



FLASH POINT

LENA AUSTIN

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Lena Austin

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Flash Point

Lena Austin

When fireman Dustin Hardesty saves a scruffy tomcat from a fire, and then a neutering at the shelter, he has no idea he's just moved a cat shifter named Tigs into his life.

Tigs figures he owes Dustin, so he'll hang around to give Dustin some good times. He doesn't count on Dustin never wanting to let go of his alley cat.

01 Tigs' Blog

My name is Tigs, and I'm a cat shifter. Don't get smart, it's not short for Tigger or anything stupid like that. I don't fucking bounce or lisp my words, and I'm a gray tabby. I usually work construction and home renovation, me and my crew. We're all shifters of one type or another, but we get along most of the time.

I'd let the rest of my crew go home early while I coiled up extension cords, locked up the tools, and cleaned up our work site. The old deli used to be the coolest little place when I'd been a kitten, but that'd been years ago. The guys would be waiting for me back at the warehouse we rented for the equipment, six blocks away -- it also served as our home. The place was "guarded" by two dogs -- a rat terrier and a Rottweiler mix along with three scruffy cats and that didn't mean anything to the absentee landlord. Long as he got his cash, he didn't give a shit.

Speaking of shit, we may look scruffy, but we're good neighbors. We used the litter box or took a walk outside. The dogs "walk" each other, so that's cool, and they curb themselves like responsible citizens.

Anyway, I smelled the stink of burning wood and rubber first. Figured some homeless guy had lit up the contents of a trashcan to keep warm nearby and didn't give it another thought. This wasn't the best neighborhood, but most poor don't foul their own nest, ya know?

So, I finished coiling up the last extension cord and tossed it into the storage locker. Two seconds to snap the padlock, and I was ready for some of Pete's Tuna Steaks on the grill back at our place.

No such luck. The smoke from the fire was coming up the stairs when I opened the door, and I bent over coughing my lungs out before I could shut the damn thing. "Who the fuck set a real fire in this stinkin' joint? It can't be for the insurance." Didn't matter. The entire downstairs -- such as it was -- was engulfed, and the floor was heating up. Damn near burned me through my boots, which meant I had seconds to get my ass out.

I took the easy road and threw a piece of scrap two-by-four through one of the windows we hadn't removed yet. Single pane, painted shut, so it shattered easy as pie. Then I shifted, abandoned my clothes to their fate, and leaped for the limb of a scrub pine just in time. I hit the branches, yowling in pissed off feline at the loss of a perfectly good pair of steel toes.

Naturally, that was the moment the fire truck showed up. How convenient. I'd bet the arsonist called in the fire as soon as he got a safe distance away, after ensuring the place would be a pile of ash. So, a professional job. Not my problem, except some asshole owed me some new boots.

What surprised the fuck out of me was the ladder that slammed up against the tree. Tree wasn't that big, being an inner city volunteer from some bird's ass that happened on an empty lot. The whole thing shook.

I might have backed up a bit, but it wasn't fear. I just didn't want to get grabbed like some wuss who didn't have sense enough to know how to get down.

The human wearing the standard issue fireman's hard hat and a million pounds of gear climbed the ladder with casual ease until we were damn near face to whiskers.

"Well, hello bay-bee!" Okay, so it came out as a yowl loud enough to burst eardrums. Any other tom would have recognized my interest in the biggest pair of grass-green eyes in a tanned face I'd seen in a long time. Okay, so they were red-rimmed and tired. If I'd been human, my dick would have lifted my ass so far I'd have fallen out of the tree. I wanted me a piece of that man!

Once handsome Grass Eyes stopped wincing from my loud mouth, he hitched himself up one more rung. "Hey there, you could replace our siren with that set of

lungs, dude." He checked the fire, now close enough to us that I was getting more than a tad warm, ya know? "I really hate to interrupt your serenade, but unless you want to burn down with this tree, we need to go." He reached for me.

On reflection, I realized Grass Eyes didn't have a clue that I was a shifter, nor did he mean to insult Da Tigs. At the time, all I cared about was swatting his hand. Encased in the gloves and shit, he wasn't even hurt, but I'd made my point. I could jump down anytime, if he'd move that fucking ladder.

Grass Eyes shook his head. "Man, I don't want to leave you, loudmouth. Come on! This tree's gonna go, shit head."

Yeah, he had a point. I ignored his hand and jumped on his shoulders. I'd be damned if I'd be carried down like some frou-frou case from Cat Fanciers magazine.

"Okay, if that's the way you want it." Grass Eyes had the sense to know when he'd been elected as the vehicle of my ride down and made his way back to the base of the tree. I kept on riding, even while he helped his buds put the ladder away. Clearly, the old deli was a total loss, so they concentrated on keeping the rest of the local trash-pit buildings from coming down. Not all that difficult, and I couldn't blame them for not working too hard at saving what wasn't worth the effort.

Grass Eyes stood over to the side, talking on his radio and leaning against the big-ass red fire truck. He'd scrub his face with his hand now and then.

One of his buddies came by, lugging shit back to the truck. "It was arson, Dustin. Betcha the dogs sniff out accelerant."

Dustin, which was Grass Eyes' real name I guessed, sighed. "Yeah. This place was being renovated too. I drive by here daily and see the workers. They've been putting their backs into cleaning this place out, and they're clean as a whistle about putting away equipment. I'll tell the inspector the same when I see him. I doubt it was them being careless."

Hey, a compliment. Very cool. I purred and rubbed up against Dustin's ear for that.

"Yeah, I like you too, loudmouth." He reached up and I let him give the backs of my ears a rub. I closed my eyes and purred louder, just to let him know he was doing a good job.

I never saw it coming. Before I knew what was happening, the other guy had me by the scruff of my neck and stuffed me in a cat carrier! Son of a...!! I would have turned around and swiped at him, but the old instincts are strong. I tucked my tail and my brain went into kitten trance, tractable as a lamb. By the time I came out of it, the door on the carrier slammed into my face. All I could do was vent my displeasure loudly. I damn sure couldn't shift, though the idea of standing naked and tall in front of Dustin had a certain appeal.

"Goddamn it, Nesmith! I'd just gotten him to trust me." At least Dustin was in my court. Props to him, then.

Nesmith used a zip tie to ensure I couldn't paw open the cage. Shit, this guy knew how to cage a cat. "Don't be stupid, Dustin. The cat's a stray whose building just got burned down. He'd get his furry ass hurt in those ashes, no matter how we clear the hot spots. Let him go to a shelter. Worst that'll happen to him is having his nuts cut."

Oh, hell no! I may not ever want to be a breeder, but I ain't planning on singing soprano for the rest of my tom cat days, either! I yowled and clawed at the zip tie through the bars.

Dustin grabbed the handle of the carrier to keep it from falling over onto the pavement. "Naw, not necessary, Nesmith. I'll keep him at my place for a few days instead. This is one smart fellow. I'll bet he'd like a nice warm bed, a litter box, and a regular supply of cans."

"Yer breakin' the rules, Dustin, but I won't tell on you. Maybe this mangy asshole can replace Casey." Nesmith walked away without another word.

Both Dustin and I stared after him. Who the fuck was Casey, and how the hell was I supposed to replace him?

Dustin closed his jaw with an audible snap, ground his teeth for a minute, and turned around so sharply I felt G-forces. He muttered all the way back to a big-ass SUV

with the fire department logos all over it, and threw his air tanks in the back. I shut my face and caught most of it. "You don't replace a human being. You just try to fill the hole left in your heart."

I couldn't have agreed more, but that didn't stop me from being curious. Who the fuck was Casey and why would Dustin get so pissed at the idea of "replacing" him? Could be anyone, like a brother. Let's face it, firefighting was a dangerous profession. Coulda been a partner, for all I knew. I didn't dare hope handsome ol' Grass Eyes was gay, or even -- gawd help me -- bi.

