

JANUARY THAW

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONFRONTING THE MINOTAUR

From the first time that she laid eyes on Lindsay Alasdair-MacMahon at that fundraiser, Rejeanne Piscard had often imagined what it would be like to share an intimate kiss with her. Never in her deepest musings, however, did she ever imagine that it could become a possibility. Thus, when she heard those words come from Lindsay's sensuous lips, she was not merely taken by surprise. She actually thought for a moment that she was hearing things...

... until Lindsay asked the question again.

"I really want to kiss you, Jeannie," she said. "Please, let me kiss you."

Rejeanne turned and looked into the sparkling blue eyes of her friend. There were so many thoughts swirling through her mind about herself and her reaction and about Lindsay and Lindsay's motives. *What's her deal? Is she bi-curious or just curious? Is it the wine?* Finally succumbing to her own yearning demons, she warily nodded.

Lindsay slowly closed in on Rejeanne and gingerly caressed the side of her face. She looked into Rejeanne's eyes and nervously smiled. "You're so beautiful," she whispered to Rejeanne, before gradually lowering her face down to meet her lips with Rejeanne's. At the moment that their lips touched, a sharply intense sensation rushed through Lindsay's body. Her skin tingled and the hairs on her arms rose. Initially, the kiss was very light, but as Lindsay felt Rejeanne's hands first connect with her sides and then wrap around her lower waist over the nightshirt, the kiss became deeper and more passionate. Rejeanne's lips were lush and velvety to Lindsay, and the new sensation thrilled her deeply. Lindsay gently wrapped one forearm around Rejeanne's neck and the other around her waist to draw her closer as she opened her mouth to make contact with Rejeanne's eagerly awaiting tongue. As the two tongues joined and caressed, that sensation in Lindsay's body settled down in her groin area where it began to throb and saturate intensely.

Rejeanne's heart pounded in her chest as her lips met Lindsay's. She was petrified and excited at the same time. She wanted to soak up everything, remember everything because she believed this to be the only time that she would ever do this with Lindsay. Thus, she committed to memory the suppleness of Lindsay's lips, the softness of her skin, the firmness of her backside, and the sexiness of the quiet moans coming from her throat. She soaked up the image of Lindsay's silky dark brown hair as it acted as an umbrella over both of their faces. She absorbed Lindsay's scent, her heat, and her beauty. *I'm in heaven*, Rejeanne thought.

However, in addition to all of the wonderful thoughts that filtered through Rejeanne's mind, there was a troubling one that she could not escape. Martin. In that instant, she sharply cocked her head away from Lindsay and released her from the embrace.

"I can't do this," she said.

Lindsay did not want to ask why, terrified of the answer. "I'm sorry," she said as she backed away from Rejeanne and returned to the safety of her edge of the bed. "I didn't mean to horrify you."

"Horrify me," Rejeanne exclaimed. "Are you kidding? I'm wet beyond belief right now."

Lindsay looked at her. "Then, what's wrong?" she asked, totally oblivious to the apparent.

"Hello?" Rejeanne retorted dramatically. "Look at that rock on your left ring finger, Lindsay."

Lindsay looked away. "I can't do this," Rejeanne repeated. "You're married... to a man... and you're straight. Even if you weren't married, you're still straight and even if you're not entirely straight, you're still in a committed relationship with a man. I won't go down that road, Lindsay."

Lindsay looked over at Rejeanne and, seeing the tears falling down her lovely face, she sighed. "I'm so sorry," she said. "I wasn't trying to test your boundaries. Honestly, I wasn't even considering the consequences of my actions. I know that was wrong of me, but I have these feelings. I don't really understand them. I just wanted to be close to you."

Try as she might, Lindsay could not stop her tears from falling either.

Rejeanne turned her body to face Lindsay. "I want to be close to you too, Lin," she said. "But I'm afraid... afraid of possibly falling for a woman who is unattainable."

At that moment, their overwhelming need to comfort each other outweighed their fears. Closing the space between them, Rejeanne and Lindsay took each other in a bittersweet

embrace. They both cried for a while, but said nothing more to each other. As they held each other, however, a calm and comfort passed through and between them. Eventually, sleep claimed them both.

