**The Grand Prize**

**A TIOS Tale**

**Part Nine: Show-and-Tell**

“Bullshit.”

“I’m serious. But remember, you promised not to say anything to anyone. I mean *anyone*. If word got out because of me, it would destroy her.”

“I told you I’d keep it between us, didn’t I? Have a little faith, Conner. Even if I didn’t, I’m not stupid enough to pick a fight with Vaughan. On top of which, I’m sure as shit not going to out somebody. What kind of asshole do you take me for?”

“Must’ve spent too much time at Kirsten’s,” Conner muttered. He didn’t know where to put his hands with Neveah’s head between his legs. The chair didn’t have armrests. It barely had a seat, rickety thing that it was. He still didn’t know how he’d let her talk him into meeting her way out here, so open yet so secluded. After a moment, he settled for folding them behind his head.

“You know, you’re pretty ballsy about reminding who all you've been sticking it to while I got your dick in my mouth,” she reminded him between slurps. Several messy streaks of her black lipstick already coated his shaft.

“You said if I agreed to meet up, we could talk. I’ve got a lot on my mind. If I just wanted a blowjob, I could’ve called up any number of girls,” he grumped.

Neveah let her teeth nick his glans, but only barely. “Fearless. Absolutely fearless.”

“Look, sorry. It’s been an insane week. The drama which I won’t mention so pointedly, yes, but not only that. I’ve gotten into a fight with Heather. A fight with Jordan. My mom’s freaking out because there’s a train of girls constantly coming over to the house, and there’s more than one who are pretty much stalking me. And I’ve been over and over it to death, and I can’t figure out what the heck even started it all.”

“Sounds like a week,” she agreed mildly, then moaned to herself as she took him back inside her mouth. Sucking cock had never used to make her so *thirsty*. Water, water everywhere, yet not a drop to drink.

“I’m at my wits end. None of it makes any sense. I mean, do you even know why you’re here, Neveah? Why you’re interested in me in the first place?”

“Does anybody? It’s chaos.”

Conner sighed, then spasmed momentarily as her tongue hit a spot just right. “Whatever that means.”

With only a little hesitation, the bobbing mop of dyed black hair pulled back from his shaft. Neveah took it gently in both hands, trailing the tips of her fingers along each side of its slick length. “It means what I said. You, me, them, humanity, the universe… all of it, chaos. Trying to make it make sense only means you’re missing out on the premise. Reasons are what we call the excuses we make for our behaviors after the fact. Causality is a big fuckin’ lie.”

She returned doggedly to her blowjob, pausing only to shoo away a mosquito. Summer was coming, and they tended to be plentiful here at Bear Lake. Remote or no, he had to admit she’d been right about the location though. The roof of one of the groundskeeper buildings, a scant fifteen feet off the ground but enough to make it feel like they were in their own idyllic pocket universe. Great view, and between the trees and the elevation, they were practically invisible despite being totally exposed. In fact, it was secluded enough they could even make a little noise if they felt like it without too much worry. His tendency toward anxiety over good times had asserted itself when she’d suggested such an exposed meetup point, but now that they were here, it was surprisingly hot.

Or it would be if he could quiet his mind.

“Ooooookay. Not sure how that helps me, but… sounds neat, I guess.” Neveah didn’t respond. Unlike most women he’d been with, blowjobs weren’t something she did to be nice or to reciprocate something he’d done. Neveah genuinely seemed to like sucking his dick. So had Kirsten, so had Olivia. Mary less so, though she’d offered unprompted. He’d gotten more anonymous texts and hand-drawn notes promising oral sex this week than he’d expected he might in a lifetime.

“And another thing,” he went on into the silence. Neveah scowled into his cock, brushing aside a strand of soot-black hair so she could look up and pretend she was paying attention, but didn’t let up. “Where does this all go? I like you, Neveah, now that I’m not terrified of you. Or a little less terrified, maybe.” A thin smile, he thought, at that, which only affirmed the latter. “But how do I reconcile it all? Are you going to be all right if I keep fooling around with other women? Are they? Heck, even if I buckle down and stick to a short list, the flirtation alone could drive a person insane. Not only me, but… I know if I had a girlfriend who was getting this kind of attention, I’d be going jealous out of my mind.”

“So lose your mind already. Envy is tyranny, and I’m no fascist.” Neveah threw herself downward, deep-throating hard. Mr. Lyons got off on watching her eye shadow run down her cheeks, she’d shared that night after they left Heather’s house; she’d gotten plenty of practice at this. Conner groaned at the tightness, hands coming down to rest on her head. Thin streaks of makeup running with the unbidden tears glowed black and gold in the late spring sun.

“That’s… that’s amazing. Geez, Neveah.” His head bounced on his neck like a bobblehead, dizzy with pleasure. “But… what was… you said something. About… something? Envy? It didn’t make sense. Sheesh, my head is swimming.” For a moment, it had made him think of… but… what had she said?

With a final irritated grunt, Neveah released him and sunk back onto her heels. “All right, I can see I’m not going to be allowed to blow you in peace, so… fine.” The dark-haired girl rose to her feet, but wasted no time sinking into his lap. It was a little disconcerting how effortlessly her pussy found his cock, dropping almost as fast as if they’d both been wearing clothes and she weren’t trying to fuck him at all. There was a brief moment of resistance, but then she was simply there, her pussy wrapped around him like hot, dense jelly.

“I… um… I guess we can have sex,” he consented belatedly as the metal folding chair she’d brought for them began to creak with her motion.

“I fucking love it when you hurt me a little bit, right like that,” she sighed, beginning to rock her hips slowly. “And since you won’t do it on your own…”

Conner made a face. “I’m not going to hurt you.”

The tears had run down her cheeks somewhat disconcertingly, but he could see the appeal, at least visually. A single drop fell from her cheek and splattered on one heavy, round breast. She saw him watching, and so she moved his hand up to feel what he seemed to enjoy seeing, his fingers smearing it liberally.

Content, Neveah leaned forward and sucked at his shoulder. “I won’t promise the same.” She grasped a piece of him between her teeth and gave him a little nip.

“Ow!” By some heretofore unexpressed reflex, Conner’s free hand gave her butt a hard slap in retaliation. His eyes widened in surprise at himself after, but Neveah only hissed through her teeth in elation and began rocking harder.

“You keep that up and you’ll never get rid of me,” she murmured.

