



# LEDGE WALKERS

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**Ledge Walkers**  
**Lesbian Adventure Club: Book 2**

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A Don't Waste Daylight Publication

# Chapter 1

I paced. I paced some more. I knew it was stupid, but I couldn't seem to help myself. We were about to host the monthly Lesbian Adventure Club, and this was the first time we had ever done so in our own home. The other times we were in charge, we had taken everyone away for the weekend. Why having them here made a difference, I wasn't quite sure. Each of them had already been here. Some came quite often. Never as a group, though—maybe that was it.

I headed out the sliding glass doors that separated the dining area from the screened back porch. I took a seat on the couch out there and lit a cigarette. As I watched Claudia preparing things in the kitchen, I let my mind drift through a mental list of the day's activities we planned. I hoped to hell that it accomplished what we intended it to. It was important to me, not just from the standpoint of success or failure, but this one was personal.

Our last get-together involved a scavenger hunt. Ginny and Kris had hosted it, and the two proved themselves to be diabolical. They had 'gotten' each and every one of us in one way or another, and numerous times during that weekend, we vowed to pay them back in full. I certainly felt resolute at the time, but now there was a part of me just so very grateful for how they truly got us. They got Claudia and me back on the right path, beyond the muck in which we had been so stuck. Our relationship felt renewed again. Hope had returned. Claudia was getting some help dealing with her grandmother's death, and ironically, it seemed to enliven her at the same time it hurt her. To suddenly think about paying them back for that seemed absurd.

I took a long drag of my cigarette as I watched Claudia approach the porch. She looked good to me, and again, I felt grateful.

"Are you going to help with any of this?" she asked, but the question arrived as a prod not a fist. "It's twenty to nine. They should start arriving soon."

“I know. I’m dumping on you,” I ruefully admitted. “I’m sorry. I’m on my way.”

“Are you okay? Is something wrong?”

I smashed my cigarette into the ashtray. I walked to the step, and I hugged her. She towered over me from the dining room. I liked that feeling sometimes—feeling small to her because I didn’t feel that way inside. The side of my face rested on her chest. Her warmth penetrating, her heartbeat steady, it felt safe there.

“There’s not really anything wrong,” I finally replied. “Just nervous. Stupid, huh?”

“No, it’s not stupid. We planned really well, though, hon, so I think everything should go off without a hitch,” she reassured. “If something goes wrong, we’ll deal with it. We always do.” She kissed me on the forehead and ordered, “Now get your butt in here!”

She put me to work pureeing peaches, hardly a monumental task. My attention shifted between doing that, watching her set champagne glasses on the island, and monitoring the street through the front window.

“You don’t think this will backfire, do you?” I asked, still wanting to make sure everything was okay. “I’m praying it hasn’t gone too far already.”

“Trust, hon,” she answered. Then she smiled broadly and added, “I’m an authority on that now, you know.”

“Oh, you are, huh?” I said with an honest but short-lived laugh. “And you’ll help me make it all right if all goes wrong?”

“Of course, I will. We did it. This is not yours alone.”

Before I had a chance to further the discussion, I saw Alison’s car pull to the curb. She had been in the club a few years. She taught yoga at the local Y, and she had a kind heart. Unfortunately—or maybe fortunately—she broke up with her partner during our last get-together, but she had been doing great since then. It made me happy that she decided to join us, as she worried about being the “ninth wheel.” A lot of coaxing on our part finally convinced her that she did not need to be coupled in order to attend. It was not, after all, the Lesbian Couples Adventure Club. *If you’re queer, we’re here.* Okay, that wasn’t exactly the club motto, but it worked.

Claudia opened the front door quickly, averting any chance of Alison pressing the dreaded button that allowed the irritating doorbell to do its evil work. I hoped that when we moved into Claudia’s grandmother house there would be no doorbell. That at least was one thing I would not miss about this home that had been ours for six years.

“Hey, you guys!” Alison said as she entered. “I’m the first one, aren’t I? Sorry if I’m early.”

“You’re right on time,” Claudia said. “Just throw your duffle bag into the first room down the hall. Then make yourself comfortable. You should have company in no time.”