* * * *

Lindsay was jarred awake by the sound of her cell phone ringing. Only a second or two passed before she realized that she was spooning Rejeanne. *She's so soft and sexy and beautiful*, she thought. Seriously not wanted to disrupt the embrace or awaken Rejeanne, Lindsay contemplated not answering the phone. Unfortunately, rationality ruled out.

Carefully, Lindsay reached over to Rejeanne's nightstand where the phone rested. Flipping it open, she looked at the screen before slowly bringing the device to her ear.

"Yeah, Marty," she whispered.

"Where the hell are you?" said the loud and irate voice over the phone.

"Still at Jeannie's," she quietly responded.

"You could have fuckin' called," he exclaimed. "Do you realize what time it is? I've been worried sick here."

"You don't need to shout, Marty," Lindsay whispered. "I can hear you just fine."

"When are you coming home?" he asked.

"In the morning," she responded.

"Okay," he said. "What time?"

"When I feel like it."

"Well, I hope that you feel like it in time for that ten o'clock rescheduled meeting with Tachman and Rosen that I finagled."

"Right," Lindsay quietly said before closing her cell phone, relieved that Rejeanne had only briefly squirmed during the exchange with Martin. Placing the phone back on the nightstand, Lindsay eagerly returned to the task at hand, affectionately spooning Rejeanne.

* * * *

When Rejeanne opened her eyes, the first thing that she saw was the frost on her bedroom window. The snowstorm had passed, leaving a clear and bright dawn that was almost whitened by the new blanket of Wisconsin snow. Rejeanne then looked down

under her covers to see an arm wrapped around her waist. “This is interesting,” she whispered to herself before turning her head to eye the sleeping beauty directly behind her.

“So this is what Lindsay Alasdair-MacMahon looks like when she sleeps,” Rejeanne quipped to the sleeping form next to her. “I like it.”

At that moment, a blue eye exposed itself. “What time is it?” asked a groggy Lindsay.

“Unfortunately, time for me to get up,” Rejeanne replied.

At that moment, Lindsay abruptly removed her arm from around Rejeanne’s waist and pulled herself back away from her. “I’m sorry. I sometimes have boundary issues when I sleep,” she said half-jokingly.

“Ah, you’re a snuggler, huh?” Rejeanne responded. “Martin must be a very happy man,” she added sardonically.

Lindsay looked away from Rejeanne. “I don’t snuggle with him,” she confessed after a deep sigh. “He doesn’t like it. I have one of those four-foot long pillows that gets my nocturnal attention.”

Rejeanne looked at Lindsay and smiled. “Lucky fuckin’ pillow,” she quipped before climbing out of bed. Lindsay eyed her as she padded toward the bedroom door.

“I’m sorry about last night, Jeannie,” Lindsay said. “About what I asked and what I did.”

“Is my kissing that bad?” Rejeanne asked.

“Oh, NO!” Lindsay responded. “I’m... I’m not actually sorry that we, um, kissed. I’m just sorry that, I don’t know, I put you in an uncomfortable situation. Like I said, boundary issues.”

Rejeanne glared at Lindsay. “Was I the first girl that you ever kissed?”

“I’ve kissed girls before,” Lindsay replied. “When I was competing...”

“Lip and tongue action, Lindsay,” Rejeanne interrupted. “I mean French kissing.”

“Oh,” Lindsay said after a couple of coughs. “Well, once before.”

“Uh-huh, and?”

“And what?”

“And where, when, and did you like it?”

“College, 1990... no ‘91, and it was nice, but it doesn’t remotely compare to what we did last night.”

“Ooh, I’m flattered,” Rejeanne remarked with raised eyebrows. “Who was the girl?”

“Her name was Heather Courtney,” Lindsay answered. “She was on the fencing squad with me and was my ‘sparring’ partner. Neither one of us were, you know, gay or anything. Although in hindsight, I probably did have a little crush on her.” Lindsay briefly reflected, continuing, “Anyway, one night we were at a party and had been drinking. We were celebrating our victory over both the Yale and Cornell squads when she turned to me and said, ‘fuck it, let’s kiss.’ So we did.”

“I assume that the kiss didn’t lead to any quail hunting, huh?”

“Pardon me?”

“You two didn’t do the nasty – have sex, right?”

“No,” Lindsay said. “We made out for awhile. But sadly, I haven’t experienced, you know, that – sex with a woman.”

“Why sadly?” Rejeanne asked to a perplexed Lindsay, who could only shrug her shoulders in response.