On the short ride to Dustin's place, I contemplated my situation. Likelihood of our company getting another job until after the media officially announced we were innocent of carelessness was slim and none. Good thing we were pretty much set for a couple of months of expenses, thanks to our resident numbers man, Beans. Beans may be a Rottweiler who looked dumber than a box of rocks, but when it came to math, he was a genius -- just a big strong genius. Ace, my brother from another litter, was cool enough to manage what little had to be done like claiming our equipment losses. If I could just bum Dustin's phone long enough to let the guys know I was okay, I could settle in to playing Dustin's kitty for awhile.

They say curiosity killed the cat. Good thing I had nine lives, right? Right.

02 Dustin's Blog

What was I thinking? I had no clue. My first day back at work after my bereavement leave, and I brought home a scruffy, loudmouthed stray tomcat with massive attitude. Guess I needed more therapy than I thought.

I hauled that heavy carrier up the two flights of stairs to my apartment and set the damn thing down on the floor. My muscles ached even more than my heart at the emptiness of my home, for once. Casey's family had cleaned out everything of value except what had clearly been mine, like my clothes. I'd been so depressed, I hadn't even fought for one stick of the antiques Casey and I had collected over the years. So, I had a fresh start to being a widower at the tender age of 35. I'd raided a thrift store for a few pots and some furniture, but I was still sleeping on a mattress on the floor, at least for now. You'd never know the charm the old furnishings had given it. Now it echoed like a mauso... I stopped that thought and slashed the zip tie with my knife.

I expected the cat to shoot out of the carrier like a rocket and hide somewhere. Instead, the cocky bastard sauntered out calmly and proceeded to give each and every room an inspection. The place obviously didn't impress him much, and I didn't blame him. He sniffed the ratty recliner I'd liberated from a dumpster downstairs with distaste and gave me a look I interpreted as surprise, as if he'd expected better of me.

I followed him around, and maybe it was loneliness that made me explain myself to His Majesty. "Yeah, I know. Doesn't smell great, does it? Guess the former owner smoked. It's temporary until I start getting money in the bank again. I haven't felt much like working or shopping for new stuff."

He seemed to accept my explanation and inspected the TV. That seemed to impress him. I didn't know what he made of the small altar with Casey's picture and a candle on the entertainment stand, but I'd swear he looked at me to ask.

So, I was compelled to answer. I have to admit, it felt kind of good to talk about all this. I was too humiliated to bring it up at work, knowing the guys would immediately have a fill-the-boot charity drive to get me new stuff, or go to my father's executor, who knew Dad had no love for his gay son. "Stupid as it sounds, it's a tribute to my dead husband. He'd always wanted a big home theatre, but we kept putting it off." I got kind of choked up at that point.

Damned if the cat didn't choose that precise moment to bound over and rub his head all over my boots. Either he was one darn smart cat, or I was anthropomorphizing typical cat behavior. No matter what, I felt comforted.

I realized I'd not even stripped off my gear. No wonder I was hot and tired. "Hang on, buddy. Let me get out of this stuff so I can prove I know how to dress like a regular guy, okay?" I shucked out of the suit, hat, belt, boots, and other crap faster than a probie at graduation, ready to party. I piled all my gear by the door and promised myself I'd take it back down to the car later. No one at the station expected me to have a brain yet. "Officially, I'm still on leave. I was at that particular fire only because I drove by on my way home from class."

The cat actually put his head to one side, just like a puzzled dog. I started imagining the bubble thing over his head with a caption, like a cartoon, like he'd just asked, "Class?"

"Yeah, I'm thinking of changing careers. Firefighting's for the young. Me, I don't have any spark left. Casey always said I was good at real estate." I caught my breath. I'd gotten his name out without choking up. Maybe I was healing, after all. "I already own a few investment properties from my parents' estate. So, getting a license to buy and sell real estate sounded good. I'll take the test in a few weeks."

Guess that satisfied him, because he started wandering around again. My home office definitely got his attention, especially the paint chips and wallpaper samples I'd

put up on a wallboard. He studied them intently, gave me a loud meow and put his paw on the silvery blue that had been my favorite anyway.

I laughed. "I agree, that's my choice for this room too. Casey liked a dark, gloomy English office, but I'm more into Scan Design." I might have said more, but the room swayed. "Damn, I forgot to eat. I'm hypoglycemic and..." Let's just say I never felt the floor hit me in the face.

I awakened to the taste of honey in my mouth, and the most gorgeous man I'd ever seen kneeling over me. Moreover, he was naked as a jaybird, which caused me to blink. Naturally, the most intelligent thing I could think of to say was incoherent, at best.

He had huge, luminescent gold-green eyes and the dark café-au-lait skin that indicated mixed ancestry. Some incoherent part of me acknowledged that the mixed race folks always were spectacular in looks. "Open your mouth, Dustin. Have some more honey from ol' Tigs, man." He pushed a spoonful of the sticky stuff against my lips.

I swallowed the honey and let it slide down my throat. The question burning my mind popped out. "Why do I have a naked man feeding me honey?"

Tigs grinned. "Oh, good. You're back. Don't scare me like that, man. To answer your question, I didn't take the time to borrow some of your clothes. Mine got inconveniently burned up." He dipped the spoon back in the jar of honey I normally reserved for self-indulgent breakfasts. "Freaking cold in here. You mind if I borrow some clothes?"

"I'd rather you stayed naked. You're too gorgeous to cover up." Maybe my brain wasn't really rewired to my mouth yet. I shouldn't have said it, but I did.

He snorted softly and dropped the spoon in the jar with a rattle. "Yeah, yeah. That's what they all say. Back atcha, Grass Eyes. Thanks for the compliment. Upsy daisy."

Tigs was monstrously strong, apparently. He lifted me up from the floor with almost no effort and carried me to my mattress. I have to admit I was ashamed to have such a handsome man anywhere near my less than posh apartment.

Tigs tucked me into my bed like a baby. "Listen, you take a nap or whatever to recover for a few. I'll scrounge up something to keep warm and make a pot of coffee. Mind if I make a phone call?" He held up a conciliatory hand, and I noted calluses and healing cuts. Working man's hands. "Local, of course."

Sleep was creeping up on me. I'd had insomnia, mostly from not wanting to sleep alone ever since Casey's funeral. Now I was going to pay for all that lost time at once, and at the worst possible moment. I mumbled, "Don't leave me alone."

"Not planning on it." Tigs kissed me softly. "Curiosity killed the cat, man. I got questions for you."

"Same goes." I was out like a light.

Then, the light came back on. From my stiff position, I guessed I'd been out cold for several hours. I rolled over and checked the clock, stacked on some library books I needed to return. Nine PM. Great. Had I dreamed my encounter with a guy named Tigs?

"Oh, good. You're awake. Thought I heard you rustling around. Want some food?" Tigs lounged in the doorway, wearing my gray bathrobe and a pair of my old navy sweatpants like he owned them.

I nodded. "Yeah. Am I crazy or did that cat I rescued become this incredibly sexy guy?" I scrubbed my face. "I'm crazy. Never mind."

"No. You're not crazy. Come eat." He turned and walked out with -- okay, I have to say it -- feline grace. It was true. I'd only seen that kind of muscular glide on a human when they were also a high-ranking martial artist of some kind. "I took the liberty of raiding your fridge and pantry, mah man. I ain't a chef, but it smells okay."

The enticing aroma coming from my kitchen was better than just "okay." Neither Casey nor I had been spectacular cooks. Whatever simmered on the stove reeled me in

like a fish on a lure. I rolled out of bed and followed my nose, padding in on stocking feet. Guess Tigs removed my shoes after I passed out.