“I’m glad you came,” I said to her as she started for the hall. “It’ll be great, not awkward—at least no more than usual. I promise.”

She smiled at me and offered her thanks. As she disappeared, I pulsed the blender a couple of good ones. I knew Claudia would kill me for an inadvertent oxymoron: chunky puree.

Suddenly from down the hall, Alison’s voice boomed, “*Lover Doll!* Oh, hi there, *Lover Doll!* Oh my God, I can’t believe you guys kept her.” By the time she finished her last sentence, she was back with us.

“Yes, we kept her,” Claudia said, tossing a dirty look my way. “But it was against *my* better judgment. *Lover Girl* here seems to think she owes something to *Lover Doll*. The best I could get was an agreement that she would not sleep with us.”

We all laughed.

“I know it’s stupid,” I tried to explain, “but the idea of throwing her away just made it all seem so trashy.”

Claudia rolled her eyes and said, “Kate, it *was* trashy. She’s a blow up doll from a porn shop. I don’t think there’s a thing on earth you could do to make it not trashy.”

“Yes, but I think I at least owe her a warm place to stay,” I said, smiling as I remembered my little lovefest with *Lover Doll* in the parking lot of Peter’s Palace.

“Did you at least wash the smooched bugs off her boobs? She was hanging out the car window for quite awhile,” Alison unwisely said.

“Oh please, hon, tell me you didn’t wash her boobs!”

I didn’t have to answer, thank God, because the doorbell suddenly bellowed its deranged tune through the house. *Ding, dong, burp, spit, ding*—that was as close as I could ever get to a description of it.

“Jesus Christ, can’t you teach that doorbell a new tune?” Ginny sputtered as soon as the door opened.

She wasn’t one to be tossing around those in-vain names. As a communication arts professor, she always said there were a million better ways to express oneself without having to be Neanderthal and resort to swearing. Either she was learning that sometimes it just plain felt good, or she was crabby. I looked at Kris, and immediately I knew that it was the latter. Kris’ lips pursed, and the furrow in her brow seemed hoisted nearly to the top of her head. Her eyes rolled and then remained in the eleven o’clock position.

“Oh, just ignore our bellman, Ginny. He is one sick dude,” I said. “Come on in. How are you guys?”

“We’re fine,” Kris instantly replied and then refused to acknowledge the whipping around of Ginny’s head in her direction. “And how are you all?”

I felt the need to apologize for the smirk that suddenly owned my face. I had known these two for over fifteen years. I loved them. I respected them. I depended on them. Above all, I trusted them. I trusted that in the nearly twenty-five years they had been together that they had learned enough about relationships and each other to weather whatever negativity existed. Issues that might do other couples in seemed to be mere bumps in the road for them, bumps they marked with respect. It wasn’t that the issues didn’t challenge or hurt. It was more that they accepted that life was downright nasty sometimes; you deal with it and keep moving. While I certainly did not enjoy their hard times, something positive stemmed from seeing their shortcomings, knowing they were not perfect. Those things gave me hope that I could have what they had, that fallible me could maintain a lifelong love. Besides, if you fuse a comm arts professor to a professor of psychology, you had to expect a few conflicts.

Kris and Ginny entered our house just as Maggie and Susan slammed their car doors. This would make Claudia happy; she loved punctuality.

I told Kris and Ginny where to drop their stuff, and then we greeted the new arrivals.

Maggie managed a vegan food store, Mama Earth’s, while Susan taught in an elementary school. They had not been together that long, but it seemed they got a bit stronger and more comfortable with each get-together. This time, in fact, I saw an unfamiliar eagerness on Susan’s face. She overtly wanted to be here, which was immense for someone who still had three-quarters of herself in a closet. I waited for the day when it was less than half, even if only by a centimeter. I figured Maggie would be more comfortable then, as one who abhorred closets and all those things and people in life that forced some of us to need that kind of shelter. She was an activist to the core, on a hiatus of sorts while the two of them found common ground.

“Hey, you guys!” Susan beamed and gave us both body slam hugs.

“Hi, humdinger,” I greeted Maggie from over Susan’s shoulder.

“Hey, dilly,” she replied, and we both instantaneously began laughing.