“I need coffee,” Rejeanne announced. “You want a cup?”

* * * *

Rejeanne resumed being the perfect hostess by preparing a hearty breakfast of eggs, toast, fruit, and tea for Lindsay. She joined Lindsay, eating her routine bagel and orange, along with her daily dose of coffee. As she ate, Rejeanne replayed in her mind everything that had transpired from the moment that her lips met Lindsay’s the night before to the sensation of Lindsay’s arm around her waist that morning. Her private thoughts brought a impish smile to her face.

For Lindsay, what had happened was far more jumbled and complex. She had kissed a woman passionately and liked it... a lot. She also felt a raw sexual yearning for Rejeanne that frightened her. She didn’t know whether she was more upset that the lust she felt was directed toward a woman or that it was supposed to be directed toward Martin. Lindsay had acknowledged to herself a long time ago that her attraction to her husband had never really included a sexual desire. To her, their marriage from the start was intellectually stimulating: a joining of compatible minds. Of course, he was sexually attracted to her and early on, she allowed his attraction to motivate her response to his sexual advances.

A few years into the marriage, however, her ever-increasing desire for power over the Alasdair family fortune caused Lindsay to be less and less needy of Martin's attention and affection. Likewise, she traveled extensively on business. And although Martin was corporate counsel for all of the Alasdair business holdings, he was also a partner and principal shareholder in his father's Boston-based law firm. His position required frequent extended trips to that city each year. Thus, their individual business responsibilities caused them to be separated from each other much more frequently. But while Lindsay poured most of her surplus energy into her work, Martin turned his enthusiasm toward other women. It wasn't long before Lindsay discovered her husband's infidelities, and her immediate impulse was to divorce him. However, her father intervened, and employing a rationale that corresponded with Lindsay's personal and professional code, convinced her to stay in the marriage. Lindsay had wanted to reveal the intimate details of her current living situation to Rejeanne the moment that she had asked to kiss her. So now, as they ate in an uneasy silence, Lindsay decided to break one of her own cardinal rules.

"There's something that I want to reveal to you, Rejeanne," Lindsay said. "Something that very few people know."

Rejeanne looked up at her friend from the bagel that was getting way too much attention. "There's a reason why I'm so snippy about questions concerning my husband," Lindsay continued. "Martin and I don't have what might be considered a conventional marriage."

"What do you mean?" Rejeanne asked.

"First, I need an assurance from you that I'm talking to a... talking to my friend in confidence and not to a reporter."

"You've been talking to your friend from the moment I closed my lap top at that coffeehouse," Rejeanne assured her as she took Lindsay's hand into hers. "You should know that by now."

Lindsay sighed as she squeezed Rejeanne's hand. "Almost four years ago, I hired a lawyer to file divorce papers against Martin," she started. "Somehow, my father found out and contacted me. After talking with him for about an hour, I changed my mind."

"What could your dad have said to you to be so persuasive, given the way you feel about him?"

"Oh, he knew what to say to me to push my buttons," she said. "It was what I subsequently planned to do to Martin that convinced me to stick with it."

"Why were you filing for divorce, Lin?"

"Martin was being unfaithful, and not just having an affair with his secretary or something," Lindsay revealed. "He was screwing around with call girls."

“So, what did you do to Martin?” Rejeanne asked as resentment toward her friend’s husband budded. “Cut off his dick?”

“Nope,” Lindsay said. “I made Martin sell to my dad all of his shares in his family’s law firm.”

“How did you do that?”

“Threatened to expose Martin to his clients as a whore chaser,” Lindsay admitted, “and to disclose to them his penchant for overbilling hours. Either revelation would have been the kiss of death to Martin’s legal career. Martin’s family firm is the third largest in New England. It represents some of the biggest, most conservative companies along the eastern seaboard from Maine to North Carolina. Martin couldn’t afford the scandal, and he wasn’t about to put himself or his family in a position where he would be responsible for the loss of 150 years of MacMahon reputation and millions of dollars in corporate legal revenues. So he coughed up the shares.”

Rejeanne cocked her head. “I’m afraid that I don’t fully understand the inner workings of the big-business mentality,” she confessed. “How is Martin selling his shares to your father helping you to the point where you’re willing to stay in a marriage to an asshole who fucks around on you?”