Tigs scraped equal portions of some beef and veggie mix onto two mismatched plates and favored me with a cocky, knowing grin. "Dustin, you must be only one step away from the rag bins and sleeping on the street. I had to use some vinegary wine from your fridge for the sauce. Did you know you had science projects growing in that thing?" He handed me a fork and spoke in a fake NY accent. "Dig in. Eat, eat! You're too skinny!"

I decided I was hallucinating. The cat I rescued from a tree about to burn down did not morph into a sexy, dark kitchen god with compelling eyes and a cocksure attitude. However, since I was actually enjoying myself, I saw no reason not to play along until I woke up. I took the first bite and the flavor exploded on my tongue. I sat down on the barstool at the end of the kitchen island and started shoveling in as much as I could without choking. In between bites, I talked to myself. "I refuse to wake up. This is the best hallucination of my life."

Tigs pulled up his own plate, snagged the other barstool with his foot, and plopped his ass next to me. He kept his fork as busy as mine. "I don't give a damn if you believe what you see or not. I called my pals, and I'm good to stay here for a few days. Figure I owe you for talking me out of the tree." He shook his fork at me. "Just don't get any ideas about collars, tags, and vets, got me?"

I shrugged. "Whatever you want, as long as you keep cooking food like this." I knew I looked like a hog at a trough the way I crammed each forkful in and chewed with my eyes closed. I didn't care.

Until the silence got to me. I opened my left eye, hoping this excellent hallucination wasn't over yet.

Nope, Tigs still sat there with the inscrutable look on his face. His forkful of food remained poised halfway between his plate and mouth. That delicious, full, kissable mouth. "Ya don't say! Careful, Dustin. I might take advantage of the fact you don't believe I'm real. In fact, I oughta do what I really want, which is screw your brains into

oblivion, then do what I should and walk out of here letting you think it was all just a dream."

I pondered that challenge for all of three seconds. The implications of his statement about screwing my brains out had so much appeal, my dick hardened at the very thought. It was my first hard-on since Casey had died, and I felt almost like a traitor to his memory for even being aroused. If that thought didn't kill the erection, it wasn't going down until satisfied. So, why not indulge in a little cock-teasing? "If this is my hallucination, shouldn't I get what I want out of it?"

He put his head to one side, just like the alley cat had done. One of those secretive Mona Lisa smiles turned up the corners of his mouth, and those incredible eyes of his glittered in the light of the one lamp above the kitchen's island. "Yeah? So what do you want?"

I paused with my mouth slowly falling open in the shocked realization that no one, not even Casey, had ever asked me what I wanted. Ever. I licked my lips, confused by the images pressing on my brain. What the hell did I want? "Okay, start with the basics. You. I want you." I looked down at my plate, suddenly not hungry for food anymore. "Why don't I feel like a traitor to Casey?"

Tigs put down his fork and turned to me. "Because it's time to move on. Time to live again. Unless Casey was a controlling dirt bag -- which I doubt -- he'd want you to live your life, love when you found it, and enjoy this beautiful world he left behind." Then, without waiting for an answer, he leaned over and kissed me again, and that time it wasn't just a chaste little brush of the lips.

Oh, boy. Was I ready to live again?

03 Tigs' Blog

I know, I shouldn't have kissed him. Geez, the guy was seriously hurting. I coulda heard violins. So old Tigs has a heart, ya know? Get outta my face about it.

There was something irresistible about Dustin, like a puppy in the shelter, or a homeless kid at a soup kitchens. The world had kicked 'em so hard, they were still reeling but they kept standing. I had to admire that kind of balls.

Speaking of balls, mine were aching for him. They didn't much care about morals or consequences, and they never had. So why was I beating myself up about being the rebound fuck? No strings. I didn't want any, and he didn't need any. Besides, the odds of a rebound fling developing into a lasting relationship were somewhere between slim and none. So why was I hesitating? Beats the hell out of me.

His dark gold hair was so soft, he could have been Pete's brother. Pete's a Himalayan, so she's got this long silky fur. Yeah, Pete's a girl. I'll explain later. I'm talking about Dustin. I'm not going to wax poetic or anything, but I liked his hair, despite it being a little longer than the military buzz most of his fellow firefighters sported. Nice muscles, too. Have to admit I enjoyed carrying him when he crapped out. I like 'em firm and smooth, and he fit both, as well as his jeans.

So, like any self-respecting feline, I shut off my brain and went for what I wanted. I slid my hand up his thigh -- no surprises -- and stroked the outline of a pretty fine piece of meat already hard and waiting. Hey, maybe the lust was mutual.

Dustin broke the kiss and ducked his head away. He spoke to the floor, and wouldn't look me in the eyes. "I'm not a mercy fuck. Don't mind me. I'll stop whining eventually."

"Who says you're a mercy fuck? Not me, pal. If you haven't noticed, I kinda owe you big for saving my furry ass. Besides, if you think this ol' tom ain't got some honest lust, check this." I dropped his sweatpants to my ankles and let him see my pride and joy. Yeah, I'm hung, and if you haven't noticed, toms ain't shy about showing off the equipment.

Mr. Bravery just stared like he'd never seen anything like my set. I could smell the pheromones coming off him in waves, but I could pretend not to notice. After all, it's never wise to advertise your advantages. His mouth opened slowly, and he licked his lips like he couldn't wait to taste. "I -- I'm not sure I can swallow all that."

"But you wanna, right?" I waited for his careful nod. "Yeah, well I want a piece of you too. So, get down on the floor and let's go to town, man." I nibbled on his neck and enjoyed listening to his breath hitch. I wanted to purr.

He slid off the seat and his knees damn near buckled, but he straightened up. "Wait."

"What now?" Dustin was a little taller than me, so I moved from his neck to his pecs. However, this also gave me the opportunity to reach behind and squeeze a handful of toned firefighter buns. I couldn't wait to part those sweet cheeks, and now my mouth watered for a taste.

"Safe sex. Oh, God. Before you make me forget all caution." He waved vaguely toward a stack of old suitcases next to his recliner. Then he bit my neck.

"What? You keep 'em in there?" I had to taste the other nipple. Just had to.

"Movies." Step by step, neither of us stopping our mutual tasting of each other, we made our slow way over to the suitcases. The only reason I followed was his hand on my cock, tugging gently in that direction. You know, what they say about having a guy's jewels in your possession is true -- my heart and mind followed. At least I remembered to leave the sweats behind.

I got his meaning, though. All he'd had was movies and his hand, so he moved all his toys to where he watched them. Hell, with that TV system, I'd have done the same. Oh, hell, yeah, gimme some Sean Cody porn and I'm a happy guy.

Dustin flipped open the top suitcase and dropped to his knees on the cool laminate flooring like he'd been born to suck cock. Maybe he had, I didn't give a shit. All I can say is the guy swallowed my thick meat whole without a problem.

"Impressive, but you don't get all the fun." I bent my knees nice and slow, so he didn't have to stop doing such an excellent suck job while I got down there too. By the time my ass touched wood, my thighs were trembling, and that's going some. We had an awkward moment while I redistributed my weight and got all the way on my back, but I didn't intend to stay that way long.

Dustin was a smart cookie. He squirmed around without losing suction so I could have my taste of his action. Before you could even say "sixty-nine is fine" we were both equally occupied right there on the dark walnut laminate.

Did I mention he had excellent taste in the things that counted, like flooring? Well, he tasted just as fine. I ignored the pole and went for the sweet treats of balls, "taint" and ass. Yeah, you know -- 'taint one, 'taint the other? That's the best flesh for yours truly. Especially Dustin's. The man was made of the best, with just enough scent to let me know I wasn't fucking a mannequin but a real human. I coulda spent all night there, with my nose between his cheeks and his cock tip bumping my collarbone.