Once the meet and greet ended, everyone took places on the living room furniture that had been pushed out of the way to accommodate the day’s activities. The conversation centered on the past scavenger hunt, and Kris and Ginny still gloated. Maybe it would be easier to pay them back than I thought.

Susan asked, “So what are *you guys* going to do to us?”

“Well, we’d love to tell you, but Holly and Laura aren’t here yet,” Claudia said. “Kate, have you talked to them recently? Are we sure they got the invite and everything?”

“Yes, I talked to Laura last night while you were in the tub,” I informed her. “She called to make sure we didn’t need anything. It’s only quarter after. That’s not really late yet.”

Between us, we finally decided to start the first activity, which we would further explain once our missing members arrived. Claudia set out fruits, bagels, a pot of warm chocolate, and various spreads. I took orders for peach mimosas as I popped the first bottle of champagne.

Our living and dining rooms bled into the kitchen, creating a very spacious area. Women with plates and glasses spread throughout, nibbling on food and swilling those kinds of spirits that were somehow justifiable for morning consumption. From the corner of my eye, I saw Kris dip a strawberry in chocolate and offer it up to Ginny, who sat next to her on the couch. *Take it, Ginny; please take it!* Reluctantly she did and even offered a slight smile to Kris in return. Perhaps she was feeling better. I knew I was. My nervousness retreated, and again, I felt at ease with our friends.

“Oh, Kate sweetie,” Claudia beckoned, and I did not like the tone. “It’s now nine thirty-five. Does *that* constitute late?”

“Yes, I would call that late,” I shrinkingly replied, wondering how this suddenly seemed like my fault. “I’ll give them a call and make sure everything is okay.”

I grabbed the phone, and before I had even punched in two numbers, the front door burst open. To say they had arrived, entered, even stormed in—none of those related the act correctly. Literally, they landed, with four quick and distinct footfalls, in nearly crouched positions, as if the artist and the detective had just dropped from the sky. Both sported wet hair and looked as though they had dressed hurriedly—the obvious signs of getting up too late and making a mad dash. I had made a few of those in my life.

“We are bad girls,” Holly said sheepishly. “We are late. Forgive us?”

“Yes, we’re very sorry for being late. Please forgive us,” Laura added.

Shit, how could anyone not? It wasn’t like they offered lame excuses or even minimized it.

“We’ll forgive you this time,” Claudia said, my little project manager seeming to turn a new leaf. “But get your butts in here *now!*” she ordered. The new leaf yellowed.

“Okay, okay,” Holly said and then quickly turned her attention elsewhere. “Hi, everybody! What did we miss?”

They both entered the mix to receive updates and the usual gossip

while I made them mimosas. They nodded with great interest to everything said while they stuffed strawberries and grapes into their mouths.

Once things settled a bit, Claudia came over by me and worked with clapping hands to get everyone's attention.

"We decided not even to try to outdo Kris and Ginny," I began. "We stand humbled before the great ones." I bowed, watching the rest follow suit, watching the great ones bask in it. "So there will be no competition this time. No clues. No winners. No losers."

Laura, of course, chimed in, "Yeah, being a loser is kind of hard to take. You two must be awfully tired of it."

"Yeah, I could rub your nose in a few things, too," I said, "but I have a bit more class. So shut up!" I stuck my tongue out at her, as any classier person would do. Inside, my resolve to find and exploit her weakness was now a craving, one I hoped to satisfy before day's end.

"I thought you just said there was no competition?" Claudia posed one of those rhetorical questions that usually came with shiny shackles all their own. "You two, please behave."

"Yes, ma'am."

Then she proceeded to explain, "There are nine of us here. Oddly enough in that mix there are five teachers: two professors, an elementary schoolteacher, a yoga trainer, and an art instructor. All of us have been at the mercy of at least one of those for many years sometime in our lives. At their mercy meaning we had stuff crammed down our throats without ever being able to offer any advice on what we needed to learn. So, ladies, our adventure simply consists of learning some of those things that they *should* have taught us in school."

The traditional and silent appraisal began as each looked to the other, first with question mark faces and then with approval.

