



## Episode Forty

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### Boxer Falls: Episode 40

By S.A. Garcia

Sheriff Neale muttered to himself as he swung out of Whispering Ridge's long drive. Workman still sawed down the fallen trees. The sound of chainsaws scraped his nerves. Normally leaf blowers held firm as number one in his pantheon of noise annoyance, especially when a god-damned moron used one at eight in the morning on a rare sleep-in Sunday. Town law claimed that said-idiot had the right to start blowing leaves at eight AM.

Once autumn arrived, Vic planned to set his alarm for seven-fifty and see if his moron neighbor violated the law.

Today another ugly noise topped his list. Vic never wanted to suffer another tongue-lashing from Oswald Cotten's angry, challenging mouth in any lifetime. The rich bastard acted as if Vic had orchestrated Conrad's abrupt disappearance. Good thing Vic hadn't mentioned the Tarot Card weirdness to the close to frothing-in-fury man. Just

like last time, Oswald's pet gnome Quinn sat listening and smirking in evil sprite menace. Damn, the sight of Quinn's messy red hair gave Vic heartburn.

Too bad Vic couldn't incite Oswald into throwing another ill-advised punch. His powerful fingers tapped on the steering wheel. Vic wanted to unleash Blake at his meanest on the snarky rich pup. Let Blake roll out the duct tape and the glass-shard whip. Vic could enjoy the muffled howls.

Shit, the notion stirred Vic's cock. A quick fantasy of a naked Oswald Cotten stretched out bound, bleeding and helpless made Vic want to find a quiet place to solve his impending woody problem.

No. Right now Vic needed to return to the station and put his mind to figuring out what the fuck had happened at the hunting cabin and the morgue. Vreeland's corpse, Conrad's vanishing stunt and the theft of Phil Boxer's corpse by what Doctor Sherman described as crazy, knife-wielding Hispanics had turned life into one huge migraine headache. Snotty Oswalds' harangue – yeah, fuck calling the prick Oz like everyone else, the stiff-necked Oswald moniker suited him much better – added depth to the headache. At least he knew Sherman would keep quiet about the damned Tarot cards. That idiot knew better than to cross Vic. Odd how a shady history over missing body parts at the morgue where Sherman had worked before he came to Boxer Falls aided in shutting up the mouthy coroner.

The emotionally shattered Grady had agreed to say nothing in willing citizen compliance. The poor man's state of shock satisfied Vic into thinking he'd hardly blab to the sorry Boxer Falls press.

His fingers drummed the wheel again. At times Vic swore that Boxer Falls was a demented experiment conducted by sicko aliens. How could one town create this much drama?

His radio squawked into life. "Hey boss, I have good news for you."

"Sanchez, you don't know how much I need your words. Lay something positive on me."

"I just apprehended the Tarot Card Killer." Hearty laughter punctuated Diego's dramatic declaration.

Vic abruptly steered onto the gravel shoulder. He glared when a gray-haired motorist shot him stink eye for not signaling. If Vic saw the flashy red Mini going a mere one mile over the speed limit, whammy, welcome to a ticket. "You fucking did what?"

Diego's rich laughter filled the car in greater volume. "No lie, chief. This is one helluva story. I received two complaints about a long-haired weirdo harassing people in our little downtown. I cruised through the main drag dodging the army of insurance adjusters when I saw the perp, a skinny greybeard in a ripped black suit. He tucked a flat item in a store window. Weird, right? I pulled over and followed him on foot. Guess what he kept propping against window frames?"

"Tarot cards."

"Right in one. That's why you're the mighty Sheriff."

"Who the hell is he?"

"Reverend Jordan Moses John Smith. What a peculiar handle, eh? He tried to resist answering my questions until I guided the good Reverend into my cruiser for a private chat. After I used gentle verbal persuasion, he confessed he placed the Tarot cards where he felt evil dwelled, which in his twisted mind is the entire town of Boxer Falls. He claims wrathful God sent the violent storm here as retribution for the town's wickedness. I don't understand why a man of God is using Tarot cards, but he had three decks with him. To hear him rant, Boxer Falls is the Berkshires equivalent of Sodom and Gonorrhea."