Against his normally gentle nature, Conner indeed cut loose on his lay of the day, granting her two more slaps to the behind. On the first, she gasped in obvious delight; on the second, she threw her body into him so hard it knocked them over backwards, the chair folding as they toppled to the roof of the shed. Conner yelped in surprise and a little pain as they hit the ground, but in the next moment he was being mounted anew by a voracious busty goth girl.

“You think you can take me, take me,” she grunted as her fingers sunk into his chest. Conner whirled and threw her down roughly on her back – and not only because the leaf-strewn roof seemed unlikely to be clean. Neveah seized ahold of his head and jerked his face to hers, her tongue starting in his mouth but soon wandering around his neck in an aimless frenzy.

Without quite knowing how or why, Conner took her. Maybe she was right and there didn’t need to be some deep reason behind it. She was here, and eager, and hot as hell. Shoot, maybe it wasn’t even that complex. Perhaps this was simply who he was, a guy who fucked who he could fuck and found reasons for it later. For now, slamming his cock into her harder than he’d ever fucked another girl – not even Hailey, not even when she’d begged – and twisting her nipples so hard that he soon learned a woman could come from such treatment, Neveah was plenty.

Before their next go, Neveah agreed to the sanitary concession of having something clean-ish to lie on. Without bothering to put on a single stitch of clothing, she made her way down the ladder. A moment later, Conner cringed as he heard a window break, and a couple minutes later she climbed back up with a canvas tarp spattered with brown and green paint under her arm. It was good enough, and they soon gave it a few fresh stains.

Some time later, the pair lay there together, naked and happily weary – though only one wore a smile – as Conner idly traced unintelligible patterns across her breasts with his thumb and index finger.

“Are you some kind of witch, drawing spells on me?” she asked dryly.

“I promise you I am not a witch. Though I guess that’s probably just what a witch would say, huh.”

“No. A witch would own that shit. Though you’d never know it, the way you’ve got half the senior class hunting you. Cock witch.”

“Is that a thing?”

“No.” She considered. “At least, I don’t think so. The way you make me come, maybe I’m wrong.”

Conner sat up, though wasn’t yet ready to stop playing with his new toys. “Does it bother you?”

“Coming til I can’t see straight? No, can’t say as I have complaints. Though if you have any, feel free to shut up and be glad I’ve expanded my type to include your scrawny ass.”

“I’m not scrawny,” he said, though the way the words came out made him feel scrawny. “But no, I meant about the other girls. And don’t bite me again.”

“Why bite you when you’re sitting that close to the edge,” she replied evenly. “And no, it doesn’t bother me. Like, don’t bring ‘em up while you’re dick’s in me, maybe, but otherwise… Like I said before, I don’t do envy. Neither should you.”

“Pretend for a moment that I was in the middle of having sex when that happened and don’t remember what you said.”

“You should be paying more attention then, not less. It’s when you’re at your most vulnerable. I could do anything to you when I have you inside me.” At last, she sat up, eyes on his level, black streaks marking her face like scars made of shadow. “Anything.”

“Noted.” He gestured for her to go on.

“Define envy.”

At least this pop quiz opened with an easy question. “I guess envy is wanting what, or who, someone else has. Right?”

“What,” she corrected. “Not what or who. What, exclusively. You can’t *have* a person. If you do, then their personhood is negated and you’ve made them an object to permit ownership.”

He recalled, faintly, that when she’d first said something about it during sex, it had spurred his thinking somehow, but now there was nothing. “That’s… deep. Philosophical. I guess I was expecting something more like ‘thou shalt not covet’ or something.”

“Well that’s what you got. You wanna fuck your neighbor’s wife, buy the bitch some flowers and fuck her. People can sleep with whoever they wanna sleep with, which is why marriage is just another scheme of the patriarchy to–” She could see in his eyes that her rant was losing him and reined herself in. “Anyway, I’m just saying, envying someone’s girlfriend, boyfriend, it diminishes them. Diminishes you.”

“So you’re fine with me, you know, fooling around with other girls?”

Neveah rolled her eyes and tapped each of their chests back and forth as she replied. “You can fuck me any time you wanna fuck me. Know that I wanna fuck you any time. I hear you’re fucking Mary or Olivia or Kirsten or Heather or who the fuck ever and yeah, I might wish it was me. I’m not gonna live some lie, though, and act like you gotta live your life for me, tat my name on your cock like it’s not yours. That’s bullshit.”

“Huh. I guess that’s… cool. Like, open-minded. Most girls aren’t like that. I’m not sure I’m like that.”

“Eh, you know your girls are getting nailed on the regular and I haven’t seen you lift a finger about it. Your big sis, too. Maybe you get it.”

“I… no. I do not get that.” Conner frowned.

“Fair. Not judging.” She paused, relented. “OK, so I am. But whatever. Some chicks feed on that jealousy shit, reading their boyfriend’s texts, snooping on their instagram, throwing tantrums when they talk to another girl. Guys, too. Guys are even worse.”

“As we are in so many things,” he conceded, not wanting to get baited into another rant.

“Not that it’s my business, kinda the opposite, actually, but you should pack that in your brain and carry it with you down that ladder when we go. Heather might’ve fucked up springing these titties on you, and yeah she should’ve asked, but she was only trying to swallow that green wave down. Practically choked on it. You ask me, she was more turned on watching us than you or I were actually doing it.”

“I had my blindfold on, so I’ll take your word for it.” He did, too. The editor-in-chief hadn’t forgotten his little trick he’d played before prom. *Hey, nothing to get a girl excited over a fella like a little jealousy. – Amanda Carpenter*

He suddenly sat bolt upright. “Where’s my phone?”

Amanda emerged from between the trees next to the parking lot. It was unlike Conner to call her unexpectedly. They were planners, both of them. If they were going to do something, it was scheduled. Busy as his social calendar had gotten, it seemed unthinkable that he’d found room to pencil in idle socialization. Or even a booty call, considering who all he had at his beck and call. Amanda wasn’t being humble or anything, but really, some of those girls in her class were crazy hot. Some of them he’d known for years, way back when he’d been wee little sixth grade Conner sprouting hair in funny places and first noticing that not all girls were cootieful, yet only now was feeling like he had a shot with them.

God, it turned her on.

