, I owe you. So I'm going to give you my contact. You can reach me whenever you want and we will talk." I have never been happier. She reached into her purse and pulled a business card. Then she used a pen to scribble something on the back before handing it to me. "That's my business card. I had my mobile number written at the back. This way, you can reach me when I'm at home or in the office." With that, she stood up, extended her hand for a shake and took her leave. As she walked away, I had a good display of her ass and they were big, round and perfect. They were better than anyone I had ever seen. She had the slimmest waist ever, and her ass had a beautiful rhythm that had me licking my lips unconsciously. For the rest of the day, Thelma was the most predominant thing on my mind. Her

beautiful face, her bright smile, her small breasts, her tiny waist and her big ass. Most of all I kept thinking about her lips, about kissing them and having her moan my name with that sweet, soft voice. By the time I got home that evening, I was fully erect because of how naughty my thoughts had been. I made a booty call to Belinda and she was in my house in less than an hour's time. Immediately she came through the door, I flung her bag from her shoulders and pulled her into my arms. I began to kiss and grope her with frenzy and I couldn't even wait for her to pull off her clothes. I turned her against the wall, pulled up her skirt and fucked her right there in my living room, fully clothed. After that, we had three more rounds before we finally fell into a deep sleep. She left first thing in the morning, but I found that I still couldn't stop thinking about Thelma. I had another hard day at work trying to conceal my hard-on. When I couldn't take it anymore, I called Thelma on her mobile number. "Hello," her sweet voice came over the speaker sounding crisp. "This is Tony from Finn and Co. Stockbrokers Ltd." "Hey Tony!" and just like that, her voice lost the edge. I smiled. "I was just thinking about your offer, and I don't know if you are free for an early lunch on Third Avenue. I can pick you up in say, thirty minutes," I tried to sound calm, self-assured, anything but desperate. I had a feeling I wasn't succeeding. "That will be lovely Tony. I look forward to seeing you." Twenty-five minutes later, I was waiting in the reception lounge of her office as she finished up with a client. I looked around the room and was impressed, the colors of the wall and furniture were complimentary, and the whole arrangement gave off a relaxing but business look at the same time. The room was cozy but was in no way shabby. I was skimming through a magazine on mental health when she walked out of her office. She smiled as she came briskly towards me. She was wearing a short, business-like skirt, a very clean white chiffon shirt and a pretty grey-colored blazer, almost the same

hue with her skirt. Her mass of curly hair had been pulled into a tight bun at the back of her head. Just like the last time, there was no trace of make-up on her face. I stood up as she reached me. Just as I extended a hand, she leaned in and gave me a quick hug. I was caught in the warm, flowery scent of her perfume. "Hello Tony. Sorry for keeping you waiting. Can we be on our way now?" I nodded and we walked towards the elevator. "You look different," I said to her when we got into the elevator and hit the button for the basement where the garage is located. "Yeah, I know I look really flustered." "Oh no! I mean you look really... beautiful and very official." "Uhmhhh. Thank you." And she smiled again. "I can see that your practice is already picking up." I noted. "Well. Just before I started, I visited some schools in the neighborhood and offered to give some free services to about ten kids. So I'm starting with these ones first. Let's see how it goes from here." At this point, we had reached the garage and walked to my car. I opened the car door for her and when she got in, I closed it. Then I went round and got behind the wheel. Soon we were cruising down to Third Avenue. "That's a really wonderful thing you're doing for those kids you know. So many kids out there just need someone to talk to, someone to care about them..." "Yeah. I have always been concerned about the mental state of children and teenagers. You find that most messed up adults who are now a burden to our society. They started out as being kids who had a terrible childhood but had no one to talk to. So they grow up with these repressed emotions and all these hurts and wrong ideas about life. That's why you find that most men who abuse their wife and kids were once kids who were abused themselves. The cycle continues if we don't do a thing about them. Children are a really important part of our society. They are our future. If we don't get it right with them, then we stand to lose a lot along the way. It's also sad that our legislative and justice systems have so many lapses especially when it comes to protecting abused kids or children who are at risk." We had gotten to the restaurant at this point. "Oops. I'm so sorry I have been blabbing non-stop. At the mention of kids and psychology, my mouth begins to run like a faulty faucet." I laughed at her analogy.

"I don't think you were blabbing. In fact, you are very interesting to listen to. You are very deep and intelligent and also very passionate about the wellbeing of children. That's fucking awesome." "Oh Tony, you're just going to make me blush to death." We got into the restaurant, got a seat and made our orders. We made light talk about the weather and the city as we waited to be served. Soon the waiter brought in our steaming plates of Chinese curry rice, chicken and bottles of water and freshly squeezed glasses of lemonade. We sank into our food and found it really tasty. Thelma didn't hold back her praises. "This chicken is so delicious, properly seasoned and well cooked. And the rice is just the right kind of spicy. Ohh, this is wonderful!" Thelma enthused. "You seemed just about ready to have a food-gasm," I teased her. she laughed and said, "And trust me, that's the best kind of orgasm ever. Oh yes, I'm a foodie!" "You don't look any bit like one." "Trust me, besides counseling, the next thing I love more is food. I love to read about food; I binge on food channels; I also love concocting new dishes all the time. And best of all, I love eating food. During my last trip to Paris, I spent most of my time discovering places to eat and trying out their most exotic dishes. It was such a beautiful experience."