Had that been a spectacular verbal stumble or had Sanchez made a joke? Vic decided to ignore the mistake. "Are you telling me he placed the Tarot cards at the hunting cabin?"

“He did. Fate led him to wander down from Berkshires after a forty-day fast. Ha, I suspect he fasted on too much loco weed. The Reverend claims evil men fought before they vanished from the cabin. He placed a card on Vreeland in the hope that Gabriel would sweep down and take him away. Regarding Conrad’s empty shoes, the Reverend believes that Gabriel had already took him away to atone for his sins.” Diego released a deep sigh. “The Reverend is a spooky individual. I’m checking if any local nuthatches, wait, excuse me, clinics have lost a wayward cleric sporting a long beard and wild gray hair.”

“Good job, Diego.” Vic rubbed his forehead. “What do you think? Did our man of God see anything real?”

“When I asked him pointed questions, he started muttering in what sounds like twisted Latin. I’m driving him to the station so he can cool his heels until you return. I reason I can hold him on the suspicion of having witnessed a killing or kidnapping.”

“You got that right. Diego, again, great work. I am on my way.” Vic glanced toward the road for oncoming cars before he pulled out in a burning rubber blaze. His pissy headache had already notched down to a six out of ten.

Fantastic.

He might even call Lord Oswald Snottwad with an update. Like later after he talked to this mysterious Reverend Jordan Moses John Smith.

As he drove, Vic tipped his hat to the sky. “Thanks, aliens, for making something go my way today.”

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Conrad rubbed his aching chin. Phil owned a fist like an iron brick. “Damn, you could have told me what you had in mind.” He couldn’t believe that Phil had taken down three muscular Hispanics intent on physical mayhem. The steadily-swinging carpenter seemed to know exactly where to hit to capitalize on the pain. He hated admitting it,

but watching the buff Phil in action was a turn-on. How sick. Conrad scolded himself.

"I didn't want you trying to play hero. Granted the gunshot wound won't kill you but I wanted you out of my way. I fight better on my own." Phil flexed his knuckles and inhaled deep breaths. A gash on his cheek trickled blood toward his lips.

The urge to lick off the blood panicked Conrad. Had his attackers smeared a weird hallucinogen on the bullet? He hated the man flexing before him. Fine, he could hate him yet still admire his prowess. He examined Phil's muscular body. "Where did you learn how to fight like a James Bond movie hero?"

Phil's condescending smile helped remind Conrad how much he despised Grady's husband. "Sometimes life throws knowledge your way. After all, carpentry involves physical labor; not that you'd know anything about that, rich boy." He leaned over one prone man and patted him down. "Bingo."

"There's a piece of splendid luck." Conrad smiled in pleasure. A smart phone had never looked so fine.

"Damn, I don't remember Grady's mobile number." Phil shook his head. "Lately I have a hard time keeping numbers in my head. I must be getting old."

"Or maybe escaping death a few too many times has rattled your brain. Hand over the phone. I'll call Oz to save us." No matter how much they didn't get along, Conrad knew Oz wouldn't abandon him to torture. Or at least he hoped that was the case. Imagine, if Conrad vanished, Oz inherited what was left. A tight smirk stretched his lips. No, he could trust Oz. If anything, Oz would adore having to save Daddy. Conrad would never live down the embarrassing incident.

Phil regarded Conrad in suspicion before he handed him the phone. The carpenter held up his hand. "Before you call, let me see if I can find out anything useful."

"Like what? Some hunky sailor's number so you can contact him for a later fuck date?" Phil's disgusted expression made Conrad experience empathy for a piece of shit stuck

to a boot heel.

"No, asshole, like a ship name for one." Phil hesitated again. "I know we sailed from Boston. Our destination is Salem."

"What? That's stupid. Why the hell would someone waste time transporting us to a ship taking us to Salem?" Conrad hesitated and swallowed. Damaged reality came home to dig into his mind. "Vreeland."

"Precisely."

"It still sounds ridiculous to plant us on a ship in Boston to take us to Salem."