It was his fault, she knew, and once or twice, she’d pushed herself, made herself see through that TIOS veil. She’d realized that yeah, what he’d done using that quote, and what she’d done following up on it in that text conversation with Conner the day after, were objectively pretty fucked up. Still, objectivity was long gone. She went to school with an ugly fat girl as one of its most sought after ladies. An unremarkable ginger led the pack of the boys (though she’d heard Kirsten brag that his cock was something special). Students went to class in short shorts, booty shorts, dolphin shorts, sports bras, wonder bras, only bras, no bras, and the girl who seemed likely to make valedictorian was pioneering the most depraved and slutty attire of them all. Sex ed was taught with no teacher, a class without class, sex with no education. And the yearbook? Dear god, the yearbook.

So Amanda figured if her hyper-sexed classmates’ hypersexuality was pointed in a different direction for a week, so what, and stopped fighting it. God damn, she couldn’t wait to tell Conner what she’d done, to pry every juicy detail out of him. How he’d squirm, how he’d get mad, then pretend to still be mad when she showed him he was being stupid, then get sulky, then let her comfort him. It was going to be so good.

The sun was beginning to go down as she made her way, per his instructions, toward the woods behind Northside. She shouldn’t have a hard time seeing her way through to Bear Lake. What he wanted with her, she’d be most interested to discover since he’d been so vague on the phone. Could he simply miss her? He was indubitably the most sentimental guy she’d ever known. If anyone could miss his girlfriend (one of them) in the midst of fending off a spontaneously self-starting harem, it would be Conner.

She hoped she looked cute. Amanda hadn’t taken much time to get dolled up for him before setting out. Her scarlet hair was curling a little at the end with the warm air, giving it a little bounce to match her step. Her legs, certainly one of her best features, were still baby smooth from the pre-prom wax, and were practically glowing in the fading daylight. Little bit of cleavage in her black top, little bit of makeup, little bit of lipstick. A lot of Amanda.

An exposed root very nearly took her down. Thankfully nobody was around to see it. Her phone became a flashlight the rest of the way, and before long she stepped out from under the canopy into the clearing around Bear Lake. The side of the lake closest to the high school was fairly quiet. Looking around, she saw only a group of younger kids trying unsuccessfully to skip stones, a man fishing in a rowboat a little ways out, and, somehow more surprisingly, a woman she almost didn’t recognize as Mrs. Ingram the art teacher packing up a small canvas on an easel. Amanda only recognized her because she was an editor-in-chief of the yearbook and it was her business to recognize NHS staff, but the woman still waved to her. She returned it and started walking along the path near the lake towards the right, the sun casting her long shadow ahead of her.

Despite being a city park, Bear Lake was practically as much a part of the Nighthawk legacy as Northside itself. Conner had brought her out here once during the winter, back when they’d still been pretending they didn’t like each other. (Sometimes he had pretended a little too well.) He had been instructed by Miss C to acquaint the new editor-in-chief with some local businesses and sites that were near and dear to their classmates. He’d begun here, tromping through snowy woods like he didn’t care if she caught up, and her taking her sweet time knowing full well he wasn’t going anywhere until she arrived.

*“This is Bear Lake. They do a bunch of events here. Homecoming bonfire, cross country meets, graduation party, et cetera.” That was all Conner said, waiting for her to acknowledge he’d done his part and could be relieved of her company.*

*She stepped past him, answered with her back to him. Amanda could feel him doing that thing where he pretended he wasn’t checking her out. When she’d caught him before, he always had this irritating look on his face like he’d been in the middle of studying one of her countless flaws.*

*“It’s really pretty.” She smirked with her back to him. Let that boy think of something wrong with a pleasant, banal observation like that.*

*“Yep. It’s a lake. Lakes are pretty. Anyway, it’s cold out here. Do you have any questions, or can we get moving? We have like ten other places to see, and I have plans after school.”*

*Amanda still didn’t give him the satisfaction of turning around. She, of course, did not have plans. She never had plans. Unless it was yearbook or school related, she wasn’t even sure she* could *have plans. “Oh yeah? Anything good?”*

*“I’m meeting someone, not that it’s any of your business.”*

*“Yeah? What’s his name?”*

*“Is that a gay joke? Seriously? That is so–”*

*Amanda pivoted, eyes already mid-roll. “It’s an ‘I can’t believe you’re too insecure to admit you’re seeing someone to a woman’ joke, so we’re clear.”*

*“Insecure? Me?”*

*“Do you prefer ‘self-important?’”*

*“Look, I’m the one who told you how to get here on your own–”*

*“‘Keep going through the woods until you hit a lake,’ yeah, very reassuring to us non-woodsmen.”*

*“–and* you’re *the one who just had to drag me out here, with just the two of us, total privacy, and try to be all suave and sexy and ‘It’s so beautiful here, Conner, isn’t it romantic.’ Ugh. The nerve!”*

*She matched his sneer. “If I recall, I observed that the lake was pretty. Believe it or not, Cassanova, people can make observations about the scenery without it being a reflection of the depth of their crush on you!”*

*“Right, because that’s your other game. Once you run out of charm, look for a way to put me down when there’s no witnesses to see what you’re really like!”*

*“Saying I don’t have a crush on you isn’t a personal attack, you egomaniac! I mean, seriously, witnesses? Witnesses! One more jerk comment like that and there really won’t be any witnesses!”*

*“See?! Suddenly we’re alone, and out come the daggers!”*

*“If I had a dagger, trust me, it would already be* in*!”*

*“Not if I had one, too, or else I’d already have done you the favor so I could get out of this stupid show-and-tell death march!”*

*They were shouting only inches apart from one another, at last stopping to let their baleful glares do the communicating. Their breath came out in a thick mist, commingling together in the space between their lips. It was Conner who flinched first. Worse, he made an even more fatal mistake of letting his regret show in his eyes.*

*“Feel better getting it off your chest?” she asked his retreating back.*

*He froze in place. “Had to get the last word, huh.”*

*“If you want it, co-editor-in-chief, you got it. Wouldn’t dream of stealing your thunder.”*

*“No no, I insist. I can show you where my kidneys are, if you need help aiming. Something tells me you know the way, though.”*

*Amanda smiled at the back of his head, but kept an ugly thought handy in case she needed to squelch it fast. That boy really did drive her crazy. She cleared her throat.*

“Over here,” came a voice to her left.

Amanda jumped, then put a hand over her heart to calm herself. “Dammit, Conner, you scared the crap out of me.”

He stepped out from behind a tree, joining her on the path. “Sorry, I couldn’t resist. I was just remembering.”