As she spoke, I watched the light in her eyes. She was so happy and full of life, and there was nothing superficial there. "I'm sorry, I just keep talking and talking when we should be talking about you. So what do you want to talk about Tony?" I took a small sip of my juice before I responded. "I think I'm a sex addict." I watched her expression go from being shocked to being professionally expressionless in a manner of seconds. It was obvious that she hadn't seen my confession coming. "What makes you think so?" she asked. "That I'm addicted to sex?" She nodded. "Well, I have three sex partners presently. I wouldn't say I'm dating any of them. I've never been interested in sharing anything intimate with them besides sex. And usually, when we're done fucking, I can't wait for them to leave." "Go on," she urged. "I think it all began when I had to leave my parents in Italy at a young age to start college in the United States. The pressure to be successful was high and then I was incredibly lonely. The only way I could take this edge off was to have sex. Lots and lots of sex. And trust me, I'm a stallion in bed. Most times, I exhaust my partners." "Ok then. So do you think this is a problem? Why the need to seek therapy?" "I feel like there is something wrong with me. Like I'm unable to pursue deep and lasting relationships. I find myself unable to connect emotionally with the women I'm sexually involved with. Maybe I want this. Maybe I need this connection. Maybe what is holding me back from this is this addiction." "Maybe you haven't found the person with whom you could connect with in this way," she said softly. I looked at her with questions in my eyes. "Well, from your story, you don't really fit the profile of a sex addict. Like I think you just like to explore and sex is like a sport to you. And maybe if you meet someone with whom you can connect with and still have all your crazy sexual fantasies, you will be fine." "So you think there is still hope for me?" Thelma smiled. "Yes, I think so. I believe that love is a beautiful thing that brings a lot of healing in its wake. I feel that everyone should get to experience this wonderful feeling. So keep your mind open, Tony." I don't know how to explain this, but I was feeling so much lighter emotionally. Talking to Thelma was doing me a world of good.

CHAPTER TWO I've never been in love before save for a one-year relationship in my third year at the university. Sometimes when I think back to it, I really can't say if I was really in love or just obsessed. I would do

anything she wanted no matter how much of a sacrifice it was on my part. We moved in together after six months of dating, and I thought it was the most beautiful thing in the world. Diana was smart, beautiful and she had the longest hair I have ever seen. Everyone on campus wanted her and I thought I was so lucky to have her all to myself. That was until I caught her having sex with another man right in our apartment. I had been so broken and hurt that I moved out the next day. That was when I

discovered my crazy side and became a renowned playboy. I had the hottest girls in school breezing in and out of my apartment every other day. I didn't even have much to give them, but I had a good reputation going on for me. I was handsome, intelligent and crazy in bed. All the guys wanted a share of the fantastic sexual experience they have been hearing about and I did not disappoint. Towards the end of my stay in the university, Diana tried to get back with me again, but I was fucking done with her. I was also completely done with dating and putting my heart and emotions on the line for any girl. Anyway, I played along with Diana, but what I was interested in was in humiliating her and breaking her spirit. I asked her to give me a blowjob in front of my friends at a night party. She was so surprised that I could make such requests. The Tony she knew was pliable and gentle. When she looked into my eyes and saw how serious I was, she got down on her knees and gave me that blowjob. My friends started to hail me and the news travelled far and I was officially stamped the baddest of them all. Diana would still not leave me alone so I took the humiliated a notch further. I told her I wanted a threesome and she was to provide the other girl. A week later, she came to my apartment with one of the hottest girls on campus and I fucked both of them crazy. After that, I stopped picking Diana's calls and she eventually gave up. I have never told anyone about Diana because it reminded me of a time in my life I wanted to forget. I had been terribly hurt and so I told anyone who cared to ask that I had never been in love before. And so I didn't tell Thelma either. I dropped her back at her office after lunch and proceeded to mine. Later that night, Belinda came over and I really wasn't feeling motivated to do anything. I concentrated on the documents I was going through in my study and when she got tired of my inattention, she left. As soon as I was done with my file, I decided to do a bit of work out before taking a shower and going to bed. As soon as I got out of the bathroom, I got a message from Thelma. "Thank you for lunch today. Thank you also for sharing your story," it read. I smiled as she had been on my mind all evening. I decided to settle down and chat with her. ME: The pleasure is all mine, Thelma. You're amazing company and I felt better for talking to you. Her response came almost immediately. THELMA: You flatter me too much. I'm glad I could be of help. I'm always here if you ever have a need to unburden. ME: Am I not just one lucky chap to have met you? THELMA: LOL. You're still at it. Anyway, when are you going to bed? ME: I just had my bath. Sleeping soon. THELMA: Aren't you just so lucky? ME:

Why so? THELMA: I'm Insomniac. ME: I can keep you company for a few minutes if you care for it. THELMA: Ohh. Wow. I care! ME: Lol. Let's play a game of truth and dare. We both get three chances. THELMA: Sounds interesting! I will go first then. Emmm... how many ladies are you presently sleeping with? ME: Just three. THELMA: Nice. Your turn. ME: Tell me about your most awkward sexual experience. THELMA: Ohh no! ME: Ohh yes! THELMA: Okay. I was 22. In college. My boyfriend and I were busy in the backseat of the car when a cop pulled over. We were parked in a somewhat deserted park. My boobs were dangling and my boyfriend was banging my ass when the cop knocked on the door. The windows had been wound down all along. I quickly pulled away so I could cover myself and my boyfriend who was on the verge of ejaculation had ended up spilling his semen all over me and the said cop. It was the craziest thing ever. ME: OMG! I've never heard anything more crazy. THELMA: It was horrible and funny at the same time. ME: I'm almost choking on my laughter here. THELMA: Laugh all you want, but it's my turn now. ME: Okay, go ahead. Although I doubt anything I've to say would be this spectacular. THELMA: You will never know. Well, I dare you to send me a picture of you as you are right now. ME: Not a big deal. THELMA: Well, send it. ME: Head shot? Bust or full? THELMA: Full

I had to go into the bathroom and take a full shot in front of my mirror and sent it to her. THELMA: Wow. I like what I see. Can you lose the towel though? ME: You can't make two requests in one turn. So wait.

THELMA: Killjoy! Well, it's your turn. ME: Send a picture of yourself as you are right now. THELMA: Copycat! Then she went on to send a picture where she's lying on her pillow, her mass of curly hair scattered all over it. She also had on a white, silky, sleeveless nightwear, and I could almost see the outline of her nipples against it. She looked so breath-takingly beautiful. I suddenly had a strong urge to kiss her. ME: You're stunning. THELMA: I know! \*tongue out emoticon\* \*wink smiley\* ME: You would have thought you are this narcissistic! \*tongue in cheek\* THELMA: Life would be boring without some touch of narcissism. ME: ...and a dash of vanity. THELMA: Vanity and narcissism go hand in hand. It's impossible to find one without the other. ME: Very true. Well, we are in the final rounds of our truth or dare game, and I daresay we have had some fun, haven't we? THELMA: Massive fun! ME: So I encourage you milady to use your last chance wisely. \*wink smiley\* THELMA: Yes milord. \*rubs hands excitedly\* ME: I'm scared! \*tongue out\* THELMA: \*Rolls eyes\* ME: Bring it on already! The suspense is killing me. THELMA: What's your biggest fear? ME: Wow. I didn't see that coming. I thought you were going to ask me to lose my towel.

