



I don't know how I did it.

I don't know how I managed to exchange pleasantries with Misty, or wait while Ray did the same with her husband Dimitri, or greet the kitchen staff (who were like family at Bridge House) without my head exploding.

Or, more accurately, my lady bits.

I had to admit, I was in something of a fog. The last time someone had, ahem, planted a seed in my garden was.... Oh. Oh no. I couldn't even remember when. It had to have been my ex-husband. But I couldn't pinpoint when. A year? Two?

After everything happened that part of me sort of shut down. It was awake now, though.

Finally, I was standing in a gorgeously decorated bedroom, with soft light playing on the pale sheets neatly folded under the lavender comforter. And I was standing in front of a man with defined shoulders, muscular arms, a broad chest and hips that don't lie.

He was looking at me with a hunger that I felt down to the very core of my being. Because it wasn't a hunger to feed. It was a hunger to consume. He wanted me. He wanted *me*.

That's hot.

Ray'd thought ahead. Overnight bags sat in one corner. A small table with assorted desserts I had no desire for sat in the other, next to a bucket of champagne on ice. I was not at all interested in ice, though.

I wanted fire.

I can't remember if Ray stepped towards me, or me towards him. I know we met in the middle of the room. I know with shaking fingers I unbuttoned his shirt. I know he kissed the caps of my shoulders when he slid my own shirt off. I felt the breeze of his soft lips at the crook of my neck, my head dropped back, eyes closed.

Each time we'd started down this path before, it had been fast and frenzied. As if we were trying to make up for thirty years of lost passion in the span of five minutes. That buildup was there. At the root of my body, a tiger yawned, stretched, and prepared to pounce.

But Ray wasn't moving fast. He was taking his time, making my knees weak with each touch of his lips to all the parts of my body where I didn't want them, ignoring the parts that did. He guided me to the bed, laying me down with a painful ease, kissing my chest, my arms, my stomach.

Then he'd come back up, to cup my face and gaze into my eyes, reminding me without words that I was precious to him. It only made me want him more. He kissed me, at first soft, then



more urgently. The weight of him on top of me was heavy, but wanted. In fact, I wanted more weight. I wanted to feel buried under him. Swallowed whole in his essence.

I gripped his hips, unbuttoning the jeans that were in my damn way. He chuckled when I slid them off of him, but the laugh ceased when I took him into my hand, stroking the length of him, taking him from semi-hard to fully erect. That struck a fire in his eyes. He hissed my name, and I moaned my approval, his mouth on mine, as he nibbled on my lower nip.

"Woman. What you do to me." He slithered my clothes off me like a snake, until I lay on the bed with nothing but my underwear.

And while I'd expected it to be awkward, no part of me felt exposed or uncomfortable under his gaze. It was far too appreciative for that. He stood at the foot of the bed, scanning his eyes over me until I felt them like his hands. I squirmed, desire building between my legs until I thought I might orgasm just from the looks he gave me.

He crawled over me, stalking me like prey, stopping to taste or touch. But never in the sensitive places. Until he reached my breasts. Then he paused, as if encountering a new toy, and let himself play.

His tongue closed over one nipple, flicking it to full attention while his fingers teased the other. I arched into his mouth, pebbled and hungry. He feasted on one, then the other, while my hands dug into his back, my nails scratched his skin. His wolf growled over my breasts, the rumble of that sound travelling through me like a jolt of electricity.

And with just his mouth and hands, roaming me and teasing me, he took me over that first wave. Just as I was ready to peak, his fingers found and circled my nub, swollen and tender. And the orgasm shot through me like an arrow.

I screamed his name, bringing his lips to mine while he continued that same, slow tease of my clit. The second time I came, it was with my mouth on his. With an utterly male look of satisfaction, Ray travelled back down, gripping my thighs with his hands so he could taste me. Replacing fingers with his tongue, he dove into me, lapped at me, and sucked with a fervor that had me gasping for breath.

I gripped the bed sheets, arching into him, as my world tilted upside down a third damn time. My heart pounded in my chest, surely that was all I could handle. But he hovered over me, and I tasted myself in his kisses, and I wanted more. More more more.