Amanda nodded. “Me too.”

He began walking, and she fell in alongside him, slowing her long-legged strides to let him keep pace. “I figured it out, finally,” he said at last.

Her resolve not to gloat was difficult to suppress, but she managed to allow only a faint smile to emerge, and only briefly. “Yeah?”

“It was you. This whole week, it was you.”

Amanda reached for his hand, but he wasn’t ready for it yet. Fair enough. Sorta. “Who’s the snitch?”

“You really let me sit there all week trying to hunt down Jordan for some insane prank or scheme or whatever, freaking out, barely sleeping, and it was you the whole time?”

He didn’t sound as mad as she’d thought. It was a little disappointing. They didn’t get mad at one another much any more. The opposite, really. “You were really cute trying to find him out. Honestly. Once or twice you even found the right file and I had to cut and paste like a third rate surgeon with a full waiting room to move it in time.”

“Can I ask what it even was? The quote? Or did you just doctor me up to look like Timothee Chalamet or something?”

She tapped her chin. “Should’ve. Darn, wasted opportunity. No, I used words. Your sister’s, actually. We were talking about prom, and Heather and I were singing your praises I guess, and somebody else said you’d looked cute. I guess Angelica’s been a little exasperated with her little bro’s blooming popularity, because she griped something like ‘ew, it’s like everybody in this class is cuckoo for Conner!’ More or less.”

He stopped, hands snapping to his hips. There’s the anger. “And you entered that? Amanda!”

“I entered it. Conner!” she parroted back, echoing his melodrama back at him mockingly. “Come on, nobody got hurt, right? Lots and lots of very consenting adults, girls who got to take a break from that mother fucker Jordan and enjoy the company of a gentleman. Even if they knew about it, all of it, they’d thank me.”

“Thank…! Yeah, I’ll bet. ‘Thanks, Amanda, for making me embarrass myself obsessing over a total nobody like Conner Fishers. You’re the best!’ Please.”

“You knew it was all b.s. and you slept with them anyway. Let’s maybe rein in that high horse of yours, mkay? Speaking of, who all did you let through the gates? Olivia and Mary, obviously–”

“Why is Mary obvious?!”

“And I’m betting Kirsten? I mean, how could you not, right? Hell, if nothing else it’s a chance to shove it in her mouth and shut her the heck up for a minute.”

“That’s crude. Kirsten, as it so happens, has been struggling with her sexuality for years now. Yeah, that’s right, she’s a lesbian, and she’s been living in constant fear that her back-stabbing social circle will use it to destroy her.”

“While that is juicy gossip, I do feel compelled to protest that it’s rather less humanizing considering that Kirsten Vaughan is not, I am pretty sure, human. Anyway, hmm, who else… Heather, no doubt.”

“Have you been following me?”

“I’m just that good about what you’ve been just that bad about, baby.” She grinned broadly, but let it fade when he didn’t return it. “Oh, fine. Olivia and Mary I heard about through the rumor mill in class. Heather’s a safe bet for you any week, this one included, and Kirsten… well…”

“Well?”

Eye contact was difficult to make on this particular admission. “Remember when you said on the phone, totally jokingly, that you’d only sleep with the elites? Cream of the crop?”

“I wasn’t joking. I mean, of course when you have certain women, certain opportunities…” His eyes shot wide as hers darted toward the ground. “You put that in, too! Good grief, Amanda!”

“Well once I saw you were too much of a goody goody to take advantage unless I nudged you… well, I nudged you. Sue me. Better yet, thank me.”

“Why?!” Conner suddenly paused and took a deep breath. “Never mind. I know why. The jealousy thing, right?”

“Guilty again.”

He nodded. The sun was touching the trees on the far side of the lake now; the collision was almost audible in the silence between the two. “I guess it’s my fault after all. All that time I spent being mad at Jordan, and nope, it’s my own fault.”

“Conner…” Amanda didn’t let him retreat, forcing her arms around his neck and craning hers down until he had no choice but to look at her. “Conner, don’t be like that. You didn’t hurt anybody, did you?”

“I mean, I took advantage…”

“We took advantage. And they took advantage. Look, the point is, you had fun, they had fun, and heck I had fun just imagining it. It’s OK! I mean, if we were a normal couple, maybe one of us – I’m honestly not sure who – should have some sharp words for the other. But we’re not a normal couple, Conner. We’re the editors-in-chief of *This Is Our Story*, and you know what? We edited! For all the mess it’s made of things for us, we’re allowed to have a little fun with it sometimes, sweetie.”

“But–”

“No. Conner, you have two girlfriends, not counting your relationship with your teacher and however you want to categorize that. You turned a chatty, chubby girl who had a crush on you into a walking wet dream. Shit, you – and yes, me too – sent the whole senior class to a resort for spring break on someone else’s dime! And you know what? So what! We’re young and we’re having fun and if our fun is a little extra, I don’t care. I happen to think that *you’re* a little extra.”

“Is that a compliment or an insult?”

She stole a quick kiss. “Compliment, dummy.”

He returned one, less quickly. “You really did cross a line, you know.”

“So how was it, fucking a lesbian?”

“I’ve subbed for your class. You tell me.”

He resumed walking. This time, her hand found his no problem.

“Are we supposed to be up here? Is this even safe?” Amanda asked as Conner helped her up from the top rung of the ladder.

“It’s safe. And since when did you worry about ‘supposed to?’”

“Fair.” Amanda gazed around. The lake was barely visible from here, not only because it was dark out, but the trees were still showing off their recovery from the winter, ensconcing them in foliage. About the only way to see someone up here would be to climb up and look, and that shed certainly hadn’t been visible from the path.

An old painting tarp was spread out on the flat rooftop for some reason, and she followed Conner down to lie down beside him, their eyes gazing up to the blooming stars. There would be ample moonlight tonight, too, ideal for what she had in mind before she let that boy back down that ladder.

“So. Tell me everything.”

“A gentleman never–”

Amanda flicked him in the arm. “You definitely twisted my words to get me to have a foursome with you and your other girlfriend and our freaking teacher, so yeah, don’t even.”

“Sure, but some things are private and all. Seems, I dunno…”

“I gave you your pick of every cute girl in the senior class. You get to sleep with them; I get to hear about it. That’s the deal.”

“I never agreed to that!”

“Well you better start agreeing, before I make this uncomfortable.”

“What’s ‘uncomfortable?’”