THELMA: That's me, man. I'm all about the shock factor. You never see me coming and then I'm like BAM in your face. ME: Emmm... take it easy. You're not actually a gangster. THELMA: Duhh. You are just jealous. Well just answer me already. ME: My biggest fear is failure. I hate to fail at anything, really. The thought of failure kept me awake in college and when I had just started working afterwards. That fear is real. But I think it keeps me on my toes. THELMA: Interesting. You're ambitious, fierce, handsome and a sex freak. Bad-ass combo. ME: LMAO. Someone has really got me all figured out. But thanks all the same. THELMA: Alright. It's your turn. I will reiterate what you said by asking you to make good use of your last question. ME: Ohhh. I'm just going to be a copycat and ask you what your biggest fear is. THELMA: Common! ME: Let's just say you ask interesting questions so... THELMA: My biggest fear... let's see. I'm scared of so many things. I can't deal, man! ME: Go on and list them. THELMA: I'm scared of clowns... ME: That's called coulrophobia, right? THELMA: Yeah. I'm mighty scared of snakes! ME: Ophidiophobia! THELMA: I'm equally scared of rats. ME: Murophobia! THELMA: I'm scared of heights and enclosed spaces too. ME: Acrophobia and claustrophobia respectively. THELMA: Wow. You're very intelligent sir. You actually should be the psychologist here. ME:

I wish! This is actually because I loved to read the Guinness World Records magazine when I was much younger. I had this aunt who had subscribed for them, so they arrived quarterly or so. Now you see why I know a lot about strange things. THELMA: That's really nice. Well, now you know a lot about me. If you use them against me, I will destroy you. ME: Hehehe. Are you daring me? THELMA: Yes, please. To drop your towel. \*wink\* \*wink\* ME: No way! You missed your chance. Don't add greed to your narcissism. That's too much vice for one soul, Ma'am. THELMA: LMAO. I hear you. Anyway, I think I'm sleepy now. We should get to bed already. It's quite late. ME: It really is! 1:30AM! How did time get away so fast?! THELMA: They say time runs faster when one is having fun and we really did have lots of it. Thank you for staying up with me. You really are a good friend. I owe you one. ME: Trust me, I will collect! THELMA: Good night then. Talk to you soon. ME: Good night beautiful!

\*\*\*\*\* The days that ensued I was taken up with Thelma that I totally forgot about Rosalind, Genevieve and Belinda. About two weeks after meeting Thelma, Belinda sent me a voice message that she was coming over to the house. I had just gotten home from the office when I played the message. I felt a bit bad because I had promised her a weekend trip to the beach last weekend and I had forgotten all about her. Belinda was a very beautiful blonde with legs for days. And she had an amazing voice one she was putting to good use. I first met her

at The Trumpets, an elitist night club where I had hosted a few, very wealthy prospective clients to a night out with some drinks and good music. She was the guest artist for the night and so when she was introduced, she came on stage with her jazz band and sang in one of the sweetest and yet sorrowful voice I had ever listened. There and then I told myself I will sleep with her. I didn't approach her that night. I've got too much finesse for that though. Besides, I had a reputation I had to maintain with my clients. Luckily for me, they signed the deal with my company that night. Two days later, I returned to The Trumpets and went straight to see the manager. We were on very good terms because of my frequent patronage. So I asked him for her contact. He gave it to me. I called her and booked her for my office party two weekends away. She was so happy because the job came with a handsome pay. It was at the party, I introduced myself and we got talking. After a while, I said to her, "You know what your voice does to me? It makes me want to fuck you." She laughed and did not say a word. The next day I took her to a friend's backyard barbeque party and we had a lot of meat and drinks until we were intoxicated. I was even more intoxicated than she was. She laughed and teased me about my

low alcohol intolerance level. Well, we had an amazing time but I didn't take her home that night. I like my women to be fully conscious of what I was doing to them and vice versa. Besides, I didn't want any woman throwing up on my bed. It had happened once in college. I had had to clean up the said lady, myself and the bed. Such experiences were enough as a one-time affair. More than once and you best be sure that you're under a spell. Anyway, Belinda and I had sex two days later and I was very impressed. When her makeup and serious hair-do were gone she looked even more beautiful. And so we started seeing each other. Two months into our relationship we had a big fight. She came to see me unannounced and met Rosalind in my shower. I was locked up in my study making an impromptu call to an oversea client. The next thing I heard was Belinda screaming down the whole house. I had to quickly round up my call and went to see what the problem was. Belinda was busy breaking my expensive furniture, fitting and decorations. Rosalind stood far away laughing quietly. I had to practically drag Belinda into my study to calm her own. "What the fuck do you think you're doing?" I asked her. "You're cheating on me with that red-haired bimbo right? How could you?! How dare you?!" "She's not a bimbo. She's my girlfriend." "Wait, what do you mean? Are you trying to say I'm the side chick?" "No, you're not. You're also my girlfriend." "What kind of fucked-up shit is that?" "I'm sorry I didn't tell you. I was going to come around to it, but then I never told you we were exclusive or anything." "You really must think you're God's gift to women or something like that, huh? Do you know that there are a lot of captains of industries, senators, celebrities, etc. who want to have me? Yet I chose you. Now, this is what I get." "I really don't mind you fucking anyone else. In fact, I'm pretty cool with it. In fact I want you to." "What? This is really messed up. I don't understand what you're saying," confusion and anger were written all over her countenance. "Okay. I really need to explain from the beginning. I don't do the heart and roses kind of relationship. I'm polyamorous as a lot of people all over the world are. I like to have to multiple lovers at the same time. That's who I am." "That means I'm not just enough for you. Like I'm lacking in so many ways." "Not at all. Listen to me, Belinda. I really like you. You're amazing. You're beautiful. You're so talented and you're really doing well in your career. That is one really bombshell combination you've got there. Please stop defining yourself by who I am. This is not about you. This is about me. I'm just incapable of dating one person at a time." "I can't deal with this shit!" she said and stomped out of the house. I sighed and went to the living room. Rosalind had called in a cleaning company to fix the mess. I smiled at her gratefully. She came towards me just then and gave me along kiss. "You will be fine, baby boy," she said and took her leave. Of all my girlfriends, Rosalind was the most understanding and had given me the least stress about the whole arrangement. We've been dating

for almost five years now, even though there were times when we didn't get to see for six to eight months at a stretch. Rosalind was very confident of her sex life and will even tell me who and who she was banging besides me. But I was still her favorite any day, any time. She never expected hearts, roses and promises of forever from me. In fact, she didn't even want them. Her freedom was her biggest asset and, in her words, "I don't want anyone or anything holding me down." and by anything, she meant marriage. Although she has told me, on several occasions, about her plans to adopt a baby when she turns forty-five.