"Sorry, rich boy, I have nothing to do with the quality of the criminal minds at work here. Stay put." Phil edged around the door.

Conrad fussed with the phone. The smart phone looked like a prototype for the next generation. Great, scummy kidnappers owned a better phone than his model. Bastards. He tapped in Oz's mobile number and waited.

Phil returned a few seconds later and shook his head in amused disgust. "We are stuck on a shit-assed small ship called the Santa Lupe. The skanky ship is almost insulting, like two steps above a tug boat. We're in the lone cargo container. The good news is there's land off in the distance." He frowned in worry. "The bad news is too much activity in the wheelhouse. Angry guests will drop by all too soon." Phil cocked his head in question. "What can Oz do for us?"

"You forget I have connections. Oz will call a senator we know. He'll summon a Coast Guard helicopter to rescue us ASAP."

"I like the sound of that news." Phil glanced down and plucked a gun from the one man's belt. "This makes me feel better." He pulled out another and tossed the weapon to Conrad. "Does the rich boy know how to shoot?"

"Of course I do." Mister Macho's insulting attitude started to wear thin.

"Just checking. This might be a fair fight." Phil stood by the door and watched for visitors.

Conrad hit dial and waited before Oz picked up on the second ring. "Hello, son."

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Quinn leaned forward in anticipation. The senior Cotten spoke on the other end of the line. Oz's sharp exclamation of "Dad?" gave away the news. As he listened to what must be instructions, Oz responded in terse reply and took notes.

A quick twinge radiated from Quinn's wounded leg. Living at Whispering Ridge seemed like a glamorous vacation. At first his natural reluctance to become too involved urged him to refuse Oz's generous offer, but that the fuck, it wasn't like anyone needed to tend bar at the wrecked Bears and Bones. It would be some time before anything was back in full swing. Much more sensible to relax up here away from the pounding noise of the town rebuilding after the storm. Quinn hated to think of himself as sensible, but he'd have to be a drooling moron to refuse a cushy bed, free food and access to Oz when the mood struck them. Frequent mood-striking kept them both busy. Their mad little encounter in a broom closet by the kitchen ranked as a first for Quinn. He hated how Oz kept silencing his exaggerated moans. To Quinn, being caught bare-assed and sweaty with his cock deep in Oz sounded yummy.

His fingers wandered under his kilt to probe the skin near his wound. Yeah, the wound's pain added a sharp edge to their impromptu fuck fests.

"All right, Dad, I'll get this in motion. Good luck." Oz thumbed off the call. He relaxed back and stared at Quinn in a messy mix of amusement, anger and cold calculation. Quinn thought his Better Friend with Benefits had never looked sexier or more complex. "Damn, what a shocker. Daddy dear has been kidnapped along with Phil Boxer."

This day turned weirder than ever. "Are ya fuckin' kidding me? Why?"

"He didn't have time for complete details which, given that they might be under attack any second, is logical. Instinct tells me something from the past has returned to bite them in the asses. I predict a fresh new scandal. Why doesn't it surprise me? Well, what the hell, the resulting publicity might drum up business. After all, a hurricane filled the rooms. I like the insurance adjustors. They order expensive meals because they write off everything." Oz shook his head and stood. "Time to play the dutiful son. I need to find a special phone number in the old bastard's study."

Quinn stood and stretched. His overwhelming lust for Quinn struck at the worst times. They walked toward Conrad's office. "Shouldn't ya call Sheriff Voyeur with the news?"

A pointed scowl answered Quinn's question. "What can Dudley Do-Nothing do about the situation? No, I need to call a close friend of the old man's."

"I can't wait to hear who."

"Senator Gil Norcross. It's time to summon the Coast Guard. Dad told me the ship's name and the identification numbers." He sighed. "After that I'll be nice and call Grady. I just hope the two kidnap victims are still alive when rescue arrives."

"Is the situation that bad?"

"Yes. Phil thinks more suspicious seamen will arrive to check on them. He already beat up three men, which is why they have a phone. The situation sounds like something out of an action flick."

