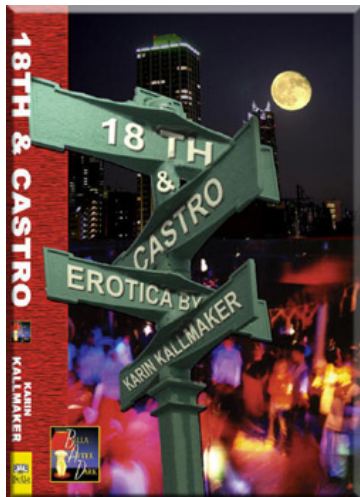

Excerpt from 18th & CASTRO



18TH & CASTRO IS A COLLECTION OF LESBIAN EROTICA SHORT STORIES BY KARIN KALLMAKER.

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UP ON THE ROOFTOP ~PART 1~

“If we time it just right, we can get in.” The dare in Suze’s eyes makes my heart pound.

“But we’ll get in trouble.” I hate that I whine, but I’ve grown to hate even more that something as simple as sneaking into an apartment building is the wildest thing I’ve done in a decade.

“The view from the roof is great. You can see the whole street. You brought binoculars, right?”

“Sort of.”

“What does that mean? Oh, look—here!” She bolts across the sidewalk, catching the building door just before it closes behind a tenant who exited.

I slither in behind her, and she makes a show of patting her pockets for supposed keys on the way to the elevator. On the fourth floor we climb up one flight of stairs and exit onto the roof.

“There will be other people later, but they’ll assume we belong or are someone’s guest. Especially if we stay quiet.” She slings her backpack against the wall and leans over. “Come and look, Amy.”

I set down my satchel and timidly peer at the street below. At first I’m a little dizzy, but when I realize I can see all the way from Market Street on my right to Nineteenth on my left, a span of nearly three

blocks, I'm thrilled. "Last year it was so crowded I left. This will be great."

"What brought you out last year?" Suze looks perfectly innocent but I'm well aware that she's fishing for some kind of declaration from me—she's been doing that since she was hired in our department.

"I'd only been here a few weeks, and it was the biggest event since I'd arrived. Every one says that the guys have the most amazing costumes. In Cedar Rapids, believe me, the most outrageous thing you can do on Halloween is fishnets and a black wig."

"There they are!" Suze pulls sleek binoculars from her backpack. "Well, believe me, that's going to seem tame the moment the sun goes down. And by midnight, Cedar Rapids will seem a long, long way from here."

Why San Francisco, Amy? That was the question all my relatives and friends had asked. Yes, it's expensive to live here. Yes, they have crime and foreign food. Yes, jobs can go up in smoke. None of them had asked the same question Suze had been dancing around since we'd struck up a friendship at work. *You're going to San Francisco because you're gay, right?*

"See the building across the street?" Suze points and I nod as I open my satchel. When the sun goes down it's going to be cold. "Last year, let's just say, there were some inspiring indoor activities."

"You mean...?"

"Oh, yeah. Wouldn't I love to have an apartment in that place? Right in the heart of the Castro, and—oh look!" Suze points down. "I think she lives in building. I'm pretty sure I watched her last year. Look at those boots."

I am looking. Is that the kind of woman that turns Suze on? I don't glance down at my comfortable Hush Puppies, nor finger my cloth jacket. "I don't think I could carry off all that leather."

"Do you want to?"

Something in Suze's voice suddenly makes my heart pound. I can't look at her. "Not really. I don't think that's me."

"Neither do I." Her voice makes me think of velvet. "I like you just as you are."

Don't look, I tell myself. I don't know why I am so scared. I have been desperate for her to touch me for at least six weeks, yet irrationally afraid I won't survive if she does. Yes, I'm gay, I'd wanted to tell everyone at home. There was just one technicality—I'd never been with a woman. I want to be with Suze, though.

I set my hoodie next to my feet and scrabble in my satchel.

"Are those *opera* glasses?" Suze is openly laughing at me, something I am used to from her.

"Yes." I can finally glance in her direction again. "Got a problem with that? They're all I had."

Sometimes Suze has a wit that can cut glass. Her first few weeks on the job as a programmer she'd occasionally scoured me—clothes, hair, being from the Midwest, you name it. I told myself maybe her behavior was the same thing as a playground punch to the arm, and given the way she was looking at me now, maybe I'd been right.