Two days after Belinda stomped out of my house, I sent her a message asking if she was okay. She didn't send me a reply. I was really worried so I went to see her in her apartment the next day. It turned out that she had flown to Spain to perform at the presidential inaugural dinner. About a week later, I went to see her again. She opened the door dressed in a bum short and a pink halter-neck top. She gave me a once-over, her face bereft of any expression, before she waved me into the apartment. I soon as I sat down on the sofa, she asked me: "What do you want, Tony?" "I needed to know you are fine." "Well I'm fine." "I can see that now." "So...?" "I miss you." Belinda didn't say a thing and I saw it as chance to try to convince her again. "See, we could have a lot of fun together this way. Promises and expectations in relationships is why people get hurt. I'm not going to do that. Tell you that we are going to get married some day or that I can't live without you. Trust me, that is some major bullshit if you ask me. But this way, you know what you are getting. There will be no surprises along the way that would break your heart. We would go to wonderful events together, have fun vacations and well of course, great sex too. What is more beautiful than that? Forget what about who else I'm seeing. This is about me and you. You can see anyone else and I don't care as long as you take good care of yourself sexually and all. I would do the same to you. I also promise you to be hundred percent honest and I expect the same from you. But I also see that you're probably looking forward to settling down someday and having kids. Well, when you meet 'that guy', we can end this thing." I saw several emotions play on her face and then it relaxed into a smile and she said, "Fuck this shit! I have missed you so much!" and she flew into my arms. We had the most amazingly steamy make-up sex ever. Well, right now, I'm in the center of my living room, about a year after that fight, and I'm listening to her sweet voice on my answering machine telling me that she is coming over. I shook my head, amazed at myself at how much I had changed these past few days. I have never wanted to kiss anyone as much as I hunger to kiss Thelma right now. I have never felt this way before and it was very scary and exciting all at once. Belinda was in my house less than twenty minutes later. I had just had my shower and my hair was still wet. When I opened the door, she flew into my arms. "Baby!" she cooed and showered my face with kisses, "I've missed you so much." I smiled and held her for a bit longer. "What happened? You didn't call me about the weekend trip again," she queried as she sauntered into my apartment. She was wearing a short, yellow print dress and she had a pair of black, leather boots on her feet. "I was so caught up with work that I forgot." I really couldn't bring myself to tell her the truth? Even if I tried, what would I say? I just met a lady who is making me reconsider this whole polyamory shit. Well I lied to you, hearts, roses and forever kind of makes sense. It's really not bullshit after all. I almost laughed at the thought of what Belinda would do to me if I ever uttered those crazy words out loud. With her fiery temper, it wouldn't be past her to get a large pan from the pantry and do my head in with it. And she would love every minute of it. But was I really reconsidering this whole polyamory business? I remembered my girlfriend from college, how I had sworn never to fall in love again but here I was longing for Thelma's lips.

"I've also been tied up at work. I'm getting some very awesome gigs these days. Last week, I was in Colorado to perform at some celebrity wedding. I had some really amazing time." "Ohh. That's lovely." "I even visited my mum last week and she was so happy. Her new husband is still a dick though." I burst into laughter. "I'm really at that point where I think you do not believe that any man, other than your father, is good enough for your mother." "Trust me, there ain't no one as good as my father. It's not even possible. Unfortunately, though, cancer took him away from us, from her. and she keeps hooking up with all these assholes." "I think you should rest assured that your mum is an adult and that she is happy with her decisions. You, on the other hand, should also try to have fun and let the old woman enjoy her life. When you get to be in your sixties, you can maybe try to pass judgments on her decisions." "Hmmm. I think you're making a lot of sense. Alright come here, baby. I missed you. I want you to eat me up." Usually when she says those words, I get so turned on but not today. "Quite an interesting offer but I'm famished... for food. There's this new, amazing Mexican restaurant down the street. I think we should go have dinner there." "Emmmm... can't we order in?" "I just don't feel like being cooked up in this house right now. Besides you're looking so beautiful. I want to show you off." She smiled and the reluctance disappeared from her face. She grabbed her back as I put on a clean shirt and a pair of dark blue jeans. We were sitting having dinner when Thelma's message floated into my phone. It read: Hey, friend. I'm missing you. How did your day go? I smiled and made to reply her when Belinda tapped me on the arm. "Hey you have been barely saying anything to me all evening as you kept on checking your phone. Now you seemed to have heard back from this person you've been waiting for all day long. And then it's seems like you are about getting settling down to chat away our date... with someone else," Belinda was livid. Even though I knew I was at fault, I began all defensive. "You really have been itching to start a fight all evening. Unfortunately, I'm not in the mood for it at all," I replied. "Is there something you're not telling me?" "I don't know what you mean, Bell." All her friends call her Bell. Her band name is even The Tower of Babel. "I don't even think you missed me. I suddenly feel like I've been forcing myself on you today," she mourned. She couldn't have been more right but I replied instead, "Ohh. Get over yourself already, Bell! Everything is not about you!" "Well, this is getting really exhausting. When you're ready for me, give me a call. Until then, I will be in my little cocoon doing what I know how to do best- make music. BYE!" and she stood up and left. I know I was supposed to be feeling bad but all I felt was relief. CHAPTER THREE I grew up surrounded by family and food. Strong family ties, large family celebrations and so much food and drinks to consume. My father's brothers lived close by and they ran their restaurants together so I had my cousins, nephews and even a grandfather around.