Meanwhile, my cock was bumping the back of his throat and signaling it wanted to blow its load. Now that wouldn't be cool, so it was time to end the preliminaries and get to the main event. I nipped the inside of his thigh to get his attention. "Dustin, do you wanna fuck?"

He let go of my shaft, which protested the loss of warmth and suction. "Yes. God, yes." He rolled over on his back and shucked off his jeans and -- Goddamn, the boy did have a wild streak -- a hot red thong before I could stand and remove the robe.

I dug around in the suitcase and found the condom box -- Polyisoprenes, even. The lube was one of the more expensive brands, in the largest bottle they made. The other toys were of impressive quality. I wondered who liked having his nips clamped, and hoped it was Dustin. He and Casey must've had each other on their backs often. I was impressed. "You ain't a cheap lay. I like that."

“Um... thanks.” His eyes followed my hands inspecting the clamps and testing their bite strength. Those grass peepers fired up all hot and bothered.

So, I hovered the little Japanese clover clamps with a silver chain running between them near his tasty little brown nips and listened to his breathing ramp up. “You want me to put these on you, Dustin?” I kept my voice soft and almost purring, just in case.

“Fuck yes!” His eyes shut and his hands snapped together on the floor above his head. Kinky. I’d had a sub a time or two, though I’d never done the lifestyle, but I knew from where his wrists went together that he was used to a pair of cuffs.

I slipped the clamps on Dustin’s chest and ratcheted them down nice and slow until they fit. Of course, they wouldn’t hurt unless I tugged on ‘em, but that was for later when I had his heels in the air.

Then I found the best toy of all. A vibrating double cock ring set. Hot damn. I put the lube on ‘em because you’re supposed to put rings on when you’re soft. How in the hell you do that when you’re already thinking about sex is where I’m clueless. My ass puckered and relaxed. It could hardly wait for the orgasm to come. “I’m gonna put this on you first, then I’m gonna have your ass. Okay?”

“Yeah. Okay.” Dustin squirmed on the floor and panted until I thought he’d hyperventilate. When I brought one ring near his sweet cock, he lifted his ass right off the floor and let me seat it.

I can be a gentleman... when it suits me to do so, that is. I took my time and let him adjust every inch of the way. The fact that I kissed and rubbed on his cock with my cheek and lips made the time it took pleasant for both of us. He was so good, I was clutching my heart before it did something stupid like fall at his feet. Nope. No strings, man. I keep reminding myself. No strings.

Dustin moaned softly. “Now that mine’s on, want me to help you with yours, Tigs?”

"Yeah." I knelt in front of him, so we could cuddle up real close. Was I taking advantage of his subbie nature? Hell, yes. Was I beginning to rethink this Dom thing and liking it? More than hell yes. Our lips met like they were magnetized.

Without much fumbling, Dustin got my ring on me. All this while he and I were doing our best to swallow each other's tongues to prove who was the bigger carnivore. I was gonna win, of course. Then he patted around on the floor until he found the control end and flicked the switch.

Both our cocks lit up with a hum, and if I wasn't already horny enough to throw him on his back, I was with my cock purring without my help.

I bent Dustin back until he was on the floor looking up at me before I broke the kiss and lifted his ankles to the sky. I rolled a condom down and lubed up without breaking eye contact with the muscular fireball under me.

Those big green eyes kept looking into mine even while my cock slid in, though they widened a bit while his body adjusted. I'd warned him this old tomcat was a bit on the large side. He'd had me in his mouth, so no one can say he didn't know what was going in him.

Only problem was, he was getting into me, too. Like a burr you couldn't get out of your fur without a shitload of pain, he was working his way deep under my skin. There was nothing I could do about it, either, and all the telling myself classy educated guys don't stick with low-lives wasn't working. I couldn't convince myself he was just slumming, ya know? Not with my dick buried in his ass while he begged me for more with those grass eyes.

"Hurry, Tigs. You're killing me with kindness." Dustin's hands clawed feebly at the wood.

"Me, too." Finally, I slid home and the fucking commenced. I won't say I like it rough, but Dustin and I were fucking like a jackhammer hitting concrete, with the humming of the vibrators to make it feel like the visual. I swear I'll never look at a jackhammer the same way without a smile on my face.

Within seconds, both of us were deaf and blind to anything else but the fucking. The rings made it difficult to blow, but that didn't mean we didn't feel the heat of the fire raging. Eventually, there'd be a flashpoint, and we'd either explode or die trying.

The control flew out of Dustin's hand and went flying off behind me and the tethering line attaching it to our cocks slapped me on the thigh on its way past. I barely registered its passing, like wiping your brow on a hot day. You just noted it and kept going.

My balls lifted, straining for the release denied them despite the tightness of Dustin's body alternately squeezing and caressing me with every stroke. They begged for the orgasm, but were restrained by the cock ring vibrating and giving them more stimulus in a viciously upward spiral of need-stimulus-need. I thought I was going to lose my mind before I lost my load, but I was determined Dustin was going to go first.

I grabbed his cock and stroked him up and down, and he yowled like he'd been born feline. I was proud of him, and proud of me, despite the noise we were making. However, my reward was a gusher from him that might have made one of his fire hoses envious. He shouted my name and came until I thought he'd pass out again. Not Casey's name, but mine.

Right then, I lost my heart along with my load. I'd had more of a reward than I'd ever hoped from Dustin, and I came so hard I thought I'd blown up like an imploded building until I collapsed almost on top of him, too spent to do more than convince my lungs to keep breathing. The only thing keeping me from crushing him were his legs, which just goes to prove how strong firemen are.

I don't know how long we stayed there before Dustin found the lead to the control, fish-hauled it to his hand, and flicked the switch, mercifully shutting off the hum. Then he hit a second switch and the rings opened up and fell away. He sighed. "I love that thing. And I think I love you, Tigs. How insane is that?"

My heart broke in two because I knew I had to go as quickly as possible before I got hurt, or worse, hurt Dustin. He didn't deserve to have a scruffy, low life tomcat in

his life. He was a classy kind of guy with an education. He deserved better than me. Lots better. "Really insane. You shouldn't."

He sighed. "I know. C'mere." He opened his arms, clearly wanting a cuddle right there on the bare hardwood.

I'll take anything smooth and flat to lay on, and my heart begged for just a few more minutes in his arms before I went back to my back alley world where I belonged. So, I lay with him on the floor in a puddle of moonlight from a window until Dustin was deeply asleep. Then I carried him into his bed and covered him with a blanket. He rolled over and sighed with a smile on his face, and I figured that was the best way to leave him.

I stopped once more to look at him from the front door, all the way back to his bedroom. He was tuxes and I was jeans, and I knew it. But that didn't stop me from clawing for a moment on the wall next to his door in pain. I wanted to stay with all my heart. I almost turned back then.

Until I saw his altar and memorial to Casey. Casey had probably been another classy guy who knew which wine went with what and all those other fancy things guys like me have no clue what they even are. I didn't want to be Dustin's rebound fuck until he woke up and realized he deserved something better than old Tigs, Nobody would build a memorial to an alley cat.

I walked out, shut Dustin's apartment door softly, changed, and ran my furry ass back to the slums where I belonged.

04 Tigs' Blog

The summer sun beat down mercilessly on me and my guys, and I wiped the sweat off my forehead just to remove the extra. After a month of investigation, the fire department had declared us clear. They never caught the arsonist, but that was no shock. The building had been a total loss, of course.

So was my heart. It was a total loss. I'd done my best to forget Dustin by working my ass off. Even Pete had begun to tell me I was too skinny lately, and they weren't accepting my excuse that I wasn't hungry anymore. Pete had even given up on making shrimp balls, her last resort treat. At least there was plenty of work.