Her eyes are soft and yet still dancing with laughter as she reaches into her backpack. "I brought a pair for you in case you forgot. These should work better."

I accept the binoculars and reach into my satchel again. "I brought beer."

Her grin deepens. "Perfect."

We clink bottles and take a long draft. Planting our elbows on the top of the wall, we settle in to wait for sunset.

HUMAN FEMALE *PON FARR*

~ 3B ~

“You think this is fun? To have some kind of human female pon farr every twenty-eight days?” Jax shook off Tate’s embrace.

“Well, honey, I’d like to make it fun.” Tate dangled the handcuffs suggestively.

Jax sighed. So she was a walking nerve, and her body felt as if she would never get enough attention in all the right places. It was Halloween, and they’d both gone to a lot of trouble with their costumes. Why not get it over with so they could go out?

Her inner critic announced that a “get it over with” mindset was a guarantee that whatever they did, she’d be unsatisfied with the result. God, she hated these hormones.

She tried to improve her attitude. “Since when does Seven handcuff Janeway to anything? Janeway is the top.”

Tate ran a hand over her foam-molded front. “Dream on!”

“She’s the captain. By definition.” Jax tossed her red hair for emphasis.

“Well, she can’t be in control all the time.”

“Pardon me, but a starship captain can be a top one hundred and fifty percent of the time. They have special training.”

Tate, who’d already put on her Star Fleet regulation boots,

reached for one of Jax's wrists. "Okay, consider this training. Just in case dear Captain Janeway should find herself captured by Seven-of-Nine clones with a bed-shaped tractor beam."

Various parts of Jax's body were delivering status reports. Clitoris: hard and aroused, Captain. Cunt: swollen and wet, Captain. Nipples: erect and playful, Captain. "I hate these hormones. I'm desperate to get laid, and the moment I ovulate it'll all stop."

"Why not make the best of them?" Tate put her arms around Jax's waist. Jax breathed in the scent of Tate's shampoo as she buried her face into the sleek blond hair. "C'mon, Jax. Let me handcuff you to the bed. It'll be wicked hot."

Jax closed her eyes. Tate was a darling, and a real sweetie. Every month she came up with something new and distracting so that Jax didn't feel quite so much like a bitch in heat. The idea was wicked hot, and if they didn't do something soon, she was going to soak through her Star Fleet uniform.

Truthfully, if they didn't do something before they went to the party, she'd spend the whole night rubbing up against anything that moved and wanting to drag Tate back home to get handcuffed to the bed. So why not have the wicked hot sex first?

"Okay," she said weakly, knowing she sounded unwilling and ungracious. It was the hormones talking.

Tate positively scampered to the bathroom. In moments lube and towels were next to the bed. How predictable I am, Jax thought. She's so good to me. Tears threatened. She hated herself like this, and the closer to menopause she got the worse it was.

"Captain Janeway, I think you ought to get out of that uniform. I don't want you pulling rank on me."

"I just got it on."

"I can't do all the things I want with that one-piece Velcro unisuit in the way." Tate sidled up to her. "Can I help?"

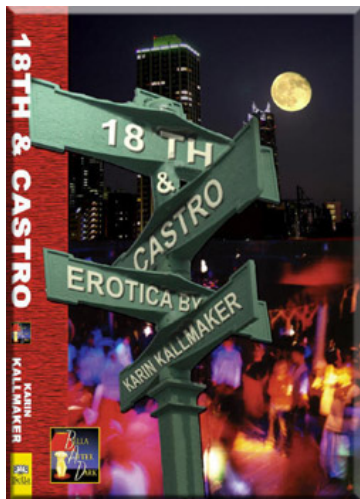
Jax nodded as she turned her back. Tate ripped open the Velcro, then kissed her way hungrily down Jax's back. She couldn't help a shiver.

"You're not the only one who gets hot as hell when you ovulate. I know what you're going to taste like and how much I'm going to enjoy it. I'm as wet as you are."

Jax would have said "I love you," but the lump in her throat was too big. She was so horny it felt unattractive and needy, but Tate knew just what to say.

Naked, she let Tate push her down on the bed. "I wonder how it would feel to come all over Seven-of-Nine's thigh."

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