I flipped him over, straddling him because I loved to. And, meeting his eyes with a bold smile that surprised me, I let him watch as I took him inside of me, inch by slow inch. When he filled me completely I held us there, watching as Ray's eyes glazed over, as he gripped my ass, desperate for the movement I withheld.



I leaned forward to kiss him, our tongues mingling, our breath matching. Then sat upright, lifting and lowering as his hips thrust. His hands were on my breasts again, his fingers pinching my nipples just enough to increase the sensation. He wrapped his arms around me, flipping us with a fluidity that stole my breath.

His fingers were clasped in mine, he pulled them overhead, slamming into me as he was carried on his own wave. We moved together so seamlessly. Like our bodies had been born to align. With one last kiss, with my name on his lips, Ray came.

And took me with him.

When our hearts had resumed a steady beat, when I lay in his arms, we enjoyed the intimacy of the after. One of his hands skimmed my arm, and mine ran along his stomach, his chest, his hips.

"I love you, Simone."

I lifted my head, pressing into the tenderness that lived in the afterglow. "I love you, Ray."

There was more talk that night. The champagne did, eventually, get opened. He tasted it off of my skin, making me squirm while he got drunk on me. We might have slept, an hour, maybe two. We made love like we were young again, minus the lack of experience and fumbling.

"Look at this," I said the next morning, as we stepped out of the shower. I extended my arm to show him the strange markings on the inside of my left wrist. They were a soft rose colored, a series of hearts and question marks interwoven like the links of a chain. I ran my fingers over them, felt nothing. "Did I get a tattoo last night and not know it?"

"Not technically." Ray kissed them, a sense of wonder softening his eyes as a shimmer of tears filled them. His lips trembled. "I didn't expect that so soon."

"Expect what?" Everything about him had gone soft. Well, almost everything.

"Look." He turned, showing me his back and the markings that were not there the night before. They were the same design. The same color. I traced them, feeling a soft buzz vibrating under my skin. He turned back, joy like sunshine radiating from him. "It's the beginning of our soul bond. They'll grow, together, as we bond further."

"Hmm." I'd never had a tattoo. But as far as markings went, these were pretty cool. "And how do we, uhm, bond exactly?"

"Well." Ray was behind me, hands already cupping me. "It starts like this."

I dropped my head to his shoulder, nearing the edge again. "Tell me more."



"Soon," he whispered against my ear, "The physical and emotional will merge. We'll join in the ways we'd always longed to. I am yours and you are mine."

He was teasing me as he spoke, one hand between my legs the other on my boobs. I swear the man had found a button there that instantly made me hot.

Maybe it was just the man.

"Yes," I whispered back, angling to kiss. "Yes, please."

"Let me show you." I whimpered when his hands left me, but he joined our fingers, leading me back to the bed.

By noon, his markings covered his back.

Mine ran up to my elbow.

And they were just the beginning.



Hey friend,

Jen Lassalle here. Thanks so much for enjoying the *Magnolia* series enough to absorb everything about it. It's always fun to get a little steamy. Especially when Simone's been taking cold showers for a while, now.

In case this is your first foray into the world of Treater's Way, I've put some detail about my other two series, both of which take place in the same universe, below. A lot of the characters who make cameos in the *Witchful* books can be found below.

If you used this freebie to join my newsletter, you'll get a few more emails from me. If you're already on my mailing list, thanks so much for sticking around. I've got some amazing things planned, in Treater's Way, and beyond...

With love and light,

Jen

	The krewe at Illusion Square went on quite the treasure hunt. With the world at stake, four friends manage to find love and the family they've always dreamed about. Find out more in <i>The Enchanted Elements</i>, a low-steam fantasy romance adventure series. Click Here to Start Reading
	Norbert the gator isn't the only strange thing at Bridge House. And Misty's midlife adventures are just getting started. Find out more in <i>Murky Midlife Waters</i>, a paranormal women's fiction novella series. Click Here to Start Reading