She rolled on her side, waiting for him to look over before letting her face contort into an ugly-cry visage. Sniffling, Amanda whimpered, “Conner, did… did you… *cheat* on me? How many times? Oh god, I can’t… I’m not sure I even want to know. After all we’ve been through, you betrayed my trust and–”

“OK, OK, god, just stop guilting me already!” he groaned. Mollified, Amanda returned to her back with a self-satisfied giggle and let him proceed. He started at the beginning, walking her through his whole crazy week. The flirtations, the brazen offers, the kiss with Olivia, finding Mary waiting for him in his bedroom naked and masturbating. His paranoia and efforts to uncover Jordan’s scheme she bade him skip past. Then he got back to the good stuff. Heather’s twisted little tit-fuck switcheroo. Fucking Kristy again. Kirsten and her seduction games, and the perversely sweet little tale of helping her take her first step out of the closet.

“Look at you, knight in shining armor for all the worst people at Northside,” she teased. The stars twinkled brightly by the time he finished. Amanda milked him for every last detail. With gradually eroding reticence, Conner elaborated on how tight their pussies were, the sounds they made when he was inside them, whose offers tempted him and whose merely shocked. By the time he was done, Amanda had thrown her own subtlety to the wind, unfastening her shorts and gently teasing herself through her underwear. She imagined herself in each girl’s place, told him what she would have done better (eventually inducing Conner to join her in shucking his own shorts).

“So yeah, that’s… that’s been my week. How was yours?” he asked with a soft laugh.

“Driving myself up the wall, horny out of my goddamn mind waiting for this.”

“Yeah?”

“Hell yeah.” She rolled over to face him, resting a hand on his stomach. He felt so warm. So reassuring. “So, is it my turn? Or do you only sleep with lesbians and undy-sniffers? Maybe I’m not your type.”

“It’s your turn, all right.”

Yet to her surprise, rather than give her the kiss she was already in the midst of leaning into, Conner turned and called out, “OK, you can come up now!”

Her eyes widened. “You did freaking not.”

Conner merely watched for the noise coming from the ladder until suddenly a head came to view. Then a face. Then a body – and then *more* body. The moonlight made the vast expanse of exposed skin practically glow. Against the nearly invisible black of her clothing, it was like she was a disembodied valley of bottomless cleavage suspended from a darkly gorgeous face. Twin streaks of dark makeup were smeared down her cheeks, even gothier than her usual gloomy aesthetic, Amanda thought as she hastily and belatedly remembered to button up her shorts.

“About time,” Neveah grumbled as she pulled herself up. “Was starting to think you two were never gonna stop gabbing.”

“Seriously? A threesome? When are you going to stop using that prom quote to score orgies?”

Conner gave her a look as if to remind her that magical yearbooks weren’t exactly common knowledge, but only briefly. He then extended a hand to the newcomer, who gripped it two-handed and hauled him to his feet, immediately pressing her body against his arm hungrily.

“Who said anything about a threesome?”

Her jaw somehow dropped even further, the bemused aspect of it fading. “Seriously? Who all else you have waiting down there?”

“No one else. Just thought I might want to have some options as to a twosome.” Conner’s hand slid down the girl’s back, settling on her butt. “She said she didn’t mind. Didn’t you, Neveah?”

“I only mind if you pick her,” the goth replied, wriggling her bottom into his palm.

“So give me a reason not to.”

Like that, Neveah’s whole body launched into motion. One hand slid down from Conner’s shoulders towards his butt while the other ventured cavalierly into his underwear. The buxom bad-girl pressed her crotch to his hip, grinding herself up and down against him lasciviously, which had the secondary effect of rubbing her giant tits against the muscles of his arm. Perhaps the primary effect, Amanda reconsidered upon seeing the way Conner extracted the arm and wrapped it around the girl’s shoulders, taking hold of one weighty breast as it now pressed itself against his side.

He couldn’t be serious. That whole evening of slowly building steam, and now he meant to unload it all on this nobody from class? A smug sparkle glittered in Neveah’s dark eyes as she began openly stroking Conner’s cock, supplanting and doubtless improving upon his own prior efforts. Neveah had one of the best grades in class for handjobs, though Amanda had always thought Jordan gave the bitch too much credit for that hateful black-eyed stare she gave while she was tugging at him. Conner seemed to be responding to it, too.

“Take your top off. I want to see ‘em,” he ordered her. Neveah grinned, or maybe snarled? There was something animalistic in it. She never stopped jacking him off as she tore her top off, grabbing it at the waist with her free hand and violently tossing it over her head, black hair flying behind, not even interrupting her stroking as she threw it off the roof. It vanished instantly against the night sky.

“Conner… can we… can we talk?” Amanda asked softly, rising to her knees. It was an effort, sounding congenial as he casually squeezed Neveah’s tits. An effort not to crawl to his feet and bite the bitch’s hand off, then take him into her mouth until he exploded.

He waited until after he was done giving her a long, tongue-swapping kiss to reply. “About what?”

“About… this? About us? About lines and boundaries?”

“You got a lot of demands for somebody who didn’t even hear the man tell you to take your top off,” Neveah retorted with a snicker. “Don’t worry, Carpenter. You’re not so flat. You won’t look like a little girl next to me or anything. At least, no more than you do next to Blake.”

Amanda barely heard the tail end of the taunt over the blood roaring in her ears. Neveah knew about Heather? Neveah felt like she could jerk off Amanda’s man right there in front of her? Neveah thought she was *flat?!*

Off came her shirt. Her necklace caught on the fabric, however, and by the time she extricated it, she’d managed to grab a thin strip of her own hair which she nearly pulled out at the root in her haste to finish the task. The shirt followed Neveah’s over the roof’s edge, fluttering out of sight. She cursed under her breath, and again when she saw that the delay had been all Neveah had guided Conner into a rickety folding chair and planting herself on his lap. Her tits slapped back and forth against his lips and she danced in place, massaging his cock with the front of her panties.

When the hell had she gotten down to her underwear? Not to be outdone, Amanda removed her own shorts, and fuck it, bra and panties after. Nothing they hadn’t all seen before many times. Fewer for Conner, but still, he was no novice to her naked form.

Neveah was in full-on lap dance mode by then, grinding her tight black satin boy shorts against Conner’s cock. Club rules obviously did not apply. Two overflowing handfuls of goth girl titties demonstrated that. A roundly beautiful face sneered up coldly at Amanda as she approached.