"Suspicious seamen, eh?" Quinn raised his eyebrows and started laughing.

Oz struggled to look serious before he joined in. "You are a rude little prick. Wait, what am I saying; there's nothing little about your prick." He snickered until he choked.

“After I call Senator Norcross, let’s celebrate Daddy dear’s discovery.”

“I love when your me-so-hard power trip mode kicks in. Usually the any arrogant shit storm turns me off. For some reason ya make it work for me, sexy man.” Quinn stepped close and yanked Oz close for a long, hot kiss. “Come on, I want to watch my man boss around a Senator. I might strip down and wank off in glee.”

Oz leaned over and bit Quinn’s earlobe. Hard. “As long as you don’t distract me, do as you wish. Just save some spunk for me.”

“No worries there, my hard bastard. Let’s get this over with now.”

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Adam stared at Zach’s tired, tense profile.

A wave of love mixed with anger and dissatisfaction invaded his thoughts. Too many thoughts careened around in Adam’s frustrated mind. How did the coddled brat think he had the right to ask Adam such a crucial question? Yes, they loved each other. Yes, when they fucked the cliché earth moved. Yes, they enjoyed each other’s company.

Why had Zach ruined everything by popping the marriage question while they stood in the shower immediately after his father’s supposed death? He acted too damned young and impulsive. A marriage proposal deserved respect, planning, hell, he added logic to the list.

At an emotional level, reckless Zach really acted childish. He didn’t understand how he had wounded Adam. Adam doubted if Zach would ever understand. A man who asked someone to marry them then spat at the same person was not prepared for a serious relationship. Look at them! Zach was nineteen; Adam a not so much more mature twenty. But at least Adam had experienced life’s ugly torments. Zach, not so much.

Adam twisted and stared back at the rumpled Grady. The man looked like he had aged ten years during the drive. That was what love and true commitment did to a person. Adam doubted if Zach understood the important concept.

Self-anger kicked in. What a sick thing to think about his lover. Adam swallowed. No matter what, he loved Zach. True love came with warts, flaws and canker sores, not flowers, cupids and sunsets. Maybe if they conquered serious problems early in their love, the road ahead would seem smoother.

Fuck, he sounded like a fake television know-it-all therapist.

He forced a smile. "Grady, are you good?"

Grady twitched, stared at Adam and smiled. The frail smile looked like vultures had ripped at the structure. "I'm fine even with my son's warp speed driving style."

"Dad, stop." In retaliation Zach goosed their speed closer to ninety.

Adam tried not to sound scolding. "Grady is right. Remember, getting pulled over by a state trooper will slow us down."

"From the rumors I've heard in the kitchen, if he's anything like our corrupt Sheriff Neale, I can suck my way out of the ticket."

That statement needed to fade away into the horizon. Adam blinked and regarded the trees whipping past the car on the Massachusetts Turnpike. Zach's fingers gripped his thigh. "Sorry. Really sorry."

"Both hands on the wheel, sonny." Adam managed a weak smile.

"I hear and obey." The speed dropped closer to eighty. Zach tried to sound perky. "This is a pretty good little car. I always thought that Fords were shitty."

"I'm surprised the dumpy rental place in Chicopee had a 2012 Ford on the lot." Adam twisted and smiled at Grady in gratitude. "Let's hear it for credit card power."

Grady's next smile erased a few years from his sad face. "I'm glad you asked me to accompany you on this rescue mission. Including me means the world to me. Zach, you know that Cathy is a little... strange."

"Strange enough to tell me that my one Dad is alive." Adam wondered how Zach's voice didn't frost the windshield. "I can handle that strangeness."

*Welcome back, my friends, to another conversational dead patch.* Adam sucked at his watery fountain Coke purchased during the last quick piss stop. He peered at the atlas. "I estimate another two hours; well, at this speed maybe less."

A generic music ring tone filled the car's relentlessly gray interior. Zach swerved to the left. Adam reached to grip his slender shoulder.

Adam turned. Grady fumbled in his trouser pocket until he answered his phone. "Hello?" Adam watched his face. "What? Oz! But... Conrad and Phil?"

