

*a going for the gold* novel

# Personal Best

*sean michael*



Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

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## Chapter One

Jessy Turner was between swimmers when he walked into Jamail Hall at UT, looking for Coach Jeff Samuels.

Jeff had called with "an opportunity". It could be anything from a job offer to a lead on a new swimmer who needed a private coach to someone who was looking for private lessons for their tyke; there was no telling with Jeff.

The man's office was empty, so Jessy made his way through the huge complex down to the pool. He was stopped in his tracks by the show going on in the water. The kids were swimming laps, going hard, and lane three was smoking. His form needed work, but fuck, he was flying through the water like a damned fish.

Jessy hadn't seen someone with that much raw talent in too fucking long. He sat in the stands and just watched.

Dark hair, long, long arms and legs—the kid moved and moved, and fuck if he just didn't keep *going*, digging up more and more energy.

"Kid's going to burn himself out." Jeff's voice sounded at his shoulder.

"I'm surprised he hasn't already. You gonna rein him in sometime soon?"

"Nope. You are." Jeff gave him a grin. "You remember Doug and Jamie Gaulliet? The all-American freestylers that were killed off the coast? That is their son."

He whistled low. "Comes by it naturally then." He felt that excitement shiver up his spine, the one that said he was onto

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something special. "So I am, am I? You offering me a job or handing me the next Olympic champion on a silver platter?"

"I'm handing you the kid. He's got a scholarship. He swims my meets. You get the use of the pool and facilities for training. There are already two sponsors lined up—good money, but they want you."

"You okay with losing the coaching opportunity?" Jeff was a good man. A good coach, but this kid needed one-on-one. Still, Jessy needed to hear it from the man himself.

"Shit, Jessy. This kid? Needs 24/7 care. He's got more energy than anyone I've ever met." Jeff nodded out to the water where the damned kid was *still* going. "He can do that for hours, then get out, down an entire pizza and 2-liter." Jeff chuckled. "Then he'll either throw up from nerves or get in the pool and do it again."

"24/7, yeah?" Jessy nodded. "I'll give it some thought." Like he was going to do anything but jump at the chance to coach this kid. He was already planning to get the kid off caffeine, put that energy to efficient use.

His place was big enough to move the kid in, the pool a good size, perfect for training. They could come into Jamail Hall a few days a week, train with the rest of the UT team.

"If you don't want him, let me know soon. I don't want to lose him to UCLA."

"Let me go talk to him. I'll let you know before I go."

"Sure. His name's Mike, by the way. Sweet kid. Don't terrify him." Jeff winked and blew the whistle. "Frank, Aaron. Up and out. To the weight room."

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He snorted. Terror was how you got them to follow the rules.

The kid was the only one left in the pool and he slowly made his way down, crouching at the end of Mike's lane.

A pair of the biggest, darkest eyes Jessy'd ever seen blinked up at him, smiling. "You lost? Coach is ... uh ... probably in the weight room."

"I'm not lost. I'm Jessy Turner. You can call me Coach." He held his hand out to the kid. "You're Mike Gaulliet, right?"

The kid had a strong handshake, firm. "Yeah. That's me. Nice to meet you."

"You look pretty good out there. Been swimming long?"

"Only since before I can remember. I've been racing for ten years."

"Where?" The kid was still moving, kicking his legs idly. Man, that energy was something else.

"North Texas youth league. North Texas juniors. Plano High. UIL All-State team."

"Yeah? You've worked with some good people, you know that?"

"Yeah." The kid smiled, eyes just lighting up. "Coach Nevins is the absolutely coolest. Well, Coach Samuels is close."

Jessy nodded. Those were good names. And the kid obviously appreciated the coaching, knew a swimmer needed direction. "Coach Samuels thinks you'd benefit from some one-on-one attention. What do you think?"

Mike tilted his head. "I ... How does that work? I mean, Coach wouldn't be my coach?"

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"Nope. You'd go to meets with the team, represent UT, but he doesn't have the time to give you what you need, knows you'll reach your full potential with me."

"Uh. Well. How do you get paid? The school?" Mike blushed, pulled himself out of the pool. "I don't mean to seem stupid, I just don't *know* how this works."

Jessy nodded. "Fair enough. You've got sponsors who pick up the tab for all your needs. Food, board, airfare, coaching, everything. Samuels says you've got a couple on board already."

"I do? Okay. What do I have to do? I mean, I pretty much swim and try to go to class sometime."

He laughed. "Well I'd like you to move in with me. I have a place here in Austin. Got a pool, weight room, whirlpool. Everything you'll need. And if you're serious about school that's cool, but you'll need to drop down to two classes, three tops. No way you can put the swim time and class time in if you're taking a full load."

"Oh." Mike gave him a head tilt, a grin. "No offense, man, but I don't make decisions without my coach, you know? I don't know you. Wanna go find Coach Samuels?"

"I like to hear that, because if I become your coach? My word is gold." He stood and headed toward Samuels' office, trusting Mike was following.

He heard the slap of Mike's feet, the kid following, then getting distracted to grab a towel, then following, then taking a longing look at the soda machines, then following.

He knocked on Samuels' door, ducked his head in. "You got two minutes for the kid and me?"

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Jeff nodded, smiled. "Come on in."

Mike nodded, leaned against the wall. "Hey, Coach."

"So Mike and I have talked, but it seems he needs to talk to his coach before making any decisions."

Jeff chuckled, red curls bobbing with it. "Smart, Mike. Very smart. Jessy's the best, kid. You need him; you'll soar with him."

Jessy grinned, nodded his thanks. "Better tell him the bad stuff, too, Jeff. My last swimmer fired me for being ... I think the word he used was unbendable, only it had a few more adjectives thrown in for spice."

Jeff chuckled, nodded. "Jessy's a hardass, Mike, and you're not used to that, not really."

Mike shrugged. "I just want to swim. I want to break Spitz's record. That's it. If you think this is the right thing, I'll try it."

"I expect a hundred percent commitment, kid. My job is to tell you when to jump, yours is to ask how high and then do it, so to speak. If you honestly think I'm steering you wrong, you can talk to me about it, but if I don't change my mind, we still do it my way. You think you can handle that?" He wanted this kid, wanted him bad, but there wasn't much point in both of them going into this if they weren't both committed. "You listen to me, you work for me and I will take you to the top of your field and keep you there for as long as possible."

Those dark eyes met Jeff's, looking for something. "I'm not real good at the shut up thing."

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"No, but you are really good at the do-what-you're-told-while you're bitching about it." Jeff chuckled and winked.

Jessy laughed. "Kid, if I quit every time a kid bitched about the rules? I'd be dirt poor and not have a single swimmer to my resume."

"Oh. Okay. Cool." Mike gave Jeff a grin, wicked and mischievous. "He says I can drop a class. No more evil biology, baybee."

"I didn't say you *could*, I said you had to. It'll mean giving up the scholarship, but, Jeff, you said two main sponsors already, right? The kid's bills should be taken care of, and he only needs, what? One or two classes to stay on the UT team?"

"He has to be half-time. Six hours." Jeff looked at Mike. "You stay in the bio class and you can take the other hour as a swim course. That means only having to be in class two days a week and a serious core class done. You're half-through the semester..."

Jessy nodded. "Once the biology is done, it's done. What's your major?"

Mike opened his mouth, but Jeff chuckled. "Currently? Forgetting class because he's in the damn pool."

"I like a kid with dedication. You've made a smart move, kid, teaming up with me. We'll turn that dedication into gold." There was no doubt in his mind of it.

"Cool. Cool." Mike looked at the clock, blinked. "Man, I gotta hustle. I promised Alex I'd help with the water babies. He's buying pizza after."



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"I hear you puked, Mike, I'll pull you out of the pool for a week. Don't overdo." Jeff looked at the kid over the top of his glasses.

"Okay. Yeah. Sure. I." Mike held one hand out to Jessy, bouncing. "How does whatever we're doing happen?"

"We start today after this ... water babies thing. I'll help you move your stuff into my place. You tell me where you're staying and I'll meet you there at three. Oh, and Mike? Enjoy the pizza—it'll be your last one."

"You gotta be kidding, man. Pizza? My bread and butter. I'm a college student. It's what we're made of." Mike grinned and bounced out, head popping back in. "Oh. Right. Jester Center. Room 214. Roommate's name is Chen. See ya!"

Jeff, the old bastard, was fucking chuckling.

"I take it the hyper thing is par for the course?" It made sense really; the kid had to have a lot of energy to swim like that.

Jeff nodded. "From what I can see, he's like a wind-up toy. He goes and goes and goes and then crashes hard, sleeps like the dead, then starts over. Coach from Plano said the kid's been in the pool six to eight hours a day for ten years."

"Cool. I like not having to worry about getting them into the water." He held his hand out to Jeff. "Thanks for the tip, Jeff. He's a real find."

"Hey, not purely philanthropic. He's going to win us some serious points at meets." Jeff shook his hand, grinned. "Is he going to come to team workouts? Or should I just expect not to see him for a while?"

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"Give me your schedule and I'll work at least a couple a week into ours. If we don't show the first couple of weeks it's because he needs time to settle into the new routine, but we'll eventually start making it."

Jessy grabbed one of the blank pages out of the paper feeder in Jeff's little printer and nabbed a pen. "I'll need the team workout schedule, the meet schedule, a list of current sponsors, copies of any paperwork with them, the kid's school papers."

Jeff nodded, started digging through a file cabinet. "I have that—plus his PBs, his times, medical records, and the spare key to that deathtrap he calls Bonzo." Jeff stopped, chuckled. "Oh, God. I can't wait for you to meet Bonzo."

"What the fuck is Bonzo?"

"Little, yellow crotchrocket. The kid loves it."

Jessy shook his head. "How come they always like the fast, dangerous rides?"

"Because if they didn't get off on the rush, they wouldn't race."

He grinned and nodded. "All right, if you think of anything else I need, just put it aside and I'll pick it up next time I'm here. I'm going to go talk to the admissions office and deal with the scholarship stuff and then pick him up at Jester Center. Thanks again."

"Have fun. If he calls crying, I'll let you know." A huge file was handed over to him.

Jessy grinned, taking the file. "If he doesn't in the first week, he won't."

He nodded to Jeff and headed out.

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It looked like he was employed again. And Mike was the real deal, he could feel it in his bones, knew it just from watching the kid swim a few practice laps in the pool.

He was looking forward to this.

\* \* \* \*

He never could sleep in a new place. Hell, without Chen's snoring? He might never sleep again. Mike finally gave up at dawn, got dressed and sucked down a soda before heading down to the pool Coach had showed him the night before.

He slid into the water and started going, slow and easy backstrokes, one lap after another.

He had no clue how long he'd been going when he saw Coach Jessy waiting at the other end of the pool.

He waved, stopped when he reached the edge. "Mornin'. How're you?"

"Good. You?"

"Okay. Little wigged about the whole new place all of a sudden thing, but okay." He gave his new coach a grin. The man was built, solid and strong, fierce gaze. He'd logged in last night, searched the web a little and found out he was lucky. Coach was considered real up and coming. Made him nervous as fuck.

Coach nodded. "You'll get used to it soon enough. I want you to think of this place as home, okay? How many laps have you done?"

He shrugged. "I started at five..."

Coach frowned. "That's almost an hour. From now on you count your laps. Hell, from now on they'll be set. Fifty crawl.

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Fifty fly. Fifty back. Etcetera. You need to start focusing on the wall and you can't do that if you aren't paying attention to your laps."

Focusing on the wall? O-o-o-okay. "I wasn't really training, Coach. I was just ... swimming."

"No such thing anymore, kid."

Coach held out his hand. "Come on out. We'll eat and I'll go over the rules, set up a schedule with you."

He reached up, let Coach help him out of the water. "I brought some Rice Krispies from the dorm. I'll share, if you want."

Coach shook his head. "Nope. No more Rice Krispies. You want cereal, I've got some homemade muesli, or shredded wheat's good, or Cheerios. Everything else has too much sugar."

"What's muesli? It sounds slimy. And man, I'm not fat, yeah?" He looked down, tilted his head. Nowhere near fat.

"Muesli is not slimy. It's oats and nuts and dried fruit, raisins and shit. And nobody said anything about you being fat. The stimulants though? You don't need those. So less sugar. No caffeine. I'm going to up your carb and vegetable intake. Fruits are good—you get hungry and want a snack, you can have fruit. No chocolate, no chips. Minimal meat."

"No chocolate? Dude! That's unreal." He wasn't going to give up the sodas either. In fact, he wasn't even going to discuss that. "The muesli shit, though? That sounds good."

"No chocolate. Full of sugar and caffeine. Empty calories. And the muesli is good. I make a mean vegetable omelet,

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too." Coach led him in to the little kitchen with its bar seating. "You want to try the muesli out this morning?"

"You know caffeine is a wonderful thing, right? I mean, I burn the calories off..." The man was going to starve him to death. "And sure, I like crunchy. Do you put milk in it?"

"Yep. And if you're hungry you eat. Fruit, dry muesli, vegetables. I'll even make sure there's some fresh stuff kept cut up in the fridge along with something to dip them into to keep it interesting. Caffeine is a quick, sharp high that fades just as fast and, frankly, you don't need the extra hyping."

Coach poured him out a huge bowl of muesli, filled it with milk, and put it down in front of him. "You like orange juice?"

Mike put the towel down on the barstool and sat, stirring the cereal stuff and looking at it. Didn't look bad. "Yeah. Does anybody not like orange juice? That's like not liking peanut butter."

Coach laughed and poured him a large glass of orange juice. "I hate peanut butter."

"That's un-American." He dug into the cereal, humming along to the tune in his head.

That earned him another laugh. "I'll make a note of that."

Coach poured himself a bowl of mini-shredded wheat with milk and a cup of coffee, before sitting next to him. "You been doing any training with weights at all?"

He shook his head. "No. Coach Samuels and me? We tried, but it didn't work for us. I get distracted."

"Yeah? I'll keep that in mind, but I'd like to give it another try. A half hour a day or so, just to give you something out of the water."

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"Okay." He nodded. He liked using his body, liked having something to do.

"All right. You've got an hour and a half biology class on Tuesdays and Thursdays at ten. I've spoken with the admissions office and dealt with the other courses—they just need your John Hancock on the paperwork to officially drop you off the scholarship program. You have to report to the pool at Jamail Hall at noon on both those days to work out with the team, and that counts as your other course requirement to keep you on the UT team. What strokes do you favor?"

"It depends. I race the 100, 200, and 400 IM, 200 and 400 freestyle, 50 and 100 breaststroke, 200 and 400 butterfly. I want to try the 800 backstroke, but Coach Samuels thinks I'm more of a sprinter."

Coach chuckled. "You mean you haven't met a stroke you didn't like. Are you actually racing all those in the same meets?"

"Sometimes. Depends on whether other guys need the race, mostly. Sometimes on my stomach. Coach Samuels told you about my stomach, huh?" It didn't happen all the time, but it happened enough—too much water, too much stress, add a little food and some nerves and upchuck-city.

Coach nodded. "That's one of the reasons for the diet. You throw pop and pizza on top of a lot of racing and your stomach's gonna throw it back.

"I think nine or ten races at a single meet might be too much, but we'll let you race them for now, see if the new training and diet help with the stomach. We're going to set up

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a schedule. Up at six a.m.. Breakfast. You start swimming at seven. Fifty laps each of your strokes followed by a break of stretches and fruit or a glass of juice. A half-hour of resting. You can work on your homework or read or whatever as long as it's resting.

"Back in the pool for fifty more laps of each stroke, more stretching and lunch. A half-hour of working the weights and then we'll run mock trials in the afternoon. Tuesday and Thursdays will be exceptions obviously."

"I don't know if I can eat and then swim, Coach. Not in the morning." He finished his cereal, about half the juice. "But I'll try. When are your days off?"

He was given an incredulous look. "Days off? How long have you been swimming, boy?"

He tilted his head, confused. He hadn't asked about his training; he'd just wanted to know when to leave the man alone. "Ten years."

"You ever take a day off?"

"From the water? Nope."

"There you go. I won't be taking days off either. And you can have a light breakfast if you can't keep a decent one down. But even if you spend fifteen minutes eating you've got forty-five minutes before you hit the water—and I find you in the pool before seven a.m and there will be repercussions—but if you have time you should be fine."

Man, he was going to have to write all this down. Something must have shown on his face because Coach gave him a grin. "I'll type the schedule up in the computer and print out a copy to keep on the fridge."

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"Oh. Cool." Mike smiled back, that smile of Coach's infectious. "I'm not stupid, but I can lose track of time. What happens in the evenings?"

"You'll get used the schedule and it'll be second nature. You have any suggestions for the evenings?"

"I watch a lot of movies. Hang out on the computer. Swim, if I can't settle. Normal stuff."

"All right, let's leave it open for now. I don't mean to be your warden, but if you want friends over or to go out, you have to go through me."

"Chen's my one good friend. Oh, and I volunteer on Thursday afternoons with Alex." He thought Alex was an utter babe. Totally straight, but a guy could *watch*.

"Doing what exactly?"

"I help the little kids in the low-income daycare learn to swim. Or at least how not to drown. Alex's girlfriend runs the program."

"Excellent. Community service is good. And the Thursday schedule is already screwed, so that works." Jessy gave him a look. "What about you—you got a girlfriend? Because I have rules about that, too, I'm afraid."

"Rules?" Oh, man, he so didn't, but he didn't want to get tossed out because he was gay. Then again, he still had his scholarship now...

"No sex a week before meets, no late nights, if the girlfriend interferes with the swimming, you're cut off. I need to meet her, she's got to be a part of the team."

"And, uh. If I say there's not gonna be any girls?"

One of Coach's eyebrows went up. "You into celibacy?"



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"Uh. No. No." He blushed dark, stood. "But I'm not into girls."

"Oh. Did Samuels know?"

"No. I mean, I don't think so. It's a problem, huh? I can go back to Jester, man. No sweat." Hell, most of his shit would go in Bonzo's saddlebags.

"No, it's not a problem, I was just wondering if Samuels picked me for you because he knew it wouldn't be a problem. You should know that I'm not into girls myself."

"Oh." He blinked, found a grin. "Well, right now? No boyfriend either. So the no sex thing? I can hang." Jerking off wasn't sex.

"Excellent. And you'll let me know if the no boyfriend status changes."

"Yeah, well, me and Bonzo? Not exactly stud magnets, but I'll let you know if it happens."

"Yeah, about Bonzo. No riding during swim season."

"No way. You're talking fucking months!" This, he'd fight for. He'd built that little bike up from the ground.

"It's too dangerous."

"You haven't even seen him."

"It's a crotchrocket, right? Too dangerous. Unless you've added the features to turn it into a Volvo."

"It's a solid bike. I did the classes. I passed the tests. I'm a safe rider." He was already tired of the argument.

"We'll revisit it in a month once you're settled into the routine. Until then it's off limits." Jessy's face was closed, brooked no arguments.

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"So what? I'm on the bus until Halloween?" He sighed, nodded. He'd have to see if Chen could give him a ride back Thursday nights. Hell, maybe they could study. "It's bullshit, but I'll do it."

"I'll drive you wherever you need to go." Coach leaned in. "I'm going to be your shadow, kid. Get used to it."

"Look. I just wanna swim. You know, up and down the pool. I'm not complicated."

"Then we should get along just fine." Coach checked his watch. "We'll take this as your first rest period—you can go do a round of laps after a half hour or so."

"Okay." He washed out his bowl and headed to unpack, to hang posters, to listen to his music blaring in his ears and try not to worry about whether he was doing the right thing.

## Chapter Two

Jessy thought things were going pretty well.

The kid was bitching about some of his rules—the no Bonzo and no pop ones seemed to be the hardest for Mike, but on the whole, they were getting along. Mike swam like he was born to it, pushing and pushing himself as far as Jessy would let him.

Like tonight. Kid had been growly at supper and then asked to go out and swim, work off some excess energy. Of course, that was a couple hours ago and the kid was still out there. No fucking way he hadn't done at least fifty laps of each stroke, which meant the kid wasn't counting, or didn't care.

Jessy went out to the pool and crouched down at one end, waiting for Mike to get to the wall.

The kid looked exhausted, but just full of restless energy, sliding through the water. "Hey, Coach."

"You're taking your time tonight. How many have you got left?" Like he thought the kid had any idea.

"I have the butterfly left ... of this set."

He raised an eyebrow. "Have you been counting at all?"

"I counted the first set. Every lap."

"The first..." He shook his head. "All right, out."

"I still have the butterfly left, though." Mike pulled himself out of the water, arms fucking shaking. Well, he couldn't call the kid lazy.

"Except you don't have laps scheduled for the evening. Jesus, Mike, there's a point you have to stop and listen to your body."

"I was." God, the kid was earnest, those eyes just something else.

He reached out and held onto the slender arms. "You're shaking, Mike."

"I..." Mike nodded, throat working. "I'm okay, Coach. Just been hard to sleep."

Jessy knew a surefire cure for that. He shook his head to clear it. Damn, where had that come from? Well, he knew where—the kid was fucking sexy and just his type—long and lean, not an ounce of fat, beautiful muscles.

"Why's that?" he asked, leading the kid toward the house.

Mike shrugged. "New place. New situation. New everything."

"You need to come to me when you've got problems like that, kid. I can't help you if I don't know about it, yeah?" He nodded toward the stairs. "There's a bed in the spare bedroom. I'll grab some massage oil and give you a good rub down. That should relax you."

"Yeah." Mike was all nervous energy. Hell, if he could bottle that, they could light up a city.

He grabbed the bottle of massage oil out of the cabinet in the workout room and met Mike up in the spare room. "Lose the shorts, kid, and lie on your stomach."

Mike nodded, sliding the tight shorts off. Completely bare except for a line of dark-dark hair right above the kid's prick,

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muscled, fine—Mike was a wet dream. He gave his cock a firm talking to, warming the oil between his hands.

He straddled the kid's thighs and started working the slender muscles in those long arms and shoulders.

Mike groaned, the sound low and raw. "Oh. Oh, that's ... Oh."

"Good. I know. It's one of the few perks of having Hardass Turner as your coach." He kept massaging, working slowly and testing the muscles for injuries or soreness.

Mike melted, just dissolving for him.

He spent a long time on the arms, shoulders and back, slowly working down, wondering idly if Mike would balk when he got to the kid's ass. Mike didn't, though, long thighs parting just a little, muscles strong under his touch. He nodded, pleased at the trust the kid put in him, and kept working. Ass, thighs, calves. He knew that by the time he was done, the kid was going to be relaxed enough he might just fall asleep here.

Mike was purring, the sounds arousing and sexual, uninhibited and fine. Jessy bit back his groan, his cock loving the sounds the kid was making. Damn. He wasn't going to make it if he had the kid turn over, he just wasn't.

He finished up with both feet and then got off the bed and pulled a sheet up over the kid's ass. "There. You think you'll be able to sleep now?"

"Uh-huh..." One hand reached out, stroked his arm. "Thanks, Coach."

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He sat on the bed next to the kid and nodded, hand patting the lean back. "Anytime. I mean it, Mike. If you're sore or wound up? You let me know."

"It's all so different, you know? Almost more different than going to the dorm from home."

He nodded, hand sliding on Mike's back, trying to keep the kid loose and easy. "Yeah, but here you've got your coach's full attention, yeah?" He chuckled. "Of course maybe that's not the great thing that I think it is."

"Oh, it's ... It's scary, how good it feels."

"This?" he asked, sliding his hand down Mike's spine. God, was the kid really this starved for touch?

"That. Having you watching. It's weird, knowing you pay attention."

He shook his head. The kid drew the eye, in the water and out, how could folks not pay attention? "A team coach has a team to look out for. Their loss."

"I'm not complaining. I just ... Are you having a good time?"

"Are you kidding? I could sit and watch you swim all day long." It was true, too.

Mike chuckled. "Unless it's before breakfast, or too late after supper."

"Oh, I could watch then. It's just not good for you. And you're what it's all about, kid."

"I'm not a kid, you know. I'm almost nineteen."

"I'll try and call you old man from now on then." He chuckled. In that the kids were all the same.

Mike giggled. "That's right. Old Man Gaulliet."

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"Well, old man. You about ready to get some sleep?"

"Yeah. Yeah." He kept touching, relaxing, watching as Mike drifted off, falling into a deep, still sleep.

Then he laid another sheet and a blanket over the kid and went to beat off in the shower.

\* \* \* \*

"You want to come have some pizza with us, Mike? We're going to Mangias!"

He looked over at Alex and Jimmy, shrugging. He hadn't had pizza in three weeks. Of course, he hadn't been sick either. "I don't know. Lemme see what's on my schedule."

He padded over to his coach, head rolling on his shoulders. "Hey, Coach."

"Hey, Mike. You looked good out there. Your shoulders okay?" Coach's big hands dropped onto his shoulders, fingers working the muscles.

"Uh-huh." He rolled his head again. "Slept wonky, got a crick. You wanna go get pizza at Mangias? The guys are ... Oh. Ow. That aches there. The guys are going."

"No pizza, Mike." Coach's fingers stayed where they were, working the spot Mike complained about. "And you're supposed to let me know if you're hurting."

"I just did." He closed his eyes, groaning.

"Mike! Come on! Practice is *over*! Time for a real life, now!"

Coach tsked. "Someone needs to teach these kids that swimming is real life."

Coach Samuels shook his head. "It's not for 99% of them, Jessy. It's just fun."

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*by Sean Michael*

"Winning is fun, Jeff. Doing your personal best at a meet? Fucking fun."

Mike chuckled. "No, that *rocks*. Swimming is fun."

Coach grinned and damn, that serious face looked good happy. "See, Jeff? And that's why Mike's gonna win those medals, it's more fun than partying to him."

Coach Samuels tilted his head, lips twisting. "That's why I coach a team, Jessy. I can't breathe and sleep and eat the sport."

Coach shook his head. "Can you imagine that, kid? Some people don't think swimming is the be-all and end-all." He was given a wink, his shoulders squeezed.

He chuckled, but Coach Samuels shook his head. "Now, Jessy. There's got to be life after the pool. Goals. Education."

"If you're like me, you work to stay at the pool after your racing days are done, but I hear you. Still..." Coach shook his head and then smiled at Mike. "Come on, kid. Home."

He nodded. "Okay."

He didn't feel like pizza now.

He sort of felt ... wigged.

He fell into step with Coach, catching a look. "You okay, kid?"

"Yeah." He nodded, sighed, belly twisted up.

Coach stopped him, turned him to face those blue eyes. "Talk to me."

"I just. I'm good. I ... It's weird. I feel weird."

Coach put an arm around his shoulders, kept walking him to the locker rooms. "Weird?"



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*by Sean Michael*

He sighed, rubbing his belly. "It's like, I'm a freak now, here, with guys that ought to understand."

"Some of them'll understand, kid. The ones that want it as badly as you do. And they'll be jealous. The rest of them." Coach shrugged. "Does it matter what the rest of them think?"

"It's not supposed to. It's just ... weird. I'm supposed to be mad and demanding pizza right now, huh?"

Coach shrugged. "Seems like an awful lot of effort to go through when what you really want is to get home and swim your laps."

"Yeah." He grinned, leaned into Coach a little. "Yeah."

It felt good, to have someone understand.

Coach walked him into the locker room and then straddled the bench, waiting for him to change. "There's an old saying, Mike. It's lonely at the top. That's because most people don't have the drive, the commitment to make it. You do. And frankly, you're not alone. I know I'm not your friends, but I'm going to be there with you—for every stroke. I'm committed to you—to getting you to the Worlds, the Olympics."

"You think I could make the team?" Mike pulled his trunks off, pulled the sweats on, a T-shirt.

"Hell, yes. It's just a matter of time. Less now that you're with me instead of just with the UT team."

He nodded over, grinning. "Cool. And you sort of are my friend, yeah?"

Coach gave him a smile and a wink. "A friend who gives orders, yeah."

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*by Sean Michael*

"Eh, I've had bossy friends. I ignore them, too." He grinned, bebopping out the door.

Coach caught up to him, smacking his ass. "Brat."

He stuck his tongue out, laughing. "Yep."

"You shouldn't stick that out unless you intend to use it," teased Coach.

"Hell, according to the rules, I gotta ask permission to use it anyway."

Coach laughed, the corners of his blue eyes crinkling. "You got that right, kid."

"That's Old Man to you." Mike loved that look. Loved it.

That laughter continued. "Come on, Old Man. You feel like some steak tonight?"

He tilted his head, then nodded. "Yeah, that sounds great. Do I get to splurge and have a Dr. Pepper too?" No harm asking.

"Nice try, Old Man, but it's not happening."

"No? Damn." He looked over. "I really miss caffeine, Coach."

"It's been three weeks, you should be used to it by now." Coach didn't look like he was going to give on this. At all.

"Well, the unending headache from hell is gone, but..." He shrugged. "I grew up drinking sodas. I mean, that's *all* I used to have to drink."

"Juice and milk are better for you. Not to mention water."

"Juice and milk don't go with junk food." He settled into the car, fastened his belt. He wasn't pissed or anything, more restless and talkative.

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by Sean Michael

"You're not supposed to be eating junk food either, though," Coach pointed out.

"I'm a college student, Coach. I'm supposed to *live* off junk food."

"You're a swimmer, Mike. You're supposed to live off what your coach tells you to." The grin on Coach's face told him that Coach was enjoying their banter.

"Yeah, but man ... No MickeyD's. No stuffed jalapenos. No greasy pizza. No sex. I'm deprived." And chuckling.

"I never said you couldn't have sex."

He gave Coach a *look*. "Okay, I have exactly seventeen seconds of free time a week and the closest I've gotten in a year is watching Alex's girlfriend jack him off after the water babies went home. I? Am not beating the boys away."

"You should be. You're a hot looking kid."

"Compared to you? I'm skinny. Hell, compared to half the guys—they bulk up great."

Coach gave him a grin. "You have less body mass to propel through the water—that's a good thing."

The car stopped at a red light and Coach gave him a long look. "You look pretty damn hot to me, Mike."

His cock jerked and he dropped his hand into his lap to hide it, fucking vibrating. "Oh."

Coach grinned wryly. "Not that you care what an old man thinks."

"Uh. You're not and I do 'cause you're fucking fine and I guess saying that'll get me into trouble, huh?" Mike's cheeks were hot, burning. Just because he'd been thinking about those eyes when he ... Well, it didn't matter, did it?

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Coach gave him a look out of the corner of his eyes. "Well, I just told you that you looked hot, so I don't see how you telling me I'm fine should get you in trouble."

"Oh. Yeah. Logic, huh? 'Cause you are and I noticed." Shut up, Michael Joseph. Shut *up*.

He was given a grin. "Yeah, I got that. I'm flattered."

He nodded. Flattered. Flattered and interested were two real different things. "Where are we eating?"

"I'll let you know in a minute." Coach turned a corner and parked. He took out his cell phone, scrolled through the numbers and hit one. "Hi. I'd like a reservation for two. Preferably something in the next half-hour. Yeah? Perfect. Turner. Thanks."

He hung up. "Ruth Chris'."

"Yeah? Cool! People say they're great." Wow. A biggie-wow restaurant.

"Yeah. Food's great, nice atmosphere."

"Do I need to put my jeans on? I have some in my bag."

"Wouldn't hurt." He got another once-over from Coach.

"Not that you don't look good the way you are."

Blushing dark, he rolled his eyes and grabbed his jeans, changing right there in the front seat, hoping to hell Coach didn't notice his stiffie.

Coach was quiet the rest of the trip, pulling into the parking lot of Ruth Chris' soon enough. "We're here."

"Cool." He dared to grin over, tease. "If I'm lucky, they *only* have booze and Dr. Pepper to drink."

Coach laughed, coming around to open the door for him. "They're bound to have at least water."

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He stood up, Coach close enough that their bodies bumped, rubbed. "Let a guy have his fantasies, man."

"I never said you couldn't have fantasies either." Coach's voice was a little rough.

"Oh, good." He let himself have a long look, admiring everything about that strong, square body.

Coach walked just ahead of him, giving his name to the hostess, smiling when they were seated right away.

The place was cool—brass and dark wood, and it smelled like pure heaven. "Oh, man. I'm starved."

Coach grinned. "Me, too. You can have what you want, no caffeine with your drink though."

"Fried shrooms and dessert?"

"No dessert, kid. All those calories'll have you hyped up enough without adding straight sugar."

"Yesterday the calories from a super burger were going to make me logy..." He grinned. Control freak.

"You need to focus on your swimming more than you need to keep track of why I don't let you eat your junk food."

He started laughing. "Man, I thought one of the good parts of being an athlete was eating whatever you wanted 'cause you burned it off." Personally he thought Jessy was doing some weird food experiment.

"Well, yeah, you'll use the calories; the trick is getting those calories to work for you."

"You're something else, Coach." He ordered the stuffed mushrooms and the steak kabobs.

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"I'm just trying to do the best I can by you, Mike. It's all about you." Those blue eyes looked at him, looked into him, Coach dead serious.

He blushed dark, heart pounding in his chest.

"Never doubt that, Mike. You are the elite athlete, the star. The sponsors, me, Coach Samuels, we're all just here to help you."

He wondered if his parents had felt like this, like him. "Did you ever get to know my folks? They'd have been older than you, but you were swimming juniors when they were competing."

Coach nodded. "Yeah, I remember them. I remember wanting to be just like them." Coach shook his head. "I didn't have the natural talent. They were amazing. I believe you're even better."

"Did you know my mom lived in West Texas and didn't race until college? She swam in a pond. I was in the pool before I could crawl."

"Not until college? She moved through the ranks fast. I've been curious actually, why you aren't already a household name."

Their waitress brought him milk and Coach a beer, along with his mushrooms and Coach's garlic bread.

"Well, they died when I was eleven, you know? My Aunt Kathy and Uncle Jerry took me in, but Kathy was almost twenty years older than my mom and they didn't have kids. I sorta started racing because Aunt Kathy doesn't believe in Ritalin." He grinned, offering Coach some mushrooms.

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Coach took them and passed over the plate of garlic bread. "So it was more a casual thing?"

"More a tire me out so she didn't beat me to death with my own arms thing." He took some bread and nodded his thanks. "The Y pool was open seven a.m. to nine p.m. all summer long and when I got home? I slept."

Coach shot him a look. "You swam from seven a.m. to nine p.m.?"

"Laps from seven to nine, free swim 'til noon. Home for lunch. Free swim from one to five. Swim team five to seven. Laps from seven to nine." He grinned. "The lifeguard made us get out for ten minutes out of every hour."

"Christ. All that swimming and no one ever figured out how good you were. Well, that's changed. Of course you're in the water almost as much, but you're working for something now."

He nodded. He liked being in the water. Hell, he'd gotten into the practice of slipping down in the middle of the night, just enjoying the dark, the cool, the act of swimming.

"Well, I'm sorry you aren't already an Olympic champion, Mike, but I'm glad we were brought together. It's been awhile since I found someone as committed as you are, who likes to be in the water even more than I want him to be."

"Oh, if you'd found me sooner, I wouldn't have my M-Class license..."

Coach laughed. "Always good to have a silver lining, kid."

He winked, digging into his meal happily, enjoying the hell out of the broccoli and carrots. "Can I have more of these?"

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"I don't know, Mike. Those vegetables can be dangerous." Coach looked so serious, no twinkle in those eyes. Then he caught the twitch of Coach's lips.

"Don't make me kick your butt, Coach." He ordered more veggies and another glass of milk.

Coach laughed. "I'd like to see you try."

"I'm stronger than I look. All the mucous-ly stuff I eat in the morning."

"Muesli," growled Coach. "It's muesli." Coach was putting away his steak like he hadn't eaten in days.

He chuckled, getting back to eating. Making Coach growl was in his top five favorite pastimes.

When he'd finished eating, Coach ordered the cheesecake with caramel sauce.

"You are a mean, evil man."

No soda *and* no dessert.

Bastard.

"Be nice or I won't share."

"I can be nice. Kinda." He winked and finished his milk.

Coach laughed. "Well then I guess I can share. Kinda."

"So, can I have anything I want on my birthday?"

"As long as it doesn't fall in the week before a meet or during a meet and no caffeine." Coach tilted his head. "When is your birthday?"

"Halloween night. Candy, candy, candy." No way he wasn't having the whole enchilada—burger, fries, chocolate, Dr. Pepper.

"Well you're safe on the meet front, then. But I'm going to limit your candy intake. You can have anything you want, but



not in unlimited quantities." Coach took a bite of the cheesecake and his eyes rolled into the back of his head. "Oh, the cheesecake here is always so damned good."

He swallowed his sigh, his frustration. Every so often, he just wanted to be a normal guy. Dates, cram sessions, movies. Take Bonzo out for a ride. Oh...

"I want to go for a drive tonight. Take Bonzo out before he rusts."

"Can you take a passenger?"

"Sure. You wanna come?"

"I do."

Coach took another forkful of cheesecake and held it out to him. He tried to see a cool way to take the fork, but it was easier to just lean in, tug it right off the fork. Oh. Oh, yummy. Coach was watching him, blue eyes focused on his lips. He couldn't hold in his moan as his tongue slipped out to clean his lips off.

"Christ, kid..." He met those blue eyes, heat flaring in him, and he didn't know if it was embarrassment or need. "You're something else."

He ducked his head, grinned. "Just a guy. Just a seriously under-caffeinated guy."

Coach laughed and the tension between them eased. "You'll live, kid."

Coach finished up his cheesecake, offering him a few bites to help and then the bill was paid and they were headed out again.

"You up for those laps when we get home?"

He tilted his head. "I'm always up for laps, Coach."

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Always.

"Excellent."

Coach held the car door open for him, helping him in.

"Thanks for supper. It was so good." He let himself touch the muscled arm, just once.

Coach nodded and smiled at him. "It was my pleasure, Mike. We'll have to do it again."

"I'd like that." It was like a date, except they were going home together. Weird.

Coach nodded and closed his door, getting into the other side and starting the car up, taking him home.

\* \* \* \*

Jessy walked around the crotchrocket, shaking his head. Damn thing looked like a bumblebee. A killer bumblebee. Still, he figured if he was riding with the kid, maybe they wouldn't break any speed limits. And if he was honest, the thought of being snugged up against that ass probably had a lot to do with his giving in.

Mike was bouncing, looking good in jeans and a leather jacket. "Coach, Bonzo. Bonzo, Coach. Isn't he sexy? You want the red or blue helmet?"

He chuckled. "As long as it fits, kid."

"Blue. Have you ever ridden before? It's wicked fun." A helmet was handed over, the red one popped on Mike's head.

Jessy put the helmet on and shook his head. "Nope." He gave the kid a wink. "I'm a virgin."

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"Oooh! I finally get to show you something!" The kid was all energy, bouncing, long thighs straddling the bike. "Come on and get behind me."

He got on behind Mike, hands sliding on the trim waist as he settled in right behind. "Nothing fancy, kid, you've got an old man riding with you."

"Trust me, yeah?" Mike's ass snugged against him. "Hold on tight."

The little bumblebee bike buzzed to life, Mike turning on the lights and roaring out of the drive. His hands were wrapped around Mike's belly, their bodies touching—he was plastered up against the kid. The wind was noisy, pushing past him.

It felt fantastic. All of it.

They drove out toward Lake Travis, buzzing across the dam and up and down the hills, the view stunning. He could see why the kid loved this, though he was freezing; the only parts of him that were warm were the ones snugged up tight against Mike.

"You want to stop at the lake, Coach?" Mike hollered back.

"Sure," he shouted.

They slowed, winding down the hills, past the Oasis, toward the water. They pulled into an empty parking lot, the moon shining on the water.

He got off the bike reluctantly, already missing the press of Mike's body. "It's gorgeous out here at night."

Mike nodded, smiling wide. "I love riding out here. Makes me want to dive in and just *go*."

"So let's do it." A little skinny dipping would help them bond.

"Yeah? Really?" Mike blinked at him. "For real?"

"Why not? We're the only ones here, I bet the water's warm." God, that was a cute look.

"Okay. Okay." Mike put the helmet down, shrugged off the jacket.

He pulled off his own helmet and started getting naked.

Mike stripped down, clothes tucked into a saddle bag. The moon loved that skin, loved the lines of muscles. He tried not to stare, but the kid was truly beautiful.

Mike stretched up, twisted, the warm-up motion as familiar as breathing. Fuck, there went his prick. Jessy walked quickly past the kid, sliding into the water, gasping as he hit it—it wasn't *that* warm.

Mike was right with him, sliding into the water, the moonlight and water gilding that skin.

He swam with Mike, enjoying the view. Watching Mike play in the water was something else. That long body brushed against him, slid away, came back. He laughed, feeling carefree and easy; being naked in the water was always freeing, especially in natural water under the moon.

Mike moved against him, just touching that skin against his own, so smooth. He moved forward, bringing them together again, cock hard, brushing against Mike's warm skin. He was mid-moan before he remembered who he was, who Mike was. Cutting the sound off in his throat, he backed up, turned and swam strongly out toward the center of the lake,

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just needing some space, needing to give his body something else to concentrate on.

Mike was his swimmer, his responsibility. Not his lover.

The lake was quiet, still, the water lapping at him as he swam out. His ardor faded enough that he would be able to control himself and he turned and headed slowly back, eyes searching for Mike's pale form.

Nothing. Nowhere. He frowned, looking to the shore, toward the bike. What the fuck?

He pulled strongly toward the approximate point where he and Mike had brushed together. No way the kid had trouble swimming, no way. And if Mike'd gotten a cramp or something, he would have called out and Jessy would have heard him.

Jessy had started to panic when Mike's head popped up from about twenty yards out, a purely sexual groan sounding, the kid gasping the air in.

Of all the stupid fucking stunts.

And he couldn't say a word, because suddenly he was hard as stone again and this time a little swim wasn't going to take care of it. He couldn't remember the last time he'd been so turned on.

Biting back his own groan, he got out of the water and quickly dressed, pushing his cock into his jeans and zipping them up, hoping the tightness of quarters would have his erection fading before he had to settle in against Mike's ass again.

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Of course, Mike? Loose-limbed and smiling, dressing and chattering, relaxation written all over the kid. No kidding, Mike had come, and pretty spectacularly, too, he guessed.

He cleared his throat, but didn't say anything, just got onto the crotchrocket behind Mike and held on.

"You okay, Coach?" Those dark eyes were huge, moon shining in them as the bike started up.

"Yeah, kid. Just fine." And if his voice was about five times huskier than usual, well, neither of them mentioned it.

And if his cock never got soft the whole way home, neither of them mentioned that either.

### Chapter Three

Oh, man.

Man, he was miserable.

Hamburgers and pizza. Chocolate. Popcorn. More chocolate. One and a half slasher movies.

All of it okayed by Coach, too.

Well, except for the half of a Dr. Pepper, but they were out of Sprite and he was so queasy.

Ben's voice sounded, echoing in the theater bathroom.

"Man, you want us to call your coach? Me and Alex are gonna take the girls out to the lake, make sure they're not scared, you know?"

"No, I can take the bu..." Another wave of nausea hit him and he handed out his cell phone. "Fuck. Yeah. Call him."

A couple of minutes later Ben was back. "He's coming. And we'll wait with you until he gets here. Unless you think he was kidding about the yanking off our arms and beating us to death with them if we left you on your own."

If he hadn't been puking up a lung? He might have laughed.

Maybe.

Of course, Coach wasn't kidding.

"He sounds like a real hardass, Mike. You happy working with him?"

He flushed, rested his head against the stall wall. "Yeah. Yeah, I am." Happier than he'd ever been.

"Better you than me."

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*by Sean Michael*

"Ben, man, are we going or what? The girls are getting restless."

"No way, we've got to stay until Mike's coach comes to get him."

"What the fuck?"

"Mike's sick, man, we shouldn't just abandon him."

"Just go. I'm okay. I'll be cool."

"Your coach sounded pretty fucking sure of what would happen if we left you, Mike. And he said he'd be here in like five minutes."

"Shit, you are such a mouse, Ben. And an ass licker, always doing what the coach says to do."

Mike shook his head. "I'm not worth having two pissed off girls, Ben. I'm cool. Promise. I won't let Coach kill you."

"Cool, let's go, Alex." Ben handed him his phone back and he focused on breathing, on emptying every last bit of stuff in his stomach. Happy fucking birthday to him.

It wasn't long at all before Coach was there, that growl filling the bathroom with sound. "Mike? You in here?"

"Uh-huh." He nodded, sweat just pouring off him.

Coach opened the door to the stall he was in. "Christ, you look like shit. Where the hell are your friends?"

"The girls were getting restless." He wiped his forehead. "'m okay."

Coach shook his head, but let the subject drop. "You don't look okay."

One strong arm went around his waist, supporting him. "You got flu or something, or just overindulged?"



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*by Sean Michael*

"I didn't have anything you didn't say was cool. Least not until after I got sick."

Coach's eyebrow went up, but he didn't push. Shit, he must really look bad. "I said you could eat what you wanted—if you'd asked my advice, I wouldn't have suggested gorging myself until I was sick. Come on, the car's outside, let's get you home."

He nodded, taking a gulp of the soda and spitting it into the toilet, trying to get the bitter taste out of his mouth.

Grumbling, Coach took the drink and tossed it in the garbage and then pulled him out of the bathroom. "Caffeine's not going to settle your stomach, kid. Not when you've been off it for this long."

"They were out of Sprite, Coach. I didn't have a choice." He wasn't trying to be difficult.

"You ever heard of water?"

There was a breeze when they got out of the movie theatre, and it felt good against his cheeks as Coach helped him to the car.

"Yep. Guys brought the drink to me."

Coach just shook his head and leaned over him to put on his seat belt. Coach smelled good. Then Coach was getting into the driver's seat and starting the car toward home.

"We've got some ginger ale at home. It should help settle your stomach."

"Oh, cool." He put the seat back and closed his eyes. "I hate puking."

"You'll notice you haven't done it once on my diet."

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*by Sean Michael*

"You can't go your whole life without pizza, Coach." He groaned, the thought of pizza making his stomach cramp.

Coach shook his head. "You can't overindulge either." One hand reached over, long fingers warm and knowing as they slid over his belly.

"Oh." He turned toward the touch. Yeah. Better.

Jessy kept up the stroking until he had to turn the car into their driveway.

"How about a hot shower and then a massage? See if we can't find a way for you to enjoy the rest of your birthday?"

"Oh, that would be cool, Coach." He gave Jessy a sheepish smile. "I didn't try to get sick, Coach. Honest."

Coach grinned at him. "No, I didn't figure you did. And I don't mean to turn everything into an object lesson."

They got in and he managed to hold it together long enough to get into his bathroom, sweaty-sticky clothes dumped in the hamper and the shower started. The hot water felt good and he just slumped to the bottom of the tub, letting it hit him.

Coach let Mike sit in there for a good long while before poking his head in. "Come on out, Mike. If you aren't feeling better by now, you're not going to." There was a big, fluffy towel in Coach's hands.

He held his hand up, let Coach get him upright, wincing a little. "I'm gonna be sore tomorrow."

"Your stomach, chest and back muscles from all the heaving, yeah? I'll concentrate my massage on them." Coach wrapped the towel around him, rubbing him down like he was a kid just out of the pool.

"Oh, that slasher movie? So sucked. You didn't miss anything." He stretched up, nose wrinkling as his muscles protested.

"Are you an aficionado?" Coach asked, towel sliding down over his thighs.

"Yeah, kinda. It's kind of cool, being scared, but not being scared."

"I've never gotten the appeal myself." Coach smiled up at him, gave him a wink. "You'll have to teach me how to watch them."

He reached out, touched the end of Coach's nose. "The old monster movies are the best. Which movies do you like?"

Coach gave Mike a soft smile, looking a touch distracted before standing and clearing his throat. "Shoot-'em-ups, comedies and, even if I'll deny it if you ever tell anyone, sappy romances."

"Yeah? I like *Practical Magic* a lot. Have you seen it?"

Coach thought a moment and nodded. "You know we have a DVD player, right? You can let me know if there's movies you want on hand, we've got an entertainment budget that goes largely unused."

"An entertainment budget?" He'd been watching movies on his Playstation in his room. "Wow. I have some movies in my room, too."

"Cool. It's not a lot, but it's for going out, which neither of us do, really. So we can pick up some DVDs without going broke."

Coach wrapped the towel around his waist. "Now I can massage you in the spare room or down in the front room

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while you watch a movie or some tapes from the last couple Worlds and the Olympics."

"I'm easy, Coach." Easy and shaky and beginning to come down from the puking adrenaline that left him jittery and bitchy.

"It's your birthday, I'd hate to make the choice for you, but if you really don't care, go on into the spare room. That's where the oil is."

"Did we get any trick-or-treaters?" He wandered to the spare room, turning some music on as he went.

"Yep. I gave them each a good scare and a box of Raisinettes." Coach changed the radio to a classic rock station, turning it down low. The bottle of massage oil was pulled from the side table drawer and Coach started rubbing it between big hands to warm it up.

"Cool. Raisinettes used to be my favorite." He lay down on his belly, one leg pulled up to ease the cramps.

"You don't want me to start with your stomach?" Coach asked, one hand sliding along his spine.

"Oh. Okay." That would work because he wasn't hard yet. Not yet. Mike flipped over, stretched.

Coach poured oil into his hands and rubbed them together and then laid them on Mike's chest, massaging his pecs. "So aside from the puking, is it a good birthday?"

"The movie was marginal, but Aunt Kathy called, put \$500 in my bank account." He kept his eyes closed. "So. Uh. Over winter break? What happens?"

Kathy and Jerry were going to Germany to see their son, and he was sort of hoping Coach wouldn't make him move

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out during break. If he was going to be alone, he'd rather be here.

"I hope you're not counting on a break, kid. Your training goes straight through." Coach's hands slowly worked down to his stomach, not pressing in hard, just enough to warm and soothe his sore muscles.

He couldn't stop the smile. "Oh. Cool. I was afraid you were going to send me to Dallas, and no one's going to be there. Sorta creepy for Christmas, yeah?"

"You're not wanting time off to visit your family for Christmas? You'll have to come home with me."

His eyes popped open. "I can't just stay here?"

"Oh. Well, sure. This is your home, Mike. I just didn't think you'd want to be alone for all the holidays. I'll be in Houston for three days over Christmas. That's about as long as my folks can tolerate me."

"I wouldn't horn in on your holiday, Coach. I wouldn't."

Coach shrugged, fingers dancing on his belly. "You're an important part of my life, Mike. It wouldn't be horning in."

"Mmm ... Maybe I'll ride down and visit you on Christmas proper, then go to Astroworld and ride rollercoasters."

"Sure, kid. Whatever you want. 'Course that's only three days, you're swimming the rest of the off-season."

"I'll worry about it later. I could just sit and eat fudge and sugar cookies and watch cartoons."

Coach chuckled. "I won't be here to rub your tummy if you make yourself sick, Mike." Coach's fingers danced lower and then slid back up.

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"Mmm ... That would seriously suck, and not in the fun spanky way."

That earned him a startled laugh and a big grin. "Come on, roll over and I'll do your back and shoulders and then go find your gift."

He turned, feeling a hundred and ten percent better, ass wiggling a little to find the perfect spot.

Coach groaned.

He lifted his upper body, thighs parting as he turned. "Coach?"

Coach bit back another groan and shook his head, cleared his throat. "Sorry, I ... Sorry."

"Sorry?" He rolled up, hand sliding over Jessy's arm. "You okay?"

"Just an old fool, kid." Jessy's hand petted his gently.

"Old fool? Who says so?" He frowned, moved closer, ready to defend his ... Jessy from the universe.

"I do, kid." Jessy's fingers slid along his cheek and then dropped. "I should find you your present. It's in my office somewhere safely out of sight."

"You're not." He shook his head, taking his life in his own hands and pushing into Coach's arms, holding them together.

Jessy made a noise, hands sliding to hold him and then dropping. "If you don't let me go, I'm going to do something I probably shouldn't." Jessy's voice was rough, harsh.

"I'm not a kid, Jess." He met those bright eyes, hands sliding over strong shoulders. "I know who I keep dreaming about, who I'm thinking about when I ... When I make myself ... You know."

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

"I'm twice your age, Mike. I'm your coach. I..." Jessy shook his head, growled again, and then suddenly pressed their lips together, hands coming up to hold his head still as his mouth was plundered in a hungry kiss.

He groaned, opened up, world just tilting. Oh. Oh, God. Yes. Please.

Jessy pushed him back down onto the bed, the kiss going on and on, leaving him breathless.

He wrapped his arms around Jessy's shoulders, legs around Jessy's waist. Fuck, it felt good.

"I've wanted to do this since I first saw you slice through the water," muttered Jessy, nipping at his lips.

"Been dreaming about it for weeks, about you." He was hard, embarrassingly so, cock rubbing between them.

Jessy groaned, his hand dropping between them to wrap around his cock and tug on it.

"Oh!" Mike bucked, hips driving hard. Oh, that felt—Oh. Oh. Yes. Please. Don't stop. Jessy.

Jessy didn't, hand working him, mouth stealing his breath. It felt so good. So good and he couldn't not come, had to shoot, entire body convulsing with it.

Jessy moaned into his mouth, kiss still hard even as his hand slowed, moving slickly, thumb sliding across his slit. Shivers rocked him, his cock staying hard, tongue sliding against Jessy's.

"I want to fuck you, Mike."

He nodded, moaning softly. He never had, but he wanted, he would let Jessy in.

"Have you ever?" Jessy asked, reaching for the oil.

"No." It didn't matter. He trusted those hands.

"I won't hurt you," Jessy told him, hand warm on his stomach again. "But if you want me to stop, you just say the word."

"I will. I want you."

"Oh, baby, I want you." Oh, that sounded. Wow. Sexy. Fine. He cupped Jessy's jaw and moaned.

Jessy brought their mouths together, swallowing the end of his moan in another kiss, hands laying him out, spreading his legs. He spread, trying not to feel awkward, trying to make sure Jessy knew he wanted.

"It's easier if you're on your side," Jessy told him, blue eyes serious but hot as hell as they gazed into his. "But I want to watch your face."

"Oh. Oh, I want to see." He wanted to know Jessy was seeing him.

Jessy smiled. "Okay."

Jessy coated his fingers with the oil and settled between Mike's legs, pushing them back toward his chest. His cock was hard, balls almost aching, heart just pounding. Those eyes held his, one hand sliding on his belly and up to tweak his nipples, distracting him as a single long, hot finger slid into his body.

"Oh." His eyes went wide, feeling the oddness, the slight pressure.

"You're hot. Tight." From the look on Jessy's face those were good things.

He looked down his body, at his hard cock, Jessy's body between his legs.



Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

"Sexy, isn't it," murmured Jessy, finger moving in and out of him, sliding and slick.

"Yeah. Better than I dreamed."

"Another finger now," murmured Jessy, free hand still moving over him.

He nodded, took a deep breath and relaxed.

"That's it." Another finger pushed in with the first and now it felt big, huge.

"Oh. Full." He met Jessy's eyes, moaning. "So big."

Jessy leaned in to kiss him, fingers sliding deep, hitting something inside him that made pleasure shoot up his spine like an explosion. He bucked, a sharp cry leaving him. Jessy's fingers slid into that place inside him again, hot tongue pushing into his mouth.

He didn't know what to do, how to move, everything huge inside him. Jessy seemed to know, fingers of one free hand sliding along his hip, brushing his cock.

"Oh. Oh. I. Jess. I..." He wasn't scared, he was ... flying.

Kisses peppered his face. "One more finger, baby."

"More?" He nodded, chasing Jessy's mouth.

Jessy nodded and licked at his lips. "Just one more."

Then that one more was pushing in, opening him up. He groaned, blinking at the burn, the stretch that eased into an incredible heat, a fire.

"You with me?" Jessy asked softly, fingers moving slowly.

"H ... how could I ... How could I be anywhere else?" He met Jessy's eyes. "You're everywhere."

Jessy groaned and dove in for a hard kiss, leaving him breathless as the long fingers hit that spot inside him again.

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

His eyes rolled and he pulled his head back. "Gonna. Gonna, Jess. Soon."

"Wait. I want to be inside you when you do." Jessy's fingers slid away, leaving him empty.

He panted, hands trembling, sliding over Jessy's skin.

Jessy stood and stripped quickly, put on a condom, and slicked up the thick, long cock he'd revealed. Then Jessy was settled between his legs, pushing them wider apart.

"What should I do?" Mike shifted, trembling. Needing.

"Just relax and enjoy it."

"Relax." He nodded, chuckled. "I can do that."

"Good." Jessy smiled at him and then that thick cock was pushing against him, demanding he let it in.

"Oh." He gasped, legs shifting, the burn the biggest thing he'd ever felt.

Jessy's hand wrapped around his prick, slowly pumping, giving him another sensation for him to focus on as that prick just kept pushing.

"Full. Oh, damn. I ... It feels so big."

"It is, baby. But you'll get used to it."

He nodded, leaning up, burying his face in Jessy's throat, panting. Jessy moaned, licking at his skin, hips moving that cock inside him. His body eventually relaxed, eased, took Jessy in.

"There you go, baby." Jessy nuzzled his neck, holding still for a moment, seated deep inside.

"Oh..." Mike stretched, took a deep breath. "Oh, Jessy. It's good."

Jessy smiled at him. "Good, it's supposed to be."

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

He was kissed and then Jessy started to move, cock sliding out and back in. He groaned, eyes closing, just feeling. Oh. Oh, wow. Soft kisses fell on his face, Jessy moving slowly, cock filling him over and over again. Eventually he began to move, rocking, meeting each thrust.

Jessy groaned and that cock went deep, slid across that point inside him again, making the pleasure spark high.

"Oh!" He went stiff, arched. "Jess!"

"There we go," murmured Jessy, moving harder, faster, rubbing that spot over and over again.

Mike stretched up, reached up for the headboard, hips rocking furiously.

"Oh fuck. Sexy." Jessy pushed harder into him, hand working his cock.

"I ... Oh." He gasped, toes curling as he shot.

"Mike!" Jessy cried out his name, cock throbbing inside him.

The whole room spun and he just held on, panting, groaning.

Jessy slid out of him, moaning and tying up the condom, getting rid of it. Then Jessy lay on him, letting him feel the heavy weight of his lover. His lover.

Oh. Wow.

Wow.

Happy birthday to him.

\* \* \* \*

Jessy rested against Mike, face buried in the warm neck, breathing in the smells of sex and Mike.

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

He floated without thinking for as long as he could, but eventually he rolled off with a groan, lying against the kid's side, hands stroking the warm skin.

Christ, what had he done?

Those brown eyes opened, met his. "You okay?"

"I should be asking you that." Jessy brushed the kid's hair off his forehead.

"I'm good. Stomach's not hurting anymore." He got a wink.

He chuckled, thumb brushing across Mike's mouth. "You going to let this affect your training?" he asked. Because if it was, he was going to have to hand Mike over to someone else.

And damn, he didn't want to do that.

"No. You going to tell me this was all a mistake?"

He shook his head. He couldn't do that, it felt too damned right. "It wasn't the smartest thing I've ever done. I'm your coach, I just crossed a huge line. But I'm not going to take it back. I don't want to."

"Oh." Those eyes lit up. "Yeah. My coach. I don't want to lose you."

He tried to hide his disappointment. "You won't. I'll keep coaching you, I promise."

He'd kind of hoped the kid would want a repeat of tonight. Well, more than just a repeat. But he could go with just coach.

"Oh." Mike pushed into his arms, kissing him hard, tongue sliding into his lips. "I thought you were going to tell me I couldn't love you and train with you at the same time."

He beamed at the kid, could feel the smile literally pulling his cheeks. Funny how he'd worried the kid would only want him the one way, too. Pair of idiots. Probably more so because they were going to try to make both work.

"This doesn't mean I'm letting up on your ass."

"I didn't ask you to."

"All right then. Happy birthday."

"Thanks." Those dark eyes were something else. "When's yours?"

Jessy grinned. "January 1st. I hope we have a repeat of this before then."

"A new year's baby, too cool." Mike leaned in, rubbed their noses together.

He chuckled and moved their lips together, breathing in Mike's scent, tongue sliding into Mike's mouth for a taste. He got a happy little purr, Mike cuddling into him, warm and close.

He found the covers and tugged them up, snuggling with Mike, hands roaming over Mike's skin as they kissed. He knew these curves and dips, knew every part of Mike's body by sight—the kid was *his* swimmer—but now he was learning it by touch.

"Oh, your hands. Wow." Mike shivered, moving nice and slow, rubbing.

"You've been fond of them from the start." And it made him feel warm inside, just like it had from the beginning.

"They've been hot as all get out from the start."

He purred, sliding one down to stroke Mike's cock.  
"Speaking of hot..."

"Oh..." Mike blinked, took a deep breath. "Yeah."

Oh, yeah, he'd forgotten the amazing recovery time of the young. He let his thumb slide across the top of Mike's cock, just dragging slowly and pressing in as it passed.

"Jessy..." Mike's shoulders left the mattress, eyes huge.

"Yeah, baby?" He nuzzled against Mike's cheek and neck, hand moving, thumb continuing to work that tip.

"I. Oh. Oh. That's. Huge."

"Yeah, you're not bad, kid." He winked and then hid his grin in Mike's neck.

"Just not bad?" Mike reached down, pinched his ass.

His chuckle had a bit of a squeak in it. "Not bad at all."

"How about good?" Another pinch, a little chuckle.

"I don't know. I haven't tasted it yet." God, the kid was cute when he pushed.

And the needy little peep?

Adorable.

Grinning, he moved down Mike's body. Lucky for him, he knew the kid was clean. Sometimes there were advantages to regular blood tests for the sponsors.

"Jessy. Oh. Oh, I—" Those amazing abs jumped and jerked.

He spent some time there, licking and tasting, nibbling at the shifting muscles. Teasing. Mike knew where he was ultimately headed. Mike relaxed, twisting a little, body begging.

Moaning softly, he slid his tongue along the side of Mike's cock. Fuck, it was hot and felt like silk.

"Oh. Oh, Jess. Soft. Your tongue's so soft."

"And you're like liquid silk, baby." He kept licking, loving the taste under his tongue, the hardness beneath that silk.

"That makes me shiver inside, when you say that." Mike's whisper was so quiet.

"That's a good thing, baby." He made sure he purred the moniker this time, nipped at the tip of Mike's cock.

"Oh..." Mike rippled, arching for him, so fucking responsive.

"Sweet." He licked at the tip of Mike's cock, gathering the hot drops that formed there.

Mike gasped, cock jerking, balls drawing up tight. He figured he'd better get his mouth around the kid's prick sooner rather than later if he was going to catch the main event, so he wrapped his lips around the tip and slowly went down on Mike.

The moan that split the air was sweet as anything, the way those long thighs shook sweeter still. He hummed, going all the way down, swallowing around the tip of Mike's cock. It felt fucking fine inside his mouth, hot and salty and good.

It didn't take long, the cries filling the air, Mike arching and shooting into his mouth. He kept sucking, hand sliding