“Ahem.”

After a second throat clearing, Conner’s face finally emerged from behind a curtain of darkness. Neveah quickly swept her head into his path to intercept, but a twist of her nipples brought her to heel. With a sulky glower at the towering redhead, she relented and let the two see one another.

“Whatcha need, hon?” he asked with a beatific smile. He was loving this too much. The bastard was playing her like a fiddle and he knew it.

“Are you going to move her out of my way or am I pitching her off the roof?” Neveah shot to her feet in an instant. Amanda was a head and a half taller, but her rival was accomplished at looming by reputation rather than height. Those black-rimmed sockets sucked Amanda down to her level like two quicksand pools of mascara.

Then they were kissing.

If she’d not had her mouth filled with a titanium-studded tongue, and her brain not filled with the after-image of her boyfriend squeezing some random bitch’s tits, and her pussy not filled with a river of lava, she might have objected. Instead, she was suddenly back in class, doing makeout exercises with a partner, letting herself grudgingly give in to Jordan’s sick little games and enjoy her quiet but nonetheless extant sapphic side. Plus tonight, there was more. Tonight, she wasn’t merely tongueing the girl who happened to take the seat in front of her. No, tonight, Amanda was going to show this cheap fetish slut who was boss.

Neveah hit the ground so hard Amanda briefly worried she’d knocked the wind out of her. This was no time to show weakness though. Amanda dropped to the tarp before the other woman could get off her back. Her thighs settled on either side of the girl, and her hands pinned Neveah down by her wrists. The goth girl glared daggers, though there was a subtle twitch at the corner of one side of her mouth where an excited smile threatened to reveal itself.

“Weren’t you saying something a minute ago, something about how I was a little girl next to you?” Amanda gave one of Neveah’s tits a firm slap and then regained control of her wrist before she could more than yelp in surprise. The twin orbs jiggled back and forth against one another like a Newton’s cradle of titty.

“Yeah, get your eyeful, bitch. You wouldn’t believe how much our boy loves fucking these mamas. Came so hard I thought it was gonna blast a hole in my chin.”

“Oh, just shut the fuck up, will you.” Amanda dragged the girl’s hands across the tarp until they were at max extension over her head, then leaned down and smothered her in her own boobs.

There was an indignant squeal, but Neveah knew where her pussy was buttered. The squeal gave way to a growl as she sucked down hard on a nipple that was already as hard as rubber. She was middle of the road on boob play most days, though she usually let Conner have his fun so long as he didn’t slobber too much.

(That is, other than the one time they’d been getting together after his date with Heather which he had initially tried to conceal from Amanda, during which he’d said, “it’s sorta nice playing with a normal girl’s boobs sometimes.” His apology had been sealed with a good half hour of his face between her legs while she vainly enjoyed what he belatedly clarified were in fact spectacular boobs.)

At any rate, as far as Neveah’s efforts went, admitting it aloud would be too painful, but inwardly, Amanda had to concede that the addition of the tongue stud felt positively divine.

She craned her neck to look up at Conner, blowing at the curtain of her hair futilely until finally a few whips of her head gave her a view of him. He was watching the two hungrily, however much he was trying to play it cool. “Think you’re pretty funny, do you,” she grumbled.

“I think you’re pretty… pretty.” He stood up, cock throbbing before him wholesomely.

“Yeah, well, it feels like you think this little tit-bag down here might be prettier, so why don’t you get back there and put your penis where your mouth is. Err… where it’s been, anyway. Ugh, whatever, just fuck me already, you asshole.”

“Well, when you put it like that…”

Rather than go around to her achingly ready pussy, Conner dropped to his knees in front of her. With her boobs still filling Neveah’s mouth, her eyes were right on a level with his cock. Sheesh. Give a mouse a cookie, and he’s gonna want his dick sucked. Fine. She was way past the point where she sucked cock to be nice; now, Amanda simply wanted cock any which way she could get it. She wanted it if for no other reason than to stop Neveah from getting it. If it went in her mouth, fine. Great, even.

Only then, two hands under her shoulders were lifting her up – she was a little sad to lose the wet, smoothly textured pressure of Neveah’s tongue – and then, she was face to face with him. He was smiling at her, and in spite of everything going on around them, everything they’d done to and for and with and without each other this whole past crazy week, there was love on his lips. Hers too, she knew. She made sure when the two pairs met that he knew it as well.

Somewhere in the middle of that sweet, needful kiss, she became aware of the too-familiar sound of a woman’s slurping at a man’s dick.

“Really, Neveah? Are you *that* cock-starved? It’s my freaking turn already!” she snapped at the greedily fellating girl pinned beneath her pelvis.

“Feels like it’s her turn. She’s sure doing a hell of a job.” His eyes stayed on Amanda’s, challenging but somehow still rather merry, as he addressed Neveah. “Little more tongue down there.” His eyes squeezed shut as a gurgling noise sounded below. “Exactly like that.”

Amanda’s eyes narrowed. “I *really* want to be madder at you right now.”

“But instead? You’re too–”

His teasing was cut short by a kiss so hard, from a mouth so hungry, that their teeth nearly knocked together. Amanda’s lithe body entwined itself around his side, her pussy shamelessly humping his hip. As Neveah slurped away at his shaft with noisy greed, Amanda’s pawing only became more frantic. Her need for him was palpable in the heat in those fingertips, audible in the whimpers rising in her throat.

“Fuck me, Conner.”

The words weren’t Amanda’s, though. They originated near the tip of his cock, from the tongue that was still licking up and down his length heedless of his girlfriend’s mounting envy. The boy looked down in interest, the girl with resentment.

“No offense, but I think if I grant your request, I might not live to regret it.”

Amanda gave his butt a reproachful pinch. “Yeah, come at me like I’m taking you hostage. Makes me crazy horny. Really.”

“I’m kidding!” Conner insisted with impressive earnestness for a guy addressing his girlfriend with his cock in another woman’s mouth. “But, um, yeah. I think it’s her turn, Neveah.”

Megan gave him another pinch, then decided to treat the boy to her strongest side and struck a pose on her hands and knees. As Conner extricated himself, she rolled her hips, stretching her body out in anticipation of some first rate bucking and fucking. *Finally*. She braced herself, her nethers aching for penetration. Hell, if he got gutsy and tried to go for her ass, she might even let him. It’d be nice for someone she didn’t detest to take a shot at–

A tongue. That was a tongue.