We'd been compensated for our lost equipment, paid for the work we'd done, and benefited from the free publicity when the news had declared us innocent. We now had jobs backed up to keep us busy for the next six months, and a real rental house we all shared because we needed the garage. Whoda thunk it? Me, mowing a fucking lawn? Yeah, and I liked it.

I would be grateful when the job we were on ended for us. We'd been hired to tear off a roof, and the last set of rotten plywood and three layers of shingles were hitting the Dumpster. Guess I was going to have to come up with a company name or something. I was thinking Amigos or Friends.

If I occasionally looked in the direction of Dustin's apartment and wondered how he was doing -- well, a guy deserved a break now and then, didn't he? I could see his roof from this job. I assumed by now he had a new love. Guys like him didn't stay single for long.

"Tigs! Hey, Tigs! Wake up!" Beans waved at me from the ground, well out of range of the flying debris. "Come down here!"

Ace and Pete kept shoveling the last few shingles, and Rat stood ready with a pry bar to remove anything stubborn. They didn't need me anymore, so I swung down to the ladder and climbed down.

Beans met me at the base of the ladder. He's a big guy, with shoulders as broad and muscular as his Rotweiller form, but his sweet face and brown eyes give away his true nature, if the reading glasses don't. Beans is a fair carpenter, but he's a genius with numbers and managing our calendar. "Tigs, our next job is a big one. You know those beautiful old mansions down by the river near the naval base?"

I nodded absently. Who didn't? While the area had once been the homes of the wealthy and privileged, the whole neighborhood had gone downhill twenty or thirty years before. Urban landlords had cut up most into squeezed little apartments for the poorest of the military that didn't have the luck to live on base but couldn't afford the good shit off the base. Worst of all the landlords had been old man Hardesty, but he'd died at last and no one mourned him.

Beans went on eagerly. "You know that old bastard Hardesty passed away and didn't leave a will, right? Well, he had a son he'd disinherited years before for being gay. Since there was no will, the son had to wait for the courts to agree it was all his. Now that all that shit has been taken care of -- what, don't you read the papers? Anyway, young Mr. Hardesty called us. Said he's seen our work and he's impressed. He wants to hire us to renovate all the properties his dad owned, putting them back to fine mansions or making them into better multi-family properties."

My jaw dropped. Such a project would take years, especially since Old Man Hardesty (Hard Ass to his tenants) was notorious for not repairing leaks or shorts. It would mean gutting and storing what could be saved, like *This Old House* on a grand scale. I swallowed hard and wondered how many men we could hire.

"Thought I'd see those wheels turning in your head." Beans gave me that drop-jawed grin only canines can master. "Anyway, Mr. Hardesty wants a visit. Invited your scruffy ass to dinner at the mansion. Seven PM tonight."

"Oh, fuck." My mind scrambled to come up with a clean pair of jeans and wondered if I'd done laundry in the past month on my one good shirt. I raced back to my beat-up truck and broke a few speeding laws making it back to the house.

By the time I drove my truck down the long driveway leading to the Hardesty mansion, I was a nervous wreck, but I was as clean and un-scruffy as I could get. I'd come out of the shower to find Pete ironing my shirt, and my newest pair of steel toes polished up as best as Rat could get them. Even my jeans had a crease in 'em. The hopeful eyes of my team had followed me out the door. It was all on me, now.

The Hardesty place was apparently first on the list of projects, because I saw scaffolding on one side where painters had been restoring the place to a gleaming white, and I definitely approved of the forest green shutters. Though I couldn't be sure in the fading light, the gardens looked like they were being restored, too, and I could smell new-mown grass. Yeah, clearly the new guy was making some changes.

I parked in front and walked to the front door carefully, afraid of scuffing my polished boots on the fancy-ass white gravel driveway. I checked my watch at the door. Seven PM sharp. Geez, I felt out of my element. I swallowed and rang the bell.

Did I mention the doors -- two of 'em -- were carved in some fancy-ass oak leaf pattern and probably oak? A bomb could go off on the stoop and they might be a little singed, but those doors were medieval in strength. Someone on the other side of the door unlocked the door with a quiet snick.

You know how they say cats can sense a storm coming? Well, it's true. Whatever was coming was making my hair stand up. What was it? For a second, I considered panicking and running back to my truck.

The door swung open and a pair of familiar grass-green eyes smiled down at me. Dustin grabbed me by the arm and drew me inside. "Hiya, Tigs. I've been worried you wouldn't have the nerve to show up at the feared Hardesty Mansion."

Okay, so that got my back up. I'd be damned if I'd admit to fear in the first place. Besides, I was busy trying not to jump Dustin's bones right there in the hall. That would not be good. He probably had a new husband by now, so I'd be cool but friendly. My heart couldn't break anymore, right? Right. "Me? Scared of Old Hard Ass? Hell, no!" I stepped into the middle of the threadbare carpet and surveyed the unrestored hallway, making tsking sounds about the wear patterns on the eight-foot wide stairs leading up to the next level. "Geez, the new owner has his work cut out for him."

Dustin just grinned and swept his hand around the room. "Take a good look. Your team will need some good figures, right?"

I pulled out a memo pad I kept in my back pocket. "Yeah. I came prepared. What are you doing here, Anyway?" I had a small tape measure in one pocket, and I took a few square footage measurements. "Here, hold that against the wall. Yeah, there. Thanks."

Dustin wore a nice set of jeans and a shirt that shimmered like it was real silk. A classy guy like him? Yeah, it probably was. Come to think of it, hadn't Beans said the son was gay? Shit. That made sense. Dustin's new man was rich, young and gay Mr. Hardesty.

I suddenly didn't want the job so very much anymore. My throat closed, and I kept scribbling down notes for my estimates out of personal pride. Call it a cat thing but I'd be damned if I'd show I was bugged in the slightest by working with Dustin, and professional pride wouldn't let me fudge the estimate either.

"You came for dinner, didn't you Tigs?" Dustin still had hold of the other end of my tape measure, so he gave it a tug. I'd almost swear he was a little worried from the sober expression on his face.

"Yeah, but it never hurts to know what you're talking about when meeting a new client." Even if that client had the one thing in this world I wanted more than my next breath of air. "Can I have my tape back?"

"What? Oh." Dustin let go, and the tape snapped back inside the case. "You can have a tour after dinner. This place is first on the agenda."

I wasn't sure if I'd be able to take wandering a shitload of bedrooms with the guy I wanted to tie up on any four-poster beds I found, and I wasn't inclined to share with rich boy Hardesty. So I nodded. "Be better to see it in daylight."

Dustin snorted. "Like night is a problem for you." He gestured toward an impressive set of French doors inset with real stained glass. "Come on, Tigs. Let's eat. The chef fixed salmon in a cream sauce."

My stomach, the traitor, growled. For the first time in a month, I was hungry. What the hell, seeing Dustin happy and in love was good. I'd left him because low-life alley cats don't belong with guys like him, so why wasn't I thrilled to see him having what he deserved? I patted my flat belly. "Looks like my stomach can't wait. Let's get to gettin', mah man."

On the other side of the French doors was a dining room bigger than the entire first floor of our house downtown. However, the equally huge table was bare except for some big-ass silver thing. Instead, near a fireplace big enough for me to stand upright inside, a small table had a tablecloth, one squat candle, and more plates stacked up than I knew what to do with, plus three wine glasses at each place. There were only two chairs.

Dustin sat in one chair, the one with arms. "Sit down, Tigs. Don't be nervous."

I gingerly sat in a chair older and worth more than all the furniture in my house. I carefully counted all the shit on the table. Yeah, two sets of everything. "Uh, ain't Mr. Hardesty coming?"