Lindsay chuckled as she looked at her friend, flattered by the obvious concern that Rejeanne had toward her situation. “Because the law firm of MacMahon, Reynolds, Wellesley, Weiss & Schieve is a professional corporation rather than a limited partnership, once Dad was in possession of Martin’s shares, he was also in the position to buy out the shares of some of the other stockholders in the firm. Once Dad owned a little over one-half of Martin’s family’s firm through stock acquisition, he designated a living trust of his ownership over to me. Although the shares are still in his name, I’m the beneficiary of them. So in essence, I own a-half of Martin’s firm.”

“You frickin’ own your husband!” Rejeanne exclaimed teasingly.

Lindsay pointed at Rejeanne and winked.

“So at what point did you cut off your hubby’s dick?”

“Oh, he still has it, literally if not figuratively,” Lindsay said. “And he’s free to do whatever he wants with it, as long as it’s not with me. He’s not entirely happy with that arrangement, since he really enjoyed being intimate with me. But oh well. I’m not about to contract some venereal disease or HIV from that man. Keeping up the appearance of a marriage benefits his firm, which ultimately benefits me. So we keep the charade going.”

Rejeanne’s eyebrows furrowed as she contemplated what she had been told. “And that, my dear, is the main reason why we don’t have kids,” Lindsay added.

“So, you’re richer... if that’s possible, and he still gets to ‘ho’ chase,” Rejeanne recapped. “What about your physical needs?”

“To answer your earlier question, Martin isn’t exactly a stallion,” Lindsay declared. “I’m managing without his family jewels just fine.”

“Okay, but again Lin, what about your needs?” Rejeanne repeated. “Four years is a long time to go without a booty-call. Please tell me that you’ve gotten some play here or there in that stretch.”

Lindsay’s mood immediately changed from relaxed arrogance to subtle insecurity as she looked down at her plate. “No one’s piqued my interest in that... until now.”

Rejeanne’s eyes widened. “So, I wasn’t the only one who was mad-horny last night?”

“You weren’t the only one.”

* * * *

As Lindsay walked into her office at a quarter to ten that morning, her mind was a million miles from the pending meeting with the two stockholders. She was thinking about the woman whose condo she had left an hour before. She thought about their conversation and how it had ended at that kitchen table. She thought about the chaste kiss she gave Rejeanne on her cheek before departing her home. And she thought about just how much she had missed her friend only seconds after leaving her.

Although Rejeanne had laundered Lindsay’s clothing, Lindsay still needed to go home and change before the meeting. What she had worn to Rejeanne’s the night before was far from appropriate for an important business meeting. Lindsay did not look forward to the possibility of a confrontation with Martin and was relieved to see that he had already left for the office when she arrived at her estate.

However, Martin was in Lindsay’s office ready to pounce when she entered the room. With his hands firmly planted on his sides, he paced back and forth like a drill sergeant for several seconds before stopping and facing his wife.

“Glad you’re here,” he said. “I wasn’t sure that you’d make it.”

“I told you that I’d be here,” Lindsay replied.

“Well, I wasn’t so sure,” Martin stated. “I begin to wonder when you prioritize whatever you needed to do with that reporter over something as important as this.”

“I’m here, Marty,” Lindsay said. “Why don’t you just drop it?”

Lindsay walked past Martin and over to her desk where she picked up a stack of papers. "I reviewed these yesterday, Marty," she said. "Did you?"

"Yes," he said as he sat down on one of the two chairs facing her desk. "I'm still curious about this situation with the reporter."

"Curious about what?"

"Well, I checked her out," he stated. "Did you know that, among other things, she's openly homosexual?"

"So?"

"So, aren't you the least bit concerned that associating with a queer could compromise your status in our business community, Lin?"

"I've been associating with Keith for years," Lindsay remarked. "Hasn't hurt my 'status' one bit."

"Keith's a man and your cousin, Lin," Marty remarked. "He has no interest in packing your fudge. But if you continue to associate with this lesbian, people might start to wonder."

"I don't know, Marty. You've been fucking Back Bay and Park Avenue hookers for years and no one suspects a thing."

"What's your point?"

"Our marital charade can work for me too."

Martin's eyes widened and he opened his mouth to speak but was interrupted by a page from Leigh, notifying Lindsay that the two businessmen had arrived.