“Oh *god*.”

Amanda had discovered early on in sex ed that she was of that variety of woman who would trade a penis in her pussy for a tongue at her clit any day. The only thing was, she wasn’t especially fond of doling out blowjobs, either, so it always made her self-conscious about reciprocity; hence, she seldom made the ask. Not that Conner had ever proven himself selfish or pushy, and not that she hadn’t sucked him off more than a few times regardless. In fact, he liked having his face between her legs so much that he’d seldom needed to be asked before volunteering independently. So that he had taken this particular moment to mollify her by sliding beneath her and helping himself to some pussy pie was exactly the right tactic as far as she was concerned. Her eyes slid closed as she widened her thighs, lowering herself to his waiting mouth.

Heck, if Neveah wanted to climb on board him while he ate her out, she wouldn’t even complain. “Don’t you fucking dare stop.”

“Oh,” came his voice, somehow sounding like it was behind her rather than beneath. “Um, yeah. If you’re having fun, then, yeah. Sure, I guess. I’ll just…”

Her eyes opened slowly. What was he saying? Wait, *how* was he saying? His tongue hadn’t let up the whole time he’d been speaking, lapping slowly, hungrily along her slit for some entirely unnecessary but nevertheless most welcome warming up. Amanda lowered her chin, gazing beneath her body, between her hanging breasts, to where Neveah was placidly engaging in cunnilingus drills like it was another exercise in class.

Amanda was just craning her head back to try to fix her eyes on Conner – *how dare he pawn me off!* – when the face between her thighs froze in place, tongue pressed firmly against her clit. Despite the lack of friction, it felt incredible, and she found her hips twitching against it even as she realized what had caused it.

Conner was inside her.

Jesus Christ, Conner was fucking this busty black-haired bitch instead of her. She’d demanded so hard it had practically been begging, and instead he’d traded her pussy for this goth girl’s, one he’d probably never had a conversation with before five days ago. As horny as she’d been in her whole life, even hornier than that wild night at Kristy’s house after prom, and he’d decided to let her rot on the vine while he stuck his dick in some random bitch just because her pussy was wet and her boobs were huge.

Amanda came. Her body drooped down against the tarp, trembling as an orgasm so powerful she almost didn’t recognize it as pleasure at first. Then she gave in and let herself coast through it. If she leaned too hard on Neveah’s face, she could give a shit.

Conner, however, seemed to mistake the tremors of pleasure for rage. “Oh shoot – I’m sorry, hon. You just looked so happy, and she was so… I mean, you know…”

“Fuck her. Fuck the fucking fuck out of her!” she roared. The proximity of the lake was forgotten; if anybody was out for a late night stroll, they’d know that they were in some truly horny company.

Neveah grunted between her legs as Conner complied, but to her credit, she was back to work. Amanda rose up to sit on the girl’s face, riding her like a cowgirl, humping the tongue that lashed with well-honed instinct at her pleasure button. Meanwhile, her new seat jostled with each hard thrust of Conner’s hips. It was like sitting on one of those toy horse rides for kids they stuck in front of Walmarts, except this one had a tongue on the seat, and you stuck something quite different in its slot to make it run.

Her boyfriend was fucking another woman. Right in front of her, even. Sure, it was Conner, so there were good odds he was only doing it to be considerate of her recently discovered kink, but judging by the moans echoing inside Amanda’s cunt, he was not phoning in his enjoyment either. He couldn’t be. Neveah might be a scary, gloomy goth with her clothes on, but naked, she was just another smoking hot babe with a killer body, dark hair and makeup, and a couple tattoos that barely showed up in the moonlight. For all his pretenses of being above the Jordan Lyons level of superficiality, Conner wanted to shove his dick in sexy girls the same as any guy.

And she was one of them. One of several, but one of them. It was a fucked up sort of compliment, but as she sagged back into his arms, letting him hold her up by her boobs as Neveah gorged herself on cunt juice, she could give a crap how many.

“I want to finish between your tits,” Conner’s voice sounded authoritatively in her ear.

“OK,” she agreed immediately.

Then she realized he’d meant Neveah’s.

There was an initial flare of embarrassment at how ready she’d been to obey, to be his cum rag, a deeper embarrassment upon recognition that he’d chosen Neveah’s tits to fuck over hers, and then a white-hot flare of arousal when her inclination to envy caught up with her. Those goth gazongas were about to be plastered with her boyfriend’s cum. Because they were better than hers. Because Conner could choose any tits to cum on that he wanted, and he’d selected someone’s other than Amanda’s. God, she wished she had tits like Neveah’s. Maybe she should get a tattoo. Dye her hair. Get her boobs done. Maybe then Conner would want to fuck hers instead.

She wouldn’t, of course. But it was so fucking hot to want to.

During their adjustment, Amanda’s pussy had slid away from the attending mouth and onto the girl’s chest. Suddenly, as Conner began to work in the fat, fleshy canyon of cleavage, she felt him emerge on the far side, the tip of his cock gliding right between her own widespread thighs. Each thrust culminated in the barest tap of cock to cunt, never quite entering her but always promising, then immediately breaking that promise only to retreat between Neveah’s giant tits for cover. The girl even had the audacity to smirk up at Amanda through the narrow window of the two long thighs framing her chin. Each faint kiss of his tip to her lips made it harder and harder to object. That boy had to be as hard as he’d ever been to reach that far. Or maybe he wanted it that bad.

Hell, maybe he was just having that much fun tit-fucking another, bustier, woman.

Conner came.

Amanda came.

Neither of them bothered to inquire whether or not Neveah had managed the same.

Neveah left soon after, Conner’s jizz still running down her chest. She didn’t bother to wipe it off. A badge of honor? Something to titillate him into inviting her another time? Maybe she was just creepy about cum like she was about so many other things. Amanda didn’t trouble herself over it. In a few hours, the week would be over and the girl would make of her behavior whatever excuses TIOS would have her make.

Conner asked if she could find her way back to the parking lot OK in the dark, the sweetie.

“My eyes are used to staring into dark places,” she replied cryptically. Amanda rolled her eyes, but Conner smiled and called for her to be careful in the woods. She even had the courtesy to toss Amanda’s shirt up to her.

“You’re not mad?” he asked.

“I’m not mad. Are you?”

“Me? What? Maybe you weren’t paying attention to what just went down.”

“I was paying attention.”