Zach swerved again, he veering entirely too close to a white mini-van. A horn honked in warning. Adam twisted forward in the seat and massaged Zach's tense shoulder. "Eyes on the road, love." He blinked and swallowed. Calling Zach love came too damned naturally to him. "Look, there's an exit. Pull off. It's time for me to drive. You need to rest."

Adam tried not to wince as Zach cut across the traffic lanes. He careened up the exit ramp into the nearby gas station to guide the car into a space near the air pump. Zach whirled to stare at Grady. Adam joined in. He swallowed in anticipation. Tears cascaded down Grady's cheeks but his eyes reflected relief. Whatever Oz told Grady made him look more vital and alert.

The call ended. Grady held up his left hand. His body trembled in amazement.

“What happened?”

“That was Oz Cotten. Conrad called him. He’s with Phil on a ship sailing to Salem, just as Cathy claimed.”

Confused glances bounced around the interior. Zach waved his hands in close to hitting Adam drama. “Why the hell is Conrad with Dad?”

Grady’s grim smile heralded a fresh problem. “My Phil has a bit of a past. I think it just caught up with him. The good news is that Oz has called in the Coast Guard. Let’s hear it for Conrad’s political clout. We might have a happy ending in Salem.”

“What is Dad’s past?”

“It’s not for me to reveal, Zach.” Grady sighed and shook his head. “Some damned secrets always come back to hurt us.”

Adam swallowed. He looked down at the floor. The lump in his throat refused to leave until he swallowed. Fuck that night; fuck it, fuck it, fuck it. He needed to stop letting the threat of past fears ruin his life. His head rose like a snake’s. He stared at Zach. “Time to drive, love.” He leaned forward and kissed Zach.

He felt the love in Zach’s determined response. Fingers raking through his hair confirmed their connection. Maybe their love would survive the past mess. He ended their kiss and rolled from the passenger seat. When he passed Zach, they stared at each other until they conducted another hard, secure kiss.

Once he guided the sporty car back onto the Massachusetts Turnpike, Adam floored the engine up to ninety. Zach’s fingers gripped his thigh.

He glanced at Zach and grinned. Zach blew him a kiss. "Onward."

When he glanced into the back seat, Grady's serene smile fueled Adam's zeal.

That was what love and true commitment did to a person. Adam decided he wanted a taste of that sweet bounty.

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Oz slumped back and shook his head. He raked his fingers through his short hair. "Aren't I the dutiful son? I yelled at a senator to call in the Coast Guard to save my wicked old Daddy's sorry ass and then, as a chaser, made poor Grady cry, but at least he cried in relief. The weird thing is he's in a car with Adam and Zach heading toward Salem. He murmured something about receiving information on Phil but he didn't know anything about Dad being with Phil." He grinned at Quinn. "The plot becomes as thick as your hard dick. How I managed to talk with you rolling that club between your fingers, well, someone give me an award."

"Aren't I a Jersey peach? All my diddlin' and here I am still hard and ready." Quinn stood and patted Conrad's gleaming, nearly empty desk. "Yo, does the bossy old git do any work at all? This desk is too damned tidy."

"Dad is all about talking the big wheel and deal. I'll give him this; he's great at wooing business partners into giving him money. Regarding the family, he's a miserable failure. The thing is I don't know if he even gives a shit about us. He can't stand Rider, and me? I think he only tolerates me because I'm great at helping him run this pile." Oz stood and started unbuttoning his casual blue linen shirt. "Now I know something else I'm great at in life. It's something really unexpected to me."

Quinn propped his hands on his hips. "What's that, Mister Braggart?"

"Making you scream in pleasure."

"Really now? It seems to me ya need to prove that skill to me again." He reached out

and pulled Oz close for a deep kiss. "Let's start at the top and work our way down. In fact, how about I use your ass to polish the old man's shiny desk?"

"What? He would go ballistic if he..."

"Fuck him, he's stuck out in the Atlantic Ocean waiting for a bunch of handsome men in uniform to save his ass. Let's see, he's a tycoon, Phil's a carpenter, add in the sailors, and the Coast Guard men. Not quite a YMCA line-up but there's potential for a dirty orgy."