My father and his brothers were awesome cooks and they were totally involved in the art and science of the cooking. It was for them not just a business but a passion. My father and uncles could take the simplest of recipes and turn it into a sophisticated cuisine. The restaurant was called Couri e fiori, Italian for hearts and flowers. Just before the business folded up, we had just received our fourth star and our clients were almost overwhelming. There were times when we had reservations made two weeks in advance. I loved to work in the restaurant and because my dad won't let us go in on week days, I always looked forward to the weekends when I could go and spend there. My mum was a qualified accountant so she was in charge of the books, settling the accounts and all what nots. When I went there, I would spend time learning how to make different dishes and drinks. When I turned fourteen, my father allowed me to take up a holiday job at the restaurant waiting on the guests. We had a lot of tourists coming in so I loved to see all these different people with their different skin colour, hair type, body build and accents. It was fun watching them react differently to the food and their environment and ask

questions about things they were not sure of. It was during this time I had my first big crush. It was on this African -American girl who was vacationing with her parents. They would come in every morning and evening for their breakfast and dinner. She was about two years older than me which meant she was about sixteen. She was tall, very pretty and had big, beautiful eyes. Whenever they came around, I almost took a dash to their table so that I could wait on her and have an excuse for gawking at her. She was so confident and fashionable and intelligent that she always commandeered their table. Her parents let her make their orders and her younger ones worshipped her. We started talking three days later when she would hang around a bit after her parents had gone. She told me her name was Pearl and she and her family was going to be in Venice for five more days before going back to Colorado. She was the first person who ever suggested that I come to the US for college and she also noticed that I was very good with numbers. She took to calling me a geek because I was tall and gangly, quiet and bespectacled too. One time I heard someone scream GEEK! when I went grocery shopping one day and even before I saw her face, I turned around smiling. She was also there to buy a few toiletries. "I started my period and was out of tampons," she whispered in my ears. When I tried to hide my blush and failed, she teased me by calling me a virgin. "Have you ever kissed a girl before?" she prodded as we walked the aisles together. "No," I whispered smiling. A day before she was to leave with her family, Pearl asked me to give her a tour of the restaurant's kitchen and pantry. I knew my dad would not have a problem with that so we went on our tour and she was amazed by all the equipment we had. "I didn't know there was a machine for this... I didn't know there was a machine for that... everything is so exquisite..." she kept gushing. When we got into the pantry, she quickly pushed me into a corner and asked me if she could kiss me. I was stunned and excited so I nodded yes. Pearl proceeded to give me a very nice kiss that lasted about two minutes before she pulled away. "I'm honored to be your first kiss," she said smiling. I missed her when she was gone and we exchanged friendly correspondence until about six months later, the family business crashed and I allowed our friendship to wither. Another thing I remember distinctly from growing up is my parents' staunch faith. We were unapologetically Catholics and observed each ritual religiously. We went for all the masses, did all the child baptism, candle prayers, rosary recitations, etc. I even served as an altar boy for a period of time and the church priest kept encouraging my parents to allow me join the seminary. The thought of this sends me into stitches of laughter these days. I wonder what Father Benedict will say if he knew about all my sexual escapades, my threesomes and all. I'm sure he will faint at the sight of my depravity. I have

not even stepped foot in church for almost a decade except for Christmas and Easter services or when I go to visit my parents. I wasn't an atheist in any way whatsoever but I wasn't a churchgoer either. I like to live my life the way I want without allegiance to anything but absolute fun. All these fond memories of family, food, church and crushes were what flooded my thoughts as I got off the plane in Texas. I had arrived for my female cousin's wedding ceremony and the whole extended family was going to be there. I looked forward to the hugs, kisses and warm greetings. As soon as I stepped into the big, beautiful home of Uncle Alberto, I was assaulted with the scent of spicy Italian cuisine, energetic discussions and hearty laughter. I smiled in appreciation. Uncle Alberto is my father's immediate younger brother and the father of the bride-to-be. The bride to be is my twenty-six-year-old cousin, Capricia. Capricia is a gynaecologist and her husband-to-be is a pharmacist from a very well to do home. We were anticipating a very large and flashy wedding and I knew my uncle will leave no stone unturned to give his first child the wedding of her dreams. If the wedding ceremony wasn't the talk of the town for the next several months, then it wasn't a true Italian wedding. The first person to see me was my little niece, Alfreda. Alfreda is a six-year old, chubby and very pretty girl who loves to scream at the top of her voice and

laugh. She is also very intelligent and smart. She is the daughter to my cousin, Alphonsus. They also live in Manhattan so we got to see quite often. She screamed my name and ran to hug me. I stooped low and opened my arms to welcome her. "Uncle Tony! We've been waiting for you!" "Who are we?" "Mummy, daddy, grandpa, Auntie Anelida, Auntie Capricia, everyone.." Anelida was my youngest sister, the one who was a lecturer in Dallas. I carried Alfreda in my arms and we went in to meet the rest of the family. Everyone was so excited to see me especially my mother who began teasing me about settling down as soon as possible. I just smiled at all her questions and insinuations as I went in search of something to drink. Anelida soon to join me at the bar. "What was that?" she asked me with a glint in her eyes. "What was what?" I asked right back, sipping my cognac on ice. "When my mum and the others were berating you about marriage back there, you just kept smiling..." "Really?" "Really! Don't tell me you've gone and fallen in love! Don't tell me you're getting married next!" She sounded so frantic that I burst into laughter. "Why are you so scared?" "Well I thought we were in this together bro!" "This staying single business. Now you're selling out on me. With you gone, Mum would come for my head next." "You unrepentant heartbreaker! You had better go fall in love." "Wonders of all wonders! Tony is preaching about falling in love. I'm afraid I'm going to turn into a unicorn pretty soon," Anelida gasped. "Ohh come on! What about Jules? Aren't you two still together? Besides you've been dating for the past three years. In fact, you practically live together. You guys should just tie the knots already." "Lower your voice before mum hears you. Jules and I don't live together. We have our different apartments.. duh." "The last time I checked you were always sleeping over at each other's. In my opinion, you're not being financially smart. You could save a whole lot of money on rent and other bills if you stop pretending you live apart and fucking move in together," I chided. "Hahaha. I get your point but we all need our spaces where we can vent and stop the relationship from going toxic." "HmMMM. I see."