It was getting chillier, and she nestled in closer. Their combined body warmth and the fading heat of their exertions weren’t going to suffice for much longer. The roof was high enough that they could make out the far side of Bear Lake, naught but a thin reflection of the moon visible in its still, glassy surface. The breeze, however, was real, and romantic or not, it was chilly.

“It’s really pretty,” she observed.

Conner chuckled, and she could tell he remembered the reference. His penchant for such recollections was a huge part of what made him such an excellent co-editor-in-chief. “Lakes are pretty,” he said with feigned exasperation. “Anything else? Because I have someone I need to go meet up with.”

Amanda elbowed him gently. “Yeah? What’s his name?”

Conner kissed her cheek softly. “Man, I hope none of them try to kill me next week. I mean, I know they won’t, because TIOS always seems to normalize the weird, but…”

“But you’re afraid Kirsten’s going to rip your dick off and ransom it in exchange for your silence?”

“Actually, I was thinking of Heather. I was really rough on her. I didn’t know it wasn’t her fault.” She glanced up in time to catch his belated grimace. “Sorry, I know that’s not a good topic at the moment.”

“Why, because I’m curled up naked beside you? No no, it’s cool, tell me about how you’re going to make it up to your second girlfriend.”

“Technically *you’re* my second girlfriend. Third, actually, if I count Kristy.”

But she could tell he was teasing, albeit nervously, and she let it slide even before he began sputtering apologies for the crudity of the jest. It was all weird, but she was happy right then, and the weirdness at least got her out of the house once in a while, so to speak. Amanda liked getting out. She liked getting out with that boy in particular.

“Tell you what. When you go to make up with Heather, let me tag along, pitch in, and we’ll call it even. K?”

“So many reasons I can’t turn down that offer.” Another kiss, but this time she intercepted it on her lips. “Leave it to Neveah Kinslan to turn what ought to be the set of a movie about a rustic psycho killer into the scene of an orgy. Come on, let’s get dressed and go somewhere. Somewhere not on the roof of some creepy shed.”

“Somewhere?” she prompted as she helped him to his feet.

“Yeah. Your place, my place. Heck, we could just camp out in the office on the couch even. As long as you’re there.”

“Text your mom, at least. Got enough women up worrying about where you’re at without upsetting the ones who count.”

A few minutes later, the two made their way down from the roof and set out for the NHS parking lot. Both had their phones in hand, shining their flashlights to find their way through the pitch black woods. They were nearing the parking lot when Amanda’s light doubled back to display what she’d very nearly missed in her haste.

“Neveah? Are you OK?” The two of them hurried over to where the goth girl was sitting, leaning back against a tree trunk. She was dressed again, at least, but there was a fresh cut on her head. She stoically let the blood trickle down her face; in the gloom, it blended eerily with the mascara.

“I may have tripped over some roots a ways back. Gave up after the second one. And don’t you dare I-told-you-so me. I still have my knife.”

Conner hauled her to her feet, although the girl looked as though she resented it. “Come on. We’ll get you out of here. Stay with me, lean on me if you need to, OK? Does it hurt?”

“Some. It’s a good reminder that I’m alive though. Might make for a nice new scar.”

“We ought to get her to a hospital, Conner.”

“I’m fine. Fuck off, Red.”

“You’re bleeding. Come on, let’s at least get you out where we can take a good look at you, OK?”

Sure enough, there was a lump already forming, and Neveah was unsteady enough that neither of them felt confident she could make it back home on her own. Against her half-hearted protests, they packed her in the back seat of Conner’s car and set out for the hospital. Amanda drove while Conner kept her occupied. She tried not to watch the back seat too closely.

It was a slow night at the ER, and before they knew it, Neveah was checked in, her bombshell body stuffed into an awkward and unflattering blue-white gown. Her mom was on her way, but the two promised to wait with her until at least then. Conner had fought to keep her alert and talking on the ride over, but between fatigue finally having its way with her and the painkillers in her IV, Neveah’s eyes were sliding shut, her voice losing most of its characteristic grit.

“I’m sorry tonight had to end like this,” Conner said, smoothing her hair back away from the bandage.

“‘S good,” she mumbled. “Will help me remember. See the scar… remember. Pain. Pleasure.” Neveah opened one eye and looked over to Amanda. “Such a lucky fucking bitch.”

She shifted in her seat self-consciously. “Come tomorrow, I bet you barely think on it. Just be a weird fling, an odd little week with some guy you barely know.”

The eye closed, but the girl shook her head fiercely, then gripped the sides of the bed to steady herself. Her voice came steadier this time, though, had more heat in it. “No way. E’ry bitch at Northside wanted him, but… picked *me*.” She winced at the effort and slumped deeper into the bed.

“Sure, say that now, but Monday morning we’ll have other cocks to occupy us, right?” May as well help ease the poor thing into the post-Conner-crush wake up, Amanda figured.

Neveah frowned, probably as much at the oblique breach of second period confidentiality as the way Amanda brushed aside her feelings. “Not jus’ some pump and dump. Iss *real*. In here.” She tapped her chest. “All us want him. Same as you. We’re not giving him up. Y’unnerstand?”

Amanda suddenly sat up rigid. She could tell Conner heard it, too.

Before either could say anything, however, the doorway was darkened by the presence of a heavyset woman who could only be Neveah’s mother, rushing to her daughter’s bedside. Rather than embrace her, however, the woman launched into a lecture about her daughter’s carelessness and how much this visit was going to set her back. Amanda and Conner tried to stick up for her, but that only brought the woman’s ire on them, too, and soon Neveah simply bid them leave. Glumly, they wished her well and slunk out of the room.

Their gloom was short-lived, however, as their phones buzzed in unison only a short ways down the hallway. *make it up to me soon* was all the message said. Conner and Amanda shared a soft smile, but moments later they were alone in the elevator, and they returned to where they had been interrupted.

“You can’t,” Conner stated flatly.

“Can’t what?”

“Don’t be coy. You can’t, Amanda, seriously.”

“What, that quote? That’s what you’re worried about?”

“I’m serious, Amanda. Don’t you dare.”

“Don’t be paranoid.”

“Amanda…”

“You say my name a lot when you’re flustered.”

“So stop flustering me.”

“Maybe I enjoy seeing you flustered.”

“Try enjoying seeing me relaxed and carefree.”

“Oh come on, would it really be *so* bad…?”

“Amanda!”

She kissed him, all the while trying to hold onto the phrasing.