At that very moment, an old guy wearing an all black suit pushed a cart from a swinging side door. The old codger shuffled up with the cart full of food. His eyes were bright and clear though, and even I got the clue this was the family butler, too proud and stubborn to retire. "Here you are, Master Dustin. Mrs. Brown particularly wants you to taste the asparagus, sir! She used to make this for you as a boy."

Dustin grinned and allowed the butler to load up his plate. He sniffed greedily over a plate of the green vegetables covered in a lemony-smelling sauce. "I remember, Mr. Webster. Please tell her I am already thrilled."

They knew him from boyhood? Call me slow, but I finally got the clue. Dustin's last name was Hardesty. He wasn't just a classy, educated fireman. He was perhaps the richest gay guy in the city, with a mansion and a fucking family butler. He was so far above me on the class ladder, he had to breathe through an oxygen mask.

I trembled, unsure of whether to leap across the table into his arms or run back home like welding sparks were hitting my tail.

05 Dustin's Blog

I hadn't been sure that Tigs would even show up, much less that I'd manage to keep him guessing long enough to entice him in for a meal and maybe more. It was the "maybe more" I wanted, but I couldn't be sure.

If Tigs had been in his feline form, his hair would have been standing on end and his ears would have been flat back against his skull. As it was, his face was pale, his body too thin, and he kept eyeing the door like he'd love to make a mad dash. Then his eyes looked into mine with a hunger for more than mere food. That was when I knew for certain.

I'd been so hurt when I'd awakened the next morning, alone again. I'd been dressing to go after him when the doorbell rang with a note from the family lawyers, delivered by private courier, no less.

Dad may have disinherited me and died intestate, but the law was the law -- I was the only rightful heir. I went from poverty to incredible wealth -- wealth I'd never seen as a child with my father's penny-pinching. How much wealth had taken me days to understand, even before I'd accepted the keys to the crumbling ruin of a house and all the responsibilities included.

I'd been appalled at the state of the supposed income properties, the way the property managers had been skimming and cheating both my father and me, and the horrible conditions endured by the tenants. It had been a nightmare.

I'd buried myself somewhere in the midst of the paperwork on Dad's desk in his office until a week later I'd made as much sense of it as I could. One thing had been perfectly clear -- renovations needed to happen from the most trusted company I could

find. I needed a combination of designer and general contractor, and that's all I knew about construction. My ignorance was just as appalling, but unsurprising given Dad's miserly ways.

By happy circumstance, the television in Dad's office had been on so I could catch the news. I'd seen Tigs' unhappy face in a still photo appear onscreen, announcing how his team had been exonerated from any charges of arson.

Then the biggest shock of all. The anchorwoman had done her homework and had found out Tigs had designed and acted as general contractor on several urban renewal projects. One, the vestibule of a restored 1920's office building, had been heralded as an outstanding restoration of the era's design, including handmade replicas of Heywood-Wakefield furniture.

I'd run my hands over my father's Heywood-Wakefield desk and blinked at the 1920's Art Deco architecture, knowing the entire neighborhood had been built in the heydays before the Great Depression. All the while, Tigs' unhappy, thin face stared at me from behind the anchorwoman.

A few phone calls later I'd had my information and planned how I'd get Tigs back in my arms. I wanted to tame a wild alley cat, but I'd better have the best bait in the trap.

Meanwhile, Webster put a serving of asparagus on Tigs' plate. He'd always been after me to eat my vegetables, fearful I'd starve or something. He'd been more of a father to me than the man who'd provided me with genes but little love.

Tigs blinked at the vegetables as if they'd come from a sewer, but smiled politely at Webster with a quiet word of thanks.

I swallowed laughter and cleared my throat. "Easy on the vegetables for Mr. Tigs, if you'd be so kind, Mr. Webster. My friend is on a very low-carb diet and can't have anything but meat, dairy, and cheeses.

Webster nodded. "Yes, Master Dustin. You told us yesterday your guest would prefer such things. Mrs. Brown looked up all the vegetables allowed, and made a special dessert Mr. Tigs may have with no strain on his delicate digestion." Proud of

himself, he served both of us a generous salmon steak covered in a delicate sauce and tottered back into the kitchen.

Tigs cut up the asparagus without looking up. "I was about to ask you what part of C-A-R-N-I-V-O-R-E didn't he get, but he trumped you, didn't he?" He put the asparagus bit in his mouth and chewed. "Actually, I can eat a few vegetables, but if I change form in the next half hour, I'll have a bit of a stomach-ache." He speared another green piece. "It's delicious."

"Try the salmon." I dug into my dinner, at least reassured he'd stay and that he'd lost none of that irrepressible arrogance I found so charming about him.

Tigs took a deep sniff. His fork bit into the steak and carried the morsel to his mouth. If I envisioned my own flesh going between his lips, I think I might have been forgiven, considering the sensual pleasure he displayed. I had no idea a human could really purr, but he managed a deep rumble. "Mrs. Brown just became my favorite lady in the whole world. Pete's going to be pissed, but Mrs. Brown makes Pete's cooking look like Mickey D's." Then he stabbed his fork at me. "Okay, Mr. Hardesty, let's talk about what I saw on my way here, what Rumor Control says, and what you think needs to happen."

"You're the expert, Tigs." I busied my fork and listened to the most amazing lecture on making things right for my home and a large percentage of my properties. Just as I'd hoped, Tigs wasn't intimidated by my money, nor, of course, was he the least bit bothered by my being gay, as many of the other contractors I'd called clearly had been. Some had promised to bid but hadn't shown up, others had given me multi-million-dollar bids via the phone without so much as setting foot on the properties.

By the time Mr. Webster served us both a cheesecake confection covered in nuts and a sour cream sauce, Tigs had managed to educate me and negotiate a per-property contract proposal starting with my family home.

"... and the first person to touch all that fancy scrollwork before I make sure we can copy that millwork will get their fucking fingers broke." Tigs shook his cheesecake-laden fork almost under my nose.

I could wait no longer to find out what I desperately needed to know. I leaned over and took his fork into my mouth and sucked, in the most deliberately suggestive manner I could.

The fork remained poised in my mouth, and Tigs stopped mid-threat.

Silence reigned for a full thirty seconds while I counted each one.

Tigs managed one small choking breath. "I, uh, take it you've got another dessert in mind." His voice was soft and hesitant.

Positive I had him right where I wanted him, I let go of the fork and licked my lips clean of the last crumb. My jeans were tight enough to drum a primitive beat upon, and the heat below them should have made a cold blast of CO2 imperative. I didn't know quite how to start the fire, but I had a better understanding of where our flash point was. I picked up my plate and fork with a grin. "Let's just say I'm suggesting we finish this upstairs. You haven't seen the rest of the house."

The big cat-man --I still wondered if I was crazy to believe in cats that shifted into sexy men-- stood and slowly picked up the delicate china and his own fork. He swallowed and studied the table. "I ain't used to just leaving the mess for someone else to clean up."

"Never you mind about the table, Master Tigs!" Webster flapped his blue-veined hands to shoo us both away. "Mrs. Brown and I are thrilled to do our jobs properly again. She's singing and loading the dishwasher. Go upstairs to finish your business. I've made up your old room for Mr. Tigs, sir, and fresh towels in both bathrooms. Go on, enjoy yourselves. Breakfast at seven, as usual, Master Dustin?"

Saved by Mr. Webster! "Yes, that would be fine." I wondered how Tigs would react to freshly ground coffee, scones, and the Irish breakfast Mrs. Brown insisted upon making.