Claudia continued, "While we don't boast having a stoolie in every bar and porn shop in the city, we do know quite a few people." She looked to Kris and Ginny, who were both laughing. "We'll be having an expert in for each session. Not only will we have some non-competitive fun, but hopefully we'll learn a few things and meet some interesting people."

A ripple of affirmative nods skipped through the group.

"And who hasn't been a kid who believed that all school days should begin with recess?" I asked—rhetorical minus the shackles. "So this is recess. We have until ten fifteen to do absolutely nothing but horse around and enjoy ourselves."

"Um, I have a question," Susan said, raising her hand like one of her students needing to use the little girls' room.

"And what would your question be?" Claudia played along.

"Is it common practice to serve mimosas for recess?" she asked. Yes,

*another millimeter closer to freedom.*

“It is at this school,” Claudia answered.

“I like recess!” Susan said in a little girl voice. She raised her glass to be quickly joined by the rest. *Two millimeters.*

## Chapter 2

“Okay, everybody,” Claudia said, but obviously too politely, for everyone kept milling about and talking. Then the manager in her stood tall. She clapped her hands loudly and repeated, “Okay, everybody. It’s almost ten fifteen. We’ve got to keep things moving along.”

When all attention was had, she continued, “Welcome to Physical Education, the class you love to hate.”

“The class with the ugly butch gym teacher who screwed you up because you thought there had to be something wrong with liking girls if you were going to grow up to be her,” I said, receiving leg-slapping laughter from everyone for the sick joke, an arm slap from Claudia for deviating from the script, and a cheek slap from myself for a badly run-on sentence.

“You all remember it, don’t you, girls? Kickball, pushups, badminton, laps, claiming to have your period one hundred and twenty-five days in a row. Well, they didn’t teach us what we needed to know to grow up to be strong, healthy women, now did they?”

A horrifically loud “No!” shook the room. Then they spouted every pathetic gym activity they knew, following each with “Bullshit!” They were madder than hell, and I could not take it anymore. I did the cowardly thing and ducked into the spare bedroom. Retrieving a stack of white sheets, I winked at Lover Doll and then made my way back to the living room. As I tossed the stack into the middle of the room, all eyes turned to me.

“So this one, ladies, is massage,” Claudia announced to a steady stream of *oos* and *ahs*. “You’ll have to strip. There’s a sheet for everyone to wrap up in. Panties are optional.”

Between them, they exchanged glances until the verdict was unanimous: They would go along with the plan.

Laura grabbed the first sheet, teasing, “You belong to the KKK? They don’t like queers, you know.”

Before I could make my retort, Maggie was studying the one she had grabbed. “Look,” she said, pointing to a mark on the sheet. “It’s not KKK.

She swiped them from a hospital—from St. Mike’s.”

“I just hope it wasn’t St. Mike’s Home for the Bedridden and Incontinent,” Susan added, much to my chagrin.

“Oh, shut up, you guys!” I said. “I got them from the thrift store. Claudia washed and bleached them. There’s nothing wrong with them. Now shut up and get moving.”

As they took turns stripping in the bathroom, Claudia and I set up a borrowed massage table for each couple, and one for Alison, who would be our guinea pig.

Soon, the living room was filled with white-sheeted bodies. Everyone walked about like clumsy geishas.

In perfect time, there was a quiet knock at the front door, and I let in our massage therapist.

“This is Janice,” I introduced. “She’s going to be teaching us a few things. She’s trustworthy, and she’s one of us, so please feel comfortable. Ask questions. Whatever you need to do. Alison, you get the massage from the pro.”

As Janice set up, Claudia and I stripped and joined the ranks.

Janice began with a short speech on the importance of touch and how it helps a couple with bonding. Alison reclined on the table next to her, and I wondered what she thought about bonding with a stranger. Maybe as a yoga teacher she understood things we didn’t, as she seemed unfazed.

“Okay, so the point of this is non-sexual touch,” Janice said. “Pay attention to your partner’s needs. Be gentle. First, we’ll concentrate on one partner, and then we’ll switch.”

With that, bargains were made, and eventually, Claudia, Holly, Ginny, and Susan were all prone. Janice handed out small bottles of oil to each of the apprentice masseuses.

“Always warm the oil in your hands before you touch your partner. A shock is not the best way to begin.”