"See how you've succeeded in making all these about me. You can't escape my questions bro. so who's this lady that has stolen your heart and makes you blush like you just got your first kiss?" I laughed slightly and said, "Her name is Thelma. She's very beautiful and smart. We're not even dating... yet. She's just so different, you know. She makes me... come alive!" "Ohh boy. I can see that you're really taken by her. Wow. Why are you two not dating yet?" "It's kind of complicated. I have all these ladies in my life already and I don't think I want Thelma in my life together with the rest of them. She doesn't even know how I feel about her yet. I just have to sort a lot of things out first," I sighed. I always felt free sharing most of my deepest secrets with Anelida. She was just so matured and understanding. "I'm sure you will figure it out," she said with a smile and squeezed my hands. Soon we joined the rest of the family. The wedding turned out very fine. And when it was time for the new bride Capricia to drive away to the airport with her groom so they can fly to Hawaii for their honeymoon, she burst into tears. Her mother joined in and in a matter of seconds, almost all the women were crying and some of the men were surreptitiously dabbing at their eyes. Somehow, I could relate with what was going on. That bittersweet feeling that says, "We your family are going to miss you but then, we're happy that you're starting out a new life for yourself with this awesome fellow." I flew back to Manhattan that evening. It had been a wonderful two days with my large family. It felt nice reconnecting with all these people after a few years. We had danced until we had no more strength left in us; eaten until our stomachs almost gave out on us; laughed until we choked and screamed until our voice was hoarse. I'm glad I've such a big family that values ties and love. Even though we all wanted to be free of the constant hovering of family members eventually, it feels good to know you've got all of these awesome people you can always run to when the tide gets too high. I was already looking forward to the next reunion.

\*\*\*\*\* As soon as I got into my house, just back from my journey, my phone buzzed. It was Thelma. I smiled. THELMA: How was your flight? Hope it went on smoothly? ME: Yes, it was. I slept almost through it. I was pretty exhausted from the whole wedding hullabaloo. THELMA: LOL. It's really good to have you back there. Try to take a warm shower and go to bed. I will see you tomorrow. I found myself smiling because it has been a while since we last saw. I had been very busy at work and then I had to travel west for my cousin's wedding. So I replied: I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING YOU. The next day I took special care with my dressing. I put on my sky-blue office cotton shirt that accentuated the broadness of my shoulders and usually made many heads turn. I was whistling as I walked into my office that morning. I met a pile of documents that needed sorting out on my desk, a few appointments and a board meeting. It was really going to be a hectic day for me. If I got home before 7PM I would be lucky. I was so engrossed in work that I soon forgot about Thelma coming over. At 12 PM, my PA came to announce that I had a visitor. I didn't quite catch the name but I asked her to let the person with just a wave of my hands. About a minute later, I felt her even before I saw her. She stood in front of me smiling so beautifully. I looked up and saw her astonishingly beautiful face. She had

a pink checkered mini wrap-around dress on which clung to her curves like a second skin. She looked so ravishing. "Thelma!" I enthused. "Hello Tony," she replied. "I totally forgot about our meeting. I came in this morning to meet a tone of work on my desk. You're such a sight for sore eyes," I said I walked around my desk to hug her. She had on a pair of gorgeous black heels that added to her small height so she was staring directly into my lips as we stood opposite each other. That was when it happened. She placed a delicate hand on my broad chest and pushed me gently back. I moved gently backwards until I was finally backing my seat. Then she gave me a final shove and I sat down suddenly. I was hell spellbound when she slightly lifted her dress then she spread her legs and sat astride me. I couldn't say a word for the life of me. When she was sitting on me, she grabbed my tie and pulled my head forward. When we were breathing into each other's faces, she dipped her head and devoured my lips. As soon as her lips touched mine, I gasped. Her lips were so soft and I felt like I was being kissed by air. Then she began a bit forceful as she forced my lips open and pushed her tongue in. she tasted of mint and flowers. I couldn't resist it anymore as I held unto her head and gave her as much as she was giving me. We continued kissing for about five minutes before we finally came up for air. When we were done, Thelma looked into my face and smiled. Then she reached out with her thumb to wipe the lipstick smudge off my lips. She showed me the telltale red paint on her thumb and I smiled too. "That was wonderful," she whispered, "that's all I thought about last night- kissing you." I smiled again. "I want to kiss you some more," I said. "What are you waiting for?" she asked. So I held unto her head gently and buried my lips in hers. The kiss started off gently then it heated up and when we finally pulled apart, our lips were slightly swollen. I was visibly aroused and I know she could feel it sitting on me the way she was. She stood up and sashayed away slowly, giving me a good glimpse of her beautiful big ass and her tiny waist. I licked my lips unconsciously. "I'm taking my leave now Tony," she announced, picking up her handbag. "Can we meet up for dinner tonight?" I asked hopefully. I was now on my feet as I advanced towards her slowly. "I will be delighted," she replied. When I got to her, I slowly turned her around and lifted her hands and put it around my neck. Then I pulled her towards my thighs. When we were touching, I whispered into her ears. "Can you feel that?" "Yes I can. You're so big!" I grinned wickedly and said: "You caused it. You made me want you so much." Then I put my hands on her breasts and gently stroked her downwards. When I got to her ass, I grabbed them real hard for some seconds then spanked her lightly. She gasped with pleasure as she leaned into me. Then she turned her head and pulled my

lips closer. We started another bout of kissing and it was when my PA knocked on the door to announce another appointment that we finally pulled. "See you later," she said as she picked up her bag again. "I will be counting the minutes," I smiled.

\*\*\*\*\* I was so excited for the rest of the day and could hardly keep still. at 7:30PM I rounded up my final appointment, approved some documents and grabbed my briefcase. I half walked; half jogged to my car.