Tigs stood, holding what remained of his dessert, so clearly out of his element that I took pity on him. His discomfort with everything from the fine china to the new situation of having someone serve him and plan his life conveyed itself even in his

posture. Every time he looked around the dining room, his shoulders hunched a little lower.

In my mind, I formulated a plan. I gestured with my own plate toward the upstairs. "Come on, Tigs. You can finish your dessert while I show you that troublesome leak in my bathroom. I love the old fixtures, so it may take an expert eye to understand what I need." I started walking backward, like I was enticing my kitty with catnip.

That steadied him. He understood renovations, so he was back on solid footing. "Ace is our plumber, but I can at least look to give him a full report." He followed me willingly. "Tell me it has glass tile and glass block?"

"It does indeed! Come see for yourself." I laughed and took the stairs with him, side by side.

He ran his fingers along the black inlay in the stair rail all the way up with a sigh of pleasure. "Bakelite embedded in solid oak. Hohausen was a genius." He lifted his eyes to mine. "I looked up your house a while back. It's a 1934 Henry Hohausen, from when he lived here."

I could have cared less, though I'd look up what I could later. At that moment, what I wanted embedded was his cock in my body, and I didn't much care which orifice. I stopped at the doors to my bedroom and crooked my finger with an evil smile. "Here, kitty-kitty!"

"Very fucking funny." Tigs' lips twitched, but just like I expected a feline to behave, he seemed haughtily bent on his own mission. That is, until he stepped into the sybaritic paradise that had been my parents' room since before I'd been born.

My mother had been a prominent socialite with more decorative taste than good sense, and her choices in the bedroom were "high class Art Deco meets bordello" in taste. She'd also loved cats of all sizes. The room was a shrine to felines, but managed to remain just on the side of good taste.

Tigs' jaw made a slow descent to the floor, and his gorgeous eyes were as round as saucers at the fine art. He reverently stroked the leather fainting couch and bent to

study the pillow embroidered with a regal cat. He looked up at me with a grin. "Looks just like Pete when she gets all royal on you. Better hide it when she comes to repair your stairs. She's our best finish carpenter." He shrugged and stood upright. "She's the only one of us with CFA papers and shit. The rest of us are alley cats, ya know." He wouldn't meet my eyes.

Unable to wait much longer, I grabbed his hand and pulled him into the bathroom, where a wall of glass brick and tiles awaited his expert eyes. "Come on, Tigs. Wait until you see the bathroom."

He grinned sheepishly and let me lead him toward the bathroom, if you wanted to call the room bigger than my old apartment by so base a name. Spa was more correct, with massage table, mirrored vanity, walk in closets the size of bedrooms, a sunken tub and shower. He stepped regally over the threshold. "Yeah, let me see this leaky... Holy shit."

I let go of his hand and let him walk around, examining every inch of the marble top on the double sink, the cedar wood for the closets, the stylized Art Deco fixtures, even the pattern on the tiles. While he was preoccupied, I made my preparations for his seduction.

06 Tigs' Blog

There aren't many things that can intimidate ol' Tigs but that much money spent on fucking furniture was almost obscene. What did you do with so much money? Now all of that was in danger of being pissed away from neglect. It wasn't Dustin's fault. I knew that. Somehow, I couldn't even muster more than mild annoyance. Everything was hazed over with lust, and yeah I'll admit it -- a huge pile of joy just to be with him. I turned around to tell him I'd have my crew back here the very next day, and forgot everything.

Dustin stood in front of the mirrored vanity wearing gold nipple rings, a green g-string with a pendant under his erect cock, and a very hopeful smile. His clothes were either puddled around his ankles or thrown over the chair. The mirrors reflected his perfect, pale body standing in front of the glass brick wall of the biggest shower in fucking history. He looked like one of the elves running around the city parks at night like moonlit ghosts. The elves still liked the night, and city parks were great for 'em to party in.

My fork and plate of cheesecake hit the floor, cheesecake side down, of course. My ears registered the bang, but my head had one thing on my mind. I licked my lips, and I shivered at the pulse of lust hitting me. "Tell me that g-string is waterproof."

Dustin's eyes widened and he looked down and fingered the gold chain thing in front. Sucker probably cost more than my truck payments. "I think so. Why?"

I started stalking him and thrilled when he backed up like a good little prey. My fangs lengthened a little, as they sometimes did just before I shifted. I could hold the

almost-feline feeling, keeping just fangs, claws, and kitty-slit eyes for up to half an hour before I had to shift one way or the other.

Dustin's breath hitched a bit, and his grass green eyes got even bigger. He backed up into the shower stall, which was bigger than my walk-in closet, a good fifteen squares. I could hear his heart hammering like my entire crew was laying a roof down.

When he had his back planted in the corner, I reached up and unbuttoned my shirt slowly, strip-teasing. I kept his big-eyed gaze locked on mine, knowing his primate instincts screamed at him to run from the predator. So I watch Discovery Channel now and then. It ain't a crime.

By the time I unbuckled my pants and threw them in the direction of the vanity, it dawned on him I was undressing for some mutual satisfaction. Now his grin lit up his face. He reached over and punched a couple of buttons, and a warming light came on in the shower stall as well as the quietest exhaust fan I'd ever not-heard.

Soon as the only tighty-whites I owned flew out the door -- hey, I said I dressed nice, not my usual thongs -- and landed on the shoes and socks I'd toed off, I remembered the little addition I'd made to my body. I wondered if he'd notice.

Dustin's eyes lit up when he saw the tiny loop of silver metal and the tag dangling from my dick. He grinned at me and knelt as if he were going to kiss my boo-boo or something. "I see we both got a little body jewelry, and..." Guess that was when the little charm caught his eye. He lifted the D with reverent fingers and kissed it. "I hope that D is for Dustin."

The kiss did me in. I told the truth. "Yeah. I thought I'd get something to remember you by. Ya know?" Not wanting to get too mushy, I returned the compliment and bent to play with a nipple ring. "I like your little additions, too."

His breath hitched. "Easy. They're still sensitive."

I put the ring down gently. "That's cool, for now. Mine, too. Be nice, okay?" I reached over and flicked on the shower. "I already had a shower, but I've got a hankering to see you wet, naked and soapy."

Just as I figured, Old Man Hard-Ass wasn't going to do without the latest gadgets in his fancy-ass pleasure palace. The water was hot straight out, which meant he'd installed a tankless water heater somewhere in the walls of the bathroom, guaranteeing he didn't have to wait for hot water, and saving a shitload of money at the same time.

Immediately, both of us looked like half-drowned rats, and the kitty in me protested the indignity, so I went back to looking like a human. Goddamn rainwater nozzle in the ceiling, plus jets coming from all directions ensured every part of me was wet.

That wasn't nothing compared to Dustin, who took a jet right in the back of his head. Rather than waste the forward motion, he planted his face next to my cock and got to work, licking and sucking.

I decided that I could wait for my special tube steak dessert. I'd fuck his ass as soon as I could find the condoms and lube, but for now he could have the first bite. I took my time and fucked his mouth slowly, enjoying every bit of soft tongue and scraping teeth.

Dustin knew how to suck cock and make it last a while. He was gentle around my piercing, and rough where he could be. Both of his hands crept around to play with my ass, too.

Too bad I couldn't purr right then, but I had to make him stop eventually. I wanted more than a mere blow, ya know? I wanted the bang, too. My fingers fisted in his hair and pulled gently. "Where's the lube and condoms? You ain't getting away that easily. Da Tigs wants it all, mah man."

Ol' Grass Eyes licked his lips and flicked off the shower. "You can get me soapy later, then. Want to try out the jet tub?"

I could see me fucking him over the rim so clearly, I damn near came right then. "Yeah. You set that up once you tell me where you keep the raincoats."