“Come on, Sutter,” Laura said from the table adjacent to ours. “Get it nice and warm.”

“I am. I am,” I corrected. “You just pay attention.”

Janice furthered her instructions, “Okay, once the oil is warm, place your hands gently on your partner’s neck and shoulder area. Like this.” She began slowly massaging Alison’s shoulders. “You want your back motion to go toward an extremity. Think of it as forcing the negative energy toward a place where it can easily escape the body, like the fingertips, the feet, the top of the head.”

I watched what she did and then tried the same on Claudia. I must have done it correctly, as I could feel her relax under my touch, and an almost inaudible moan escaped her lips.

“Feel good?” I asked, for which I received a lazy nod. “Just tell me if I hurt you.”

After several minutes of this, Janice said, “Now you want to move a bit lower, around the shoulder blade area. This time it’s the upward motion that should push the negative energy toward the arms.”

Again, I did as she instructed, feeling Claudia lose herself in my touch. I thought back to the tension that existed between us during our last get-together. There was none of it now, and none that I could feel in the muscles that gave themselves to me. I imagined pushing out any residue and infusing her with the strong, thriving feelings I had for her.

As I caught onto the techniques that Janice taught us, I finally felt in command enough to move my attention to the others in the room. It was Laura I saw first. Actually, it was only Laura I saw. She leaned into Holly, passionately kissed her neck several times, and then started biting her way down her spine. And then, I heard her breathing. It was labored and long and seemed nearly to carry a scream with it. Her hands—which were supposed to be in the shoulder blade area—were on either side of Holly, whose facedown position caused her ample breasts to bulge considerably from the sides. “Oh God,” I heard her breathily utter into her, to which an overturning Holly gasped in reply, “Oh, does my baby need some more?”

As my jaw dropped, I questioned the word “more.” What had we missed while *we* followed instructions? Then, with my jaw attempting to hang even lower, I watched a frantic Laura open the sheet around her and climb onto a naked and welcoming Holly.

“Laura!” I yelled through clenched teeth.

Her desperate eyes shot to mine, and she said nothing but “Oh God.”

I believe it was at that second—although, I admit that in the throes of shock I was not quite sure—when Janice bellowed, “Non-sexual, ladies!”

The writhing and kissing ones paid no mind. Another “Oh God” came from Laura, and I knew that we were nearing the point of no return. They gently rocked into each other, completely oblivious to anyone but each other.

Kris snapped to attention as all eyes in the room turned to the two them. “Laura!” she barked. “Get off of her!” When no response came, she yelled Laura’s name in a way that seemed to make the room reverberate.

Laura came back to the world momentarily. A pleading look made its way to Kris, and Laura implored in deep breaths, “Oh God, Kris, I have to have her.” She resumed the impassioned kissing.

“Laura!” Kris barked again. “You’re in a room full of people!”

“No. No, we’re not,” she breathed and continued her mission, which seemed to be devouring Holly wholly.

“Laura, look at me!” This time Kris took on a tone like she was trying to talk a jumper back from a ledge.

Laura looked at her, but her eyes were glazed and distant. Her breathing bordered on hyperventilation.

“Laura, you’re in a room full of people!”

Her breathing slowed a little, a very little. She swallowed hard and said, “No. When I touch her, the world goes away. Clocks even stop.”

“It may feel like that, hon, but you’re in a room full of people.”

“Oh, but I want her!” She laughed this time. “Goddamn it, do I want her!” She released a scream of utter frustration.

Kris continued, “Janice said this was to be non-sexual touching.”

“She made it sexual!” Laura defended. “Be gentle. Pay attention to her needs. I was. I did. I mean look at her!” She raised herself up, exposing a quite comfortable Holly and herself in the process. “How can this not be sexual? Holly, you are the sexiest woman in the world! I love you. I want you.”

“Oh, babe,” Holly gushed, and the kissing resumed yet again.

Before losing them once more, Kris urged, “Laura, keep looking at me. Keep looking at me.”

Laura did as she was instructed. She still looked intoxicated.

“This is the damnedest thing I’ve ever seen. You’re a grown woman. Control yourself.”

“I am in control. I love her. I want her. Oh God, do I want her.”