Oz started laughing until he choked. "I'd like to see Dad get down and dirty with a kidnapping sailor. Maybe a kidnapping sailor will win Dad's black heart. They can sail off into the sunset to make other people's lives living hells. In his own way, Dad is a brutal corporate pirate. It's his way or get out." He paused and shook his head. "Does me not caring if he ever returns make me a cruel son?"

"No, just a hardened realist." Quinn raked back his hair. "If I count who actually likes the hardass, my remaining fingers will never enter the action."

"Who likes him?"

"I give him points for creating your sexiness."

Oz blinked before he laughed again. "You are bad."

"I'm tryin' to distract you from thinkin' about virile seaman. The idea of YMCA sex makes ya entirely too stiff." Quinn regarded the bulge in Oz's lightweight gray trousers. "What's the matter, is the thrill wearin' off already?"

"Are you kidding? Never doubt the ability of a virile, ready-to-rock bartender to thrill me. Your cock is ready to blow." Oz easily lifted Quinn to the desk. Quinn smirked as Oz respectfully removed the few items from the surface. It would have been more fun to send them sailing into the air. A concerned expression shadowed Oz's fine features.

Oz stepped toward the half-shut door. "I should lock..."

"Fuck the door! No one is gonna come up here. Get back here already."

"Why would I waste time fucking the door?"

"Fine, make fun of my lacking education. Haul your educated ass over here so I can get to work."

Oz pulled the lube from the discarded kilt and tossed the small tube to Quinn. "You always come prepared to cum."

"Ordering around a senator blasted your coherency. Less talk, more action, sexy." Watching Oz finishing undressing almost drove Quinn nuts. His lover undressed in a casual, logical manner which managed to appear intelligent. Describing the movement frustrated Quinn's hard-headed nature. The effort required something closer to poetry. Poetry and Quinn had never seen eye-to-eye, but damn, the urge to spout flowery nonsense tried to demolish his mind.

He shifted to give Oz space on the desk. Their bodies pressed close in hot need. Oz maneuvered down until he pressed his ass against the desk. He squirmed until he frowned at Quinn. "This surface is hard on my ass. I—"

"Tsk, ts, what a whiner."

Oz stuck his tongue out before he pouted in mock outrage. "I never whine."

"Sez you. No matter, your pout is damned sexy." Quinn winked as he lavishly lubed his cock. He smeared extra around and in Quinn's tight asshole. Even after their wonderful exploratory sessions his lover's opening embraced virginal tightness. Quinn wondered if Oz's stubborn nature refused to accept the recent rectal cock exams. "Relax and imagine the old man lookin' through paperwork here after we've christened the expensive surface. Yeah, I see how much the idea thrills you. There." Quinn slid in and

started gaining his classic rhythm. "Think about Daddy touchin' where your firm ass rolled across his desk. Think about him pickin' up a pen touched by your sweat." Quinn thrust in hard enough to make Oz cry in glory. "Think about everything then remember that you are one hundred times better than that old bastard. Say it."

Oz's neck strained as he accepted Quinn's assault. "I am one hundred times better than that old bastard."

"Perfect. You are perfect to me." Wait, had he really gasped out his last dramatic sentence? Quinn blinked and shrugged. Yep, so the fuck what? He worked his hips until he came all too soon.

"That's the grand finale? Really?" Oz laughed as his fingers gripped Quinn's pale shoulders. "Let's see if I can stir you back into action, bartender."

Quinn pressed his palms against Oz's large nipples and succumbed to Oz's interior assault. Fuck, damn, his cock responded to the warm bliss pulsating in measured awareness. "Hey, I thought this desk hurt your ass?"

"Adaption is a great gift. The more you thrill me, the more I can ignore the hard wooden surface abusing my ass." As he squirmed, Oz laughed in breathless joy. Sweat dripped across his high cheekbones to splash the desk. Quinn reasoned he had never seen anything so deliciously sexy. "After we polish the desk again in full vigor, I propose a trip to the pool to create a few huge fuck tsunamis. Agreed?"