I got home, had a quick shower, changed into a new shirt and a pair of faded blue jeans, put on a pair of black leather sandals and left to pick up Thelma. She was waiting in front of her apartment block wearing a dark blue lycra dress, a black leather jacket and a pair of sneakers. I drove to right where she was, and before I got down to open the doors for her, she had opened it herself and had gotten in. "Hi," she said as she settled in her seat and put on her seat belt. "Sorry for keeping you waiting dear," I said I pulled away from the drive way and entered the street. "I had a late appointment too, just got in about an hour ago." "So do you have a place in mind where we can go eat?" I asked. "I was thinking we have a drive-in buy some food and drinks to go, and drive to a park. I know a spot on Fifth Avenue." So we bought some Chinese food, burgers and drinks at a McDonald's drive in and we were on our way. Soon we got to the park and settled down to eat. "My friends and I used to come here back when I was in high school with our boyfriends. We would have this big picnic, dance around, play games. It was fun," Thelma said. "Wow. This means you've lived all your life in Manhattan right?" "Yeah. My parents live about thirty minutes away on the hill. But I had to leave for college in Princeton." "Princeton? Wow. Ivy league." "Yeah. Besides my family connection, I was one of the best students. When I obtained my undergraduate degree, I applied for my Masters'. Then when my grandfather passed away and left every one of his children and grandchildren a piece of his estate and properties. That was how I came into my inheritance and decided to follow my dreams." "What was your dream?" "I have always been interested in children and in mental health but in my family only two professions was approved of, law and business. My mother is a state judge and my father, just like his father before him, is a business mogul. So it was either I joined the family business or I go into law just like my mother. I have never been interested in business so I chose law while my two brothers went into business. As the only daughter, I couldn't afford to be a rebel. Four years of practicing law, I nearly lost my mind. I was practically bored to death. Then my grandfather died and I decided to do what I had always wanted to do now that I had some good money of my own. I knew the backlash would be ugly so I decided to go very far way. I applied to London and just a few days before I was supposed to leave, I informed my parents and ran away. I didn't come home for three years as I pursued a degree in child psychology then I also got my Masters. It was one of the best times of my life. I met lots of wonderful people and dated one of my lecturers- a very good-looking, slightly graying, middle-aged divorcee. It was also enough time for my parents to absorb the sting of my insurgency and to forgive," Thelma concluded smiling. "You've had quite a life!" "Yes I have. I will be thirty-two soon and I don't regret a day in my life. There was a time I looked back with a mixture of anger and sadness at the years I wasted studying law but I don't anymore. Everything fell in place for me at the right time." "Your story is quite philosophical." "Don't mind me- when I start to talk about myself, I can babble." "You're so sexy when you babble." She smiled and asked me: "So what's your story, Tony?" "just like you I had to pursue my dreams too at an early age, but with the blessing of my family. The economic recession had made my family lose their business, most of their life savings and their source of income. Things had gotten really bad and fortunately for me, I got a scholarship to Stanford University. I moved from Italy to the United States at the age of seventeen.

That's probably the most courageous thing I have ever had to do in my entire life. It was really hard but I'm here today."

"That's such a beautiful story, Tony. So your parents are still in Italy?" "No, I paved the way for every one of them to move to the States too. So we're probably a good example of the American dream. We came in with nothing but my parents were able to resurrect their eatery business. They have branches of it in about three different cities and they are not doing bad at all." We continued to eat and talk and it felt so easy unwrapping myself to her. I usually don't like to talk about my life with other people and I was quite surprised the ease at which I unburdened myself to her. When we were done eating, I said to her. "Since you left the office today, all I have thought about is kissing you." She looked into my eyes, smiled and said, "Go right ahead." I pulled her closer and dipped my head. Her lips were cold and soft and wonderful in all the right ways. I don't even think I would ever have enough of her. And I was just getting started. I pulled off her jacket and grabbed her boobs. As I caressed them, she was busy kissing my neck. I couldn't hold back anymore. I unzipped her dress and reached for the fastening of her bra. Her breasts spilled out in all their luscious glory and her nipples stood dark and aroused. "Wow!" I said, "You're so beautiful Thelma. And dipped my head and had a taste of these great beauties. She caught her breath, stiffened and soon she was moaning beneath me. After a few minutes, I began to kiss her again. I have never been more aroused or wanted a woman this much. She was for me the symbol of perfection- everything I have ever wanted in a woman, everything I have ever wanted in a friend. "I want you so much Thelma. I want to taste you; to have all of you," I whispered. Suddenly she stiffened. Not in a positive way. Then she withdrew from me and put on her bra and adjusted her gown. I was wondering what I had said wrong, whether I had gone too far when she said. "Tony, I have a boyfriend." And just like that my world came crashing down.

#### CHAPTER FOUR I know I sound

hypocritical- getting hurt when hitherto I have been a staunch believer and advocate of polyamory. Even I was surprised at my sudden change of stance. I really thought I had gotten it all figured out with my non-committing attitude to relationships. I love the woman body, I honestly do. I love sex even more, and I was sure getting a load of it. But I never thought I would find myself in a place where I wanted just one woman, one that wouldn't have to share with anyone. ONE THAT I COULDN'T BEAR TO SHARE WITH ANYONE.

I think the latter part was what scared me the most. I didn't even think I had such emotions left to invest especially after my experience with my college girlfriend. I thought I had transcended beyond this need- this need of anyone. Then Thelma came into my life and somehow, even before I had made up my mind to date her, I was already thinking of making adjustments so that I will be deserving of her. I was already making plans to end all current relationships I had just so I can slide into a perfect monogamy with her. And now this? Was it that she probably only needed me for the sex, just like I needed the other women in my life? Was that all she was interested in? Was this boyfriend "the one"? Maybe I was blowing things out of proportion; maybe I needed to take some deep breaths and have a long talk with her. Well, at the moment, I had quietly dropped her off at home. After she announced she had a boyfriend, all I said was "okay." then she asked if I could go drop her at home and I obliged her. Now I'm sitting at home, brandishing a bottle of wine, trying hard to process this flood of emotions. I didn't like this place I was- too many things to piece together, too many things to evaluate. Life was smirking at me right now. Maybe what I needed was a distraction. So I called Genevieve, my third lover. It was about 10:30PM, and I wondered what she would be doing. As I waited for her to pick up the phone, I reflected on how we had met. Genevieve was easily my favorite of the three and the reasons are not far-fetched. She is