“She’s not an object! Holly, does she make you feel like an object?”

Holly didn’t answer right away. Then she pulled Laura into her, thrust her hips, and said, “Laura, quick make me feel like an object so I know if I’ve ever felt that way before.”

Everyone laughed, and it seemed to be enough to pull the jumper back from the ledge.

“She’s not innocent in this,” Laura defended. “Everybody always thinks she’s innocent. It’s that gorgeous face that does it.” She smiled broadly and stared down at Holly, who at this point was laughing. “Tell them what you did this morning. Go on, tell them.”

She pulled Laura into her yet again and said, “No, you tell them. I want to hear you say it.”

“Fine,” Laura said. “But remember you told me to.” She moved away from Holly a bit, and for the first time in a long time it seemed as though there were two of them. “I’m innocently—innocently, I tell you—taking a shower this morning, hurrying to get here on time. This tease here comes in, jams the door to the shower stall, drops her robe, and pushes her breasts to the glass. Then she begs me to touch her. I *can’t* f-ing touch her! She says she’ll do it for me. I’m not kidding you!”

Holly laughed deviously. “Ah, but I eventually rescued you in time, didn’t I? God, you were so wild by the time I got in there.” She pulled Laura into her again, the to-and-fro now beyond predictable. “God, I love you when you are wild like that!” And yes, they started kissing and writhing again.

Suddenly, I understood the word “more” and why they were late.

All eyes again were on them, and somewhere inside I thought to myself that it was hopeless trying to pull them apart. I thought it might be smarter to just let them have at it—to a silent chorus of closed ears and eyes. At least it would be done. Or would it? Two opposing words collided in my mind: contentedly insatiable.

“Are you guys like this all the time?” Susan dared to ask, rather loudly, and while I predicted that discomfort would be there, intrigue seemed to have overruled.

“Are you?” Kris asked. “Or did a simple massage just do you in?”

“We’re not perverts, if that’s what you’re thinking,” Laura defended. “I just can’t seem to stop myself when it comes to her. I mean really—just look at her!” She lifted herself up again for us to see what she was hoarding. She looked down at her, and another “Oh God” came forth as if it were a religion.

“Ah, Laura, I think we’ve all had a good enough look at her,” Claudia reminded. “Thanks, though.”

“Laura, you’re jumping her bones in a room full of people,” Kris crudely clarified and then watched as Laura’s eyes scanned the room as if seeing it for the first time.

“Okay, you’re right. I’m sorry,” she said and sat up, barely wrapping the sheet around herself again, making sure that Holly was covered. She stared into Holly’s eyes, but this time a different sort of emotion lingered there. To everyone’s amazement, the bold and powerful Laura McCallister began to cry.

The room fell silent. When the planet shifts on its axis, there is sure to be mind-numbing incapacitation.

Holly sat up and kissed her, but this time it was gentle and meant to soothe. “Honey, it’s okay.”

“I know it’s okay,” she said. “It’s okay because I love you.”

Kris jumped in, “Laura, what are you feeling? Why are you crying?”

“Because you guys think it’s about *it*. It’s not about *it*. It’s not about sex. It’s about her—not about me. It’s about that feeling I get when I look at her, when I hold her, when there is only us, when she has that look in her eyes. If that makes me a pervert in your eyes, then so be it. But I swear to you,” she said, “I will never stop letting myself get lost in her.”

“*Can* you stop?” Kris asked.

“Kris, just let it be,” Ginny jumped in to defend Laura.

“No. She’s a walking master’s thesis. I want to be sure she even belongs in one.”

Laura stared at her, but it wasn’t with the anger I think I would have felt. It was more an introspection, something that Laura didn’t generally do in public—but then again, I had never seen her try to take Holly in public either.

“If you’re asking if I can go without sex,” she said, “then, yes, I can. If you’re asking if I can go without Holly, the answer is no. I’m a junkie. I admit it, but I mean, just look at— Never mind; don’t look at her.” She sniffed and then laughed. “You guys have probably seen more of her than you ever thought you would. But for Christ sake, you took two drunks, threw them in a vat of vodka, and told them not to drink. I have to drink. Otherwise, I feel like I’m dying of thirst.”