Quinn swore his stiffening cock understood Oz's hilarious proposal. He pressed close against Oz as his hips performed little exploratory moves.

Yeah, cruising his cock into his lover felt much better than sitting in his dreary apartment listening to chainsaws and hammering.

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Rider walked away from the study and slid his small camera into his jacket pocket. How lovely of Quinn to stop Oz from shutting the door. Rider hadn't planned to film them, but, hell, once he heard the conversation, how could he resist documenting the special occasion? After how Trip had treated him, he felt like a scolded kid who promptly turned around to kick his dog. Not that Rider regarded Oz as a dog – Rider loved Oz – but his brother's nasty comments about the old bastard might come in handy someday. Rider always understood that Oz didn't like their father – ha, who did – but the comment about him not caring if Daddy Prick ever returned had really surprised Rider.

He smiled while he patted his camera. Screw Sam, Trip, Daddy Bastard and anyone else who tried to fuck with him. In fact, Rider planned to talk to a lawyer about Trip and Sam's nasty little enterprise. Visions of a major lawsuit danced in his head.

Yes indeed.

Maybe he should talk to Oz about how best to attack Sam and Trip. Oz had a great head for business.

Maybe, after he made sure his keepsake of today's words and deeds were safe and sound in triplicate. In the relation-eat-relation Cotten family, it always helped to have back-up plans.

Rider shook his head. His smile suited his bleak thoughts. They should have changed their last name to Cottenmouth. Too often the clan acted more like snakes than humans.

He wasn't any better.

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Loud voices sounded beyond the container. Phil peeked out. "Fuck, here they come. Four of the bastards." He hauled the container's door back into place.

Conrad sprawled on the floor with his hands gripped around the gun. Phil joined him in hip-to-hip-intimacy. Grady's husband snarled in fury. "I hate spaghetti western-style shoot-outs."

Conrad blinked in confusion. "What do you mean?"

Phil shot him a crooked smile. The expression almost seemed real. "You know, where the heroes face way too many bad guys and end up getting the shit shot out of them?"

An internal debate raged inside Conrad's mind. What the fuck; why not? He leaned over to kiss Phil's bleeding cheek. "Let's give 'em hell, cowboy."

The shouting came closer. Conrad ignored Phil's shocked stare and smiled in grim determination.

Bring it on.

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*Will help arrive before the duo attack with both guns blazing?*

*Will anyone receive a speeding ticket?*

*Who is Reverend Jordan Moses John Smith?*

*Will Rider work with Oz to stop Sam and Trip?*

*Who is helping to rebuild Boxer Falls with Phil out of the picture?*

## TUNE IN NEXT WEEK!

***Boxer Falls: The bigger they are...***

### AUTHOR BIO:

Thirty years ago, I started writing gay male romance. My writing remained a secret lest my friends thought me a freak. Writing about men inserting tab A into slot B didn't seem the norm for a suburban female teenager. Reading novels by Gordon Merrick, John Rechy and Larry Kramer helped me fill in the serious informational gaps. Yep, I read those books in my bedroom. No wonder. My suburban parents might wonder why their daughter read books entitled *The Sexual Outlaw* or *Faggots*.

As the years progressed and I discovered my personal sexual path, I still wrote gay male romance, although the stories progressed from lurking in notebooks to hiding on the computer. I wrote fantasies, contemporaries, bodice rippers; I chugged along following my muse. I never told my partner what I wrote. I feared she'd think me batty.

Now I am glad I kept the writing faith. After six published gay male novellas and novels along with a few spicy short stories, my life has turned into a fun quandary of too many stories hindered by my slow typing skills. I accept the silly challenge and blunder onward into more trauma, drama and humor.

My partner hopes that someday I will write the gay male equivalent of *Fifty Shades of Gray*. I keep telling her I refuse to have a lobotomy.

Time for the blatant promo section: My newest novel *Cupid Knows Best* is a light-hearted romp about Carl Conrad, a college professor who chases the lust of his life. When he catches sexy, mysterious Marcelino Moya, he doesn't know what to do. Take a peek!

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