Dustin stepped out of the shower and pointed to the middle drawer of the vanity. "There." He bent over, flipping dials and punching buttons, and gave me a great

ass shot of what I intended to plug as quickly as possible. Water rushed in to fill a tub big enough to wash my entire crew at once.

I grabbed a handful of what I needed and ran over, catching him completely by surprise. My tongue flicked out to catch the underside of his balls and licked all the way up while my nose teased his perfectly clean hole. Bent over the rim like that, he was at my non-existent mercy.

Oh, yeah, he was as sweet as I remembered. He remained bent over the padded rim, with his palms supporting him and keeping him safe from drowning. Dustin moaned and spread for me, helpless and unable to resist my tongue and teeth. "Tigs! Oh, my God. Yes, please. Yes!"

I licked and nibbled while my hands worked open the packet and got me safely covered. I knew Dustin was probably clean, but I figure it's polite to wrap the meat just in case. After all, I'm just an alley cat taking advantage of some prime flesh. A squirt of lube, and I was ready for action.

Soon as I stood, Dustin sensibly turned off the water before he'd be in any danger of sticking his face below the water line. "Da Tigs can have whatever he wants."

"Nice to know." I lifted him up, tossed his ass in the water, and for once didn't give a damn about the tiles or who had to clean up the sloshed mess.

Dustin came up sputtering and laughing, but he was no pushover. Before I could brace myself, he had my hand and yanked me in after him. We tussled like a pair of kids, but I'm still a little bigger and stronger. Not by much, but enough. He made me work for his submission, and that was fine by me.

Eventually, I got him over the edge and spread for a wallbanger. Somehow I'd retained the lube, so I guessed it was one of the kind you had to work to wash off. No matter to me, I was ready to plug me some of the finest pearly ass this side of the tracks, and that was enough to make me rock hard. I put my dick right up to his entrance. "Knock! Knock!"

He laughed. "Who's there?"

Oh, so the old knock-knock jokes? I could play along. "Ima!"

"Ima who?"

"Ima-coming in, rich boy." I shoved past the first sphincter with just the barest of pressures and waited while he adjusted. I may have been harder than my maul and ready to pound him like a jackhammer on cement, but since I didn't play with the customers this might be my only time with him. I wanted the goodbye he didn't get last time to be memorable. I owed him that much.

Dustin moaned so low and soft, the sound might have been a purr. His ass closed around me like a hot velvet glove. "Here, kitty-kitty! Come get your catnip toy. I'm all yours, babe."

I slid past the second sphincter and all the way home in one smooth motion -- the kind of perfect fit that makes a mason feel like he might one day create the perfect mortar-less seam, just like the ancient dead guys on TV. My hands were rough, but I did a reach around and started pumping his cock with my hand in time with my hips.

Soon we were in perfect sync, rocking and fucking with soft splashes of warm water from the waves we made in the jetted water. Dustin wasn't a noisy fuck, and neither am I, so it was just the hum of the motor and the lapping, heated water. My hand slid up and down his cock, pulling and playing with every inch. Gradually, my thrusts got harder and faster, and my body begged for release. I was caught up in every hot inch of Dustin's flesh, and I wanted nothing else but to stay there forever.

Dustin's soft moans stopped, and he encouraged me more. "Come for me, Tigs. Come inside me."

"God, yes!" I was helpless to stop myself. I came like a pneumatic hammer laying down a line of nails, more explosively than a C4 building implosion. My hand instinctively squeezed and stroked Dustin's cock with the same jerking movements of my body.

Dustin came, too, his body mimicking mine, his ass milking every last drop out of me and still holding tight like it would never let go.

We were puppets on a string, at the mercy of the moment and addicted to the ecstasy, jerking and moaning. Finally, we collapsed, fell apart, and I disposed of the

used condom as discreetly as possible into a marble-looking wastebasket next to the tub. Knowing my luck, it was for towels or something, but it looked like a trashcan, Anyway.

Dustin had a smug smile on his face. He turned around and sat on one of the underwater seats with his chin barely above the water.

No doubt I had the same smirk on my face, but I had to tease. He was too damn pretty, and I was so friggin' happy, I couldn't stop purring inside. "You look like a cat who just got the keys to the whole fucking dairy, mah man."

He laughed, but my kitty ears told me the sound was forced. "No, I'm giving my favorite tomcat the keys to the dairy. You and your amigos up to the job of returning respectability to what my father destroyed?" He didn't open his eyes, but his whole body tensed up. If he'd been a shifter, his ears would have been straining for every whisper on the wind. "Not to mention, I'd like for you to move in with me, if you want"

Ah, there it was. The real request. The one I'd been scared to hear. I looked around. It was a luxurious place, but a cage is still a cage even when the bars are made of gold and the bed is velvet. Did I want it? I was terrified now that he'd asked. I got up and yanked a towel off a brass ladder hanging on the wall. The fucking towel was so warm and soft, I wanted to rub all over it. "I -- I'm just an alley cat, man. You deserve better than me, you know."

"Do I? Or is the alley cat afraid of the cage?" Uncannily, he echoed my own thoughts back at me. "I'm not asking you to lock yourself to me, Tigs. I'm asking for a commitment of the heart." He stood and stepped out, a pale beautiful thing, like marble statues and other fancy rich man's things. He touched my arm. "Do you love me? Is that why you left? Because you thought you weren't good enough?"

I couldn't look into his gorgeous green eyes so I handed him a towel. "Here. You'll fucking freeze. Of course I ain't good enough, dope. Even when I thought you were just a poor guy like me, I knew you were better'n me."

He looked stricken and swallowed so hard his Adam's apple bobbed up and down. His next question came out in a harsh whisper. "Do you want me to find someone else?"

Oh, hell. Trapped in my own lie, I shut my eyes. My heart screamed and yowled the negative, but I managed to choke out something that sounded like a "Yeah."

"Liar." He pointed down at my cock, where the charm winked in the warming lights. "That says you already gave me your heart. You love me enough to give me up to someone else. Ain't happening, mah man."

I snorted to hear his cultured voice try to talk like me. "You ain't got the street cred for that bullshit." I sighed and gave up. "Okay, rich boy. Guess I can fix up your house and guard you from hustlers and gigolos."

"Deal." Dustin briskly started drying himself off. "We'll discuss the rest in the morning. I've waited far too long to get you into my bed."

A knock on the door had us both wrapping our towels around our waists. Mr. Webster peeked in. "Sorry to disturb your soak, gentlemen, but there seem to be a few cats and dogs waiting patiently on the front stoop. Are they yours, Mr. Tigs?"

I smothered a laugh. "Yeah. Sorry about that."

Mr. Webster nodded. "Very well, sir. I'll clean up this mess on the carpet while you bring your pets inside. I'll inform the cook to prepare some enticements, sir." He closed the door and departed.

I turned to Dustin. "Ready to meet my crew? Amigos Restoration Services apparently is very anxious to begin working for you, Mr. Hardesty."

"This is only the beginning of a beautiful relationship, Tigs. No cages, just commitment."

We went downstairs laughing. Maybe that was enough of a spark to be our flash point. I'd just have to find out. Curiosity does kill that cat, but satisfaction brings him back.

Lena Austin

Lena Austin is a “fallen” Southern Belle with a checkered past. She has been a licensed minister, hairdresser, and realtor, radio DJ, exotic dancer, telephone service tech, live-steel medievalist swordswoman, BDSM Mistress, and investment property manager. Not necessarily in that order. She never finished that degree in archaeology, but did learn to scuba. After a life like that, writing about it is pretty restful. Of herself, Lena writes, “I’m tall, and I look like an unholy mating between an Amazon and a librarian. Everything else is subject to change on a whim.” She presently has over thirty books published and has no plans to stop “until they pry my cold dead fingers from the keyboard.”