Kris thought for a moment and then asked, “Have you felt this way with anyone else, Laura? What about in relationships before Holly?”

“I’m telling you honestly: I never felt this way until the first time we were together, and we have been this way ever since. It’s mutual. Isn’t it, Hol? Have I ever wanted to go there when I didn’t think you wanted to go with me?” She looked at Holly, who vehemently shook her head.

“Never, babe. Never,” she replied, and then she tried to glance around the room from her prone position. “I want her as much as she wants me. Sometimes more.”

Kris apparently wasn’t satisfied with that. She asked, “Were you guys sexual right way?”

The two laughed with each other, remembering, and I suddenly noticed poor Janice shifting uncomfortably next to her massage table. I bet she would never again say to a group of nearly naked lesbians that touch could help a couple with bonding.

Holly said, “We didn’t have sex for the first year we dated ... not until the moment we decided to spend the rest of our lives together.”

“And we’ve been dying of thirst ever since.” This time Laura gave Holly a tender kiss and smiled at her.

“Holly, what about your other relationships? Were they this sexually charged, too?” Kris continued her march toward understanding.

“Laura was my first. Laura is my last.” Tears now filled her eyes, and “aw” spread throughout the room.

“And have you guys ever attempted anything like you did today?” Kris asked, and I imagined her scanning some diagnostic checklist in her mind.

“No. I think it’s just that it’s safe with you all. Our guard is down when we’re all together. We love you guys,” Holly said, and then added, “But we

have learned a few lessons the hard way, and so we made some rules.”

Suddenly, the group wanted to know. The mood lightened considerably.

“Well, let’s see,” Holly began. “Alison, you will be happy to know that we have a rule never to shower together again at the Y.”

Our prone yoga instructor gave a thumbs-up, and the group laughed. Even Janice laughed.

“We only buy vehicles with bucket seats, and our hands cannot cross that middle thingy,” Holly said, her upraised hands trying to help us envision exactly what a “thingy” was.

Laura admitted, “When Holly has a class she’s posing nude for, I’m not allowed within a two hundred yards.” She paused and then added, “And we cannot both be in the kitchen when one is cooking. We set off the alarm once when French toast caught fire. Well, actually they kind of exploded.” She looked at Holly, and they both laughed.

“Oh, and we never go into a lingerie shop together,” Holly confided.

Then in unison, they yelled, “Or dressing rooms!”

“Oh God, do you remember that?” Laura asked, and I knew what that religious talk would get us: prostration on the naked altar. She was glued to her in seconds, this time kissing her and saying, “Oh God, I want you.”

“Whoa,” Kris quickly interrupted. “You were doing good there for a moment. Stick with us.”

Laura pulled herself up a bit with a desperate release of air, and both their heads tilted toward Kris.

“Does it always have to end in the *big* way?” she asked, and at first I thought to laugh at the euphemism, but I then realized that they still teetered on the ledge and anything explicit might send them plummeting.

“No. Sometimes foreplay just jumps into afterplay with no play in between,” Laura reasoned. “Sometimes we just end up holding each other. Sometimes we just end up laughing. Those times are amazing, too.” There was no “Oh God” involved, but her body genuflected into Holly again. She stared at her, smiling. Without breaking her gaze, she asked, “So what do you say, Dr. Maltry? There’s nothing wrong with us, is there? We’re just lucky and madly in love. I told you!”

Suddenly “doctor” looked rather funny standing there, wrapped in a St. Mike’s sheet, her hands resting on her professor’s podium that just happened to be her lover’s butt. Hardly a clinical setting, but I knew that Kris would divulge what she sincerely believed. She was that way. Despite how intrusive it all seemed, I knew her heart was in the right place.

“Well,” she began after some thought. “The best I can say is that you are cursed with a blessing or blessed with a curse, depending on how you’d care to look at it.”

“Blessing,” they both said and somehow seemed to interpret it as permission. The kissing began again for the hundredth time, and as odd as it sounds, I could feel myself disappear; I could hear the stopping of clocks. It was a lonely feeling, and I bent down to kiss Claudia on the cheek. She rolled over, smiled, and kissed me in kind.