the oldest of the three and we've been together the longest. When I met Genny about eight years ago, she was just an upcoming lawyer working as an assistant on Obama's first term campaign team. We actually met at the national democratic convention and we sat side by side. The crowd that day reflected the feeling of the nation and the world at large as America got ready to elect our first black president. There was great hope, happiness and frenzy. We were all screaming at the top of our voices and clapping. That was how we had first noticed each other. I, the tall, almost gangly young fella decked in a shirt, blazer, jean and sneakers and she in a skirt suit. She had a low cut on that was similar to Anita Baker's. She was not really beautiful but she was damn attractive. She was of average height, deep curves and a face that was as expressive as a painter's canvass. She was so easy to understand, to trust and hence to like. We exchanged numbers and hooked up the next morning for breakfast. And that was how we became friends. We became friends first before we became lovers and maybe that's why our friendship has stood the test of time. After all what's not to like about Genny? She is smart, gorgeous, hard-working focused and very generous. When the tide turned around for her and she became a big shot following Obama's victory at the poll, she always showered me with gifts and fun vacations. She is perhaps my closest friend in the whole world. Genny, just like me, had started from nothing. She never knew who her dad was. He had gotten her mother pregnant at fifteen and had absconded. Genny practically grew up in the slum, and as an inner-city kid, she had to fight to get to where she was today. At fourteen, she had been sexually abused by her step-dad and her mother would not believe her. Genny, however, would not let the matter go. She walked all the way to social services office very early the next morning and she had him reported. Less than an hour later, the son of a bitch was cooling his ass off in a holding cell. Her mother was so mad at Genny that when the step-dad was finally sentenced to some time in prison, she pushed her out of the house. At fifteen, Genny had to move in with her high school boyfriend or face an uncertain future at a foster home. Unfortunately for Genny, her woes had just begun. The said boyfriend was basically a dropout who traded in drugs. He was the leader of the most feared gangs on the street. He was always getting into problems with the law, but he always found a way out. He was a great boyfriend at first, taking care of Genny and all her needs until his business fell apart and he started raping her and forcing her to take drugs. Genny was in a serious dilemma on whether to leave or to hold out. Because one minute he was being a total ass to her and the next, he was crying and asking her to forgive him. Besides a future without him looked really bleak and she was counting months to graduating from high school.

Genny had always been an excellent student and so when she applied to different ivy league colleges, she was accepted into most. A month to the end of high school, she got called into her principal's office, where she was informed that she had been granted a full scholarship to study law in Harvard University. She was numb with joy and happiness, but all of this was to be short-lived. That night, while she was asleep with her boyfriend, they had had a break-in and had both been shot as the "robbers" made away with large bags of cocaine and some cash. They had been rushed to the hospital almost immediately, but Genny's boyfriend was declared dead on arrival. Genny had to undergo a major brain surgery to remove the bullets lodged in her cranium. The doctors had little hope that she will survive these series of surgery unscathed, that is without losing one or two motor function, but she did survive it. It was a really difficult time for Genny; she had just lost her boyfriend, the only person in the world who cared about her that time, even though it was more of a twisted and crazy kind of care. But then, it didn't change the fact that he did. They had been dating for almost four years as she was just a few months to her eighteenth birthday. Throughout her stay in the hospital, no one had come to check on her, not even her mother. "It was the most depressing time of my life. I longed for someone, anyone, outside of

the hospital to come see me. I was almost tempted to pay to have a stranger bring me a stem of roses and stay a few minutes with me. It was crazy. You will never know how much you have, in terms of family and friends, until you have been in that place I was when not a single soul in the world cared about you- you might as well be dead for all they cared. We are losing it in this country- that thing called empathy. People are so caught up in themselves, barely looking out for the next person. That's why you have people dying in their apartments, and the neighbors only get to know when their corpses are stinking the whole place up!" Genny bemoaned. As if this wasn't enough, the doctor informed Genny that she was pregnant- ten weeks gone. He asked her what she planned on doing with it and that she had to make up her mind soon. Genny knew what the doctor was trying to say. That is, if she wanted to have it terminated, it was better soon than later and time was already running on her. Genny knew in her heart from the very first minute that she couldn't bring herself to terminate that pregnancy and she told the doctor so the next day. "Are you sure about this?" he asked her. He was aware that she was leaving for college soon and he was skeptical about how this baby was going to do anything but ruin her young life. "I want to keep it- I will find a way to make it work. Thank you for your concerns," Genny assured the elderly doctor. Genny spent a total of two months in the hospital and when she was discharged, she was already four months pregnant. She got two jobs, one as an assistant in a bookshop and the second as a receptionist in a restaurant. She worked really hard and had to save for her baby's things. Four months later, just a few weeks to her expected day of delivery, Genny resumed college. She was very slim and so her pregnancy barely showed. She always had layers and layers of clothing on so as to hide it and avoid the judgmental looks from people as she was wont to receive. On the fifth of December, 1999, Genny gave birth to very chubby and cute baby boy. When he was brought to her after hours of labor, Genny was laughing and crying because she was so overwhelmed with emotions. She named him Faisal after his late father. Somehow strong Genny was able to combine motherhood and law school all by herself and she still graduated top of her class. She got a job at a top law firm and moved into a very decent apartment with her baby. That same month she turned twenty-four. She fell in love with her boss in the office and they got married about two years later. But their love story soon turned sour. He began to abuse her both physically and emotionally just like her step father and late boyfriend before him. He would always remind her how she was nothing without him, how he gave her a present job. He loved to call her an ugly black, poor woman with an ugly, black son.

"Yeah, I found myself not only married to an abuser but a racist too!" she said to me with a snigger. She finally had enough on the day he lifted his hands to hit her son. "My mother had let her husband not only beat me but sleep with me as well. My worst dream has always been that I would turn into the kind of horrible person my mother was, especially to me. That day as Doug hit Faisal, I found that dream almost coming through. I had had to save myself from my mother and her husband; I wouldn't watch my son do that too. It was bad enough that he was already growing up in a house where he watched his mother get hit and insulted over and over again by a man who had sworn to always love and protected her," Genny said to me, that day as we dined in a small bistro. I was so overwhelmed with emotions for her, that I reached out and held her hands. I hoped my touch would convey all the sympathy I couldn't express with my words. I have never known anyone who has gone through half of what Genny had. Genny continued her story and told me that he had moved out that very day when her ex-husband had hit her nine-year-old son for no justifiable reason. Two months later, they were officially divorced and Genny had put in her resignation letter at the firm. That was when she applied for a job with Obama's campaign team and got it. We met five months later. By looking at her, you would never be able to tell that this woman had been through the most horrible things in life but she had. She had the loudest

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