* * * *

For the first time that anyone could remember, Rejeanne was silent at work. Arriving a half-hour late, she quietly made her way over to her cubicle where she remained most of the day, finishing up a couple of stories on which she had been working. When she politely refused an offer from her friends Tyler and Becky to join them for lunch, neither raised an eyebrow, particularly since lately she had been forgoing lunch dates in order to gab on the phone with Lindsay. But when she indicated that she would not be joining them and others of her coworkers for their ritualistic Friday after-work cocktails at the Colby-n-Jack Tavern, they were concerned that something was indeed wrong with Rejeanne.

Her solemn state was accentuated by the fact that she had not received that daily lunchtime call from Lindsay. She was convinced that Lindsay was so freaked out by what had happened between the two of them that she would never call again. *She probably went straight home and broke that dry spell with Martin, just to reassure herself of her status as a staunch heterosexual*, Rejeanne reflected as she was burdened with both jealousy and resentment. By 9:00 that evening, as she pined away in her bedroom, she began contemplating jumping in her car and driving to Milwaukee. She didn't care that it would be a good hour-and-a-half drive on dark, ice-slicked roads. She could spend the weekend getting high and clubbing. And when she wasn't partying, she could crash at her dad's. He wouldn't mind too much as long as it wasn't his weekend with the kids. Surely, the combination of trance music, women and marijuana would get her mind off of Lindsay.

However, as she pulled out her overnight bag and flopped it on her bed, the phone rang. The caller ID said, "Alasdair Invstmnts."

"Hello," Rejeanne said in a voice that was unmistakably aggravated.

"Hi, Jeannie," Lindsay said hesitantly. "What's wrong?"

"Oh, nothing."

Lindsay could tell that Rejeanne was distressed and was alarmed by her tone. "What are you doing?"

"Packing."

"Packing?" Lindsay asked. "Why?"

"I thought that I'd head down to the beer capital for the weekend," came Rejeanne's curt reply.

"With whom?"

"By myself."

"Why?" Lindsay asked.

"Beats staying here listening to my head pound," Rejeanne stated.

"Have I done something wrong?" Lindsay asked. "You sound really upset."

Rejeanne sighed. "No, it's not you," she said. "I'm just feeling sorry for myself."

“There’s no reason for you to feel sorry for yourself,” Lindsay said. “You’re a confident, determined and stunning young woman. You’re also a damn good kisser and you make the best baked perch this side of Lake Michigan.”

Rejeanne was grateful that Lindsay couldn’t see her blushing. “Thank you,” was all she could say.

“Please don’t drive to Milwaukee tonight,” Lindsay implored. “I wouldn’t want any harm to come to you.”

There was a long silence before Rejeanne could speak again. “I... I...do you miss me?”

“Terribly,” Lindsay responded. “I’m still at work because I don’t want to go home.”

“Bad day?”

“Marty and I got into it this morning before the meeting,” Lindsay stated.

“About?”

“Nothing worth repeating,” Lindsay said as she contemplated stating what was really on her mind. “Jeannie, what’s in Milwaukee?”

“A dyke bar,” Rejeanne said.

“Why do you want to go to a bar tonight?” Lindsay asked.

“To take my mind off of you,” Rejeanne confessed.

Lindsay took in a deep breath. “I like it that you have your mind on me.”

“I’m sure you do.” Rejeanne replied.

“Jeannie, would you like to come over to my home?” Lindsay asked.

“Tonight?”

“No, not tonight,” Lindsay said. “It’s late and I really don’t want you driving anywhere in this sub-zero weather. I was thinking that maybe you could come by the estate tomorrow. We could, I don’t know...”

That throbbing sensation returned to Lindsay’s groin area.

“You want to go to a bar with me?” Rejeanne chimed in.

“Tonight?” Lindsay asked.

“No, silly,” Rejeanne replied. “Tomorrow, we could drive down to Milwaukee... no, what the hell... Chicago. We could hang out for the day and check out the bar at night.”

“I, uh, I...”

“Never mind,” Rejeanne interjected. “Too much too soon, I’m sure. I was just thinking how nice it could be to dance with you, that’s all.”

Lindsay smiled as she began to imagine the prospect as well. “It’s not too much, but all of this is very new to me,” she said. “I still would like for you to come over tomorrow.”

“And do what?”

“I dunno,” Lindsay said. “Your suggestion about Chicago is worth considering.”

CONTINUED IN CHAPTER SIX...