“You okay?” I asked.

“Yes, I am,” she said. “I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

“Why don’t you take Laura out back for a smoke? Preferably before she starts praying again. I’ll finish the massage thing with Holly.”

I thought that was a good idea. I moved over to their massage table and made the offer to Laura. At first, she was reluctant to pull away from Holly, but with some coaxing from both Holly and me, she stood, wrapped the sheet around herself, and with wobbly knees, turned to leave the house with me. I steadied her with both hands, feeling as though I was touching something that did not belong to me. What coursed through her belonged to Holly, and for the first time, I did indeed understand that it had nothing to do with *it*. It had to do with them. It was far more emotional than it was sexual.

I aimed the shorn Sampson through the sliding glass doors. I had discovered her weakness, without a doubt, but there was absolutely no triumphant joy in it. It made me need to look more at myself than at her—at the part of me that wanted so to defeat her. But, her weakness was also her strength. It was a connection to someone, and in that instant, I understood the paradox.

I made her sit down on the step so her back was to Holly, and then I got us both a cigarette from my pack on the porch’s end table. I lit her cigarette and then mine. We sat in silence, side by side, and I had a hard time trying to fathom where she was in the world, if she was there at all. It suddenly dawned on me that pulling a jumper back from the ledge might have proven easier than trying to pull her back from the edge of herself. She had shown a different side of herself—her vulnerabilities—to others, not just to Holly as was customary. I wasn’t sure how she would think of me now. Would we be closer? Awkwardly more distant? For some strange reason, I thought back to our Murder Mystery Weekend and to the guilt I had for ‘killing’ her. That was as scripted as this, but this time I was the scriptwriter.

We continued to sit in silence, and the discomfort in it eventually dissipated. Now, peace ruled.

Claudia and Holly eventually got my attention and with it my acknowledgement that the massage session was over.

“They’re done, Laura,” I said. “We can go back in now. Come on.

Holly's waiting for you."

She smiled until it slowly turned into a beam. She looked at me and most assuredly asked without questioning, "Holly whipped, huh?"

"Holly whipped," I agreed, returning the smile. "More power to ya."

She slid her arm around my shoulder, and with geisha strides, we made our way back into the house, into the open arms of the ones we loved.

Everyone sat around on the living room floor patiently waiting her turn in the bathroom to get cleaned up and dressed. The mood had changed. The usual laughter was very low key. Pensive maybe. Had we all learned something? Would we all pull our partner a little bit closer?

Finally, it was Ginny who lost patience with the waiting. "For gosh sakes!" she said. "Who is holding up the line?"

Alison looked around and surmised, "Holly and Laura."

Faster than even the thought could reach the tongue, all of us yelled, "Dressing room!" at the top of our lungs. The boisterous laughter returned full tilt.

Kris yelled down the hall, "Laura McCallister, come out with your hands up!"

We waited, expecting silence or a few Oh-Gods to make us giggle like schoolgirls. Instead, the door slowly opened, and Laura peered around the corner, toothbrush in mouth. Through the froth of toothpaste and a grin, she asked, "Put my hands up *where?*"

It wasn't what we expected, but nonetheless, the giggling commenced. Two minutes later, they both emerged. The once again puffed-up Laura did her little peacock dance down the hall. She entered the living room and looked at each of us, knowing exactly what we were thinking.

"Wouldn't you all like to know?" she bantered. "You had your chance, ladies."

Holly pushed her through the throng, all the while shaking her head at us and rolling her eyes. To this day, I remain unsure if she was denying that anything had happened in their makeshift dressing room or if she was merely shaking her head in disbelief at the audacious ledge walker.

The complete book can be purchased in ebook or paperback. Please visit the [LAC Bookstore](#). Also available from other retailers.

## About the Author

Rosalyn Wraight is also the author of three Detective Laura McCallister lesbian mysteries: *Woman Justice*, *Secrets and Sins*, and *Corpse Call*. These novels feature several characters from this book.

The ongoing Lesbian Adventure Club series, thus far, includes seven more titles: *Savages*, *Loose Sleuths*, *Sisters*, *Leakers Ignited*, *Scraps*, *L-Word C-word*, and *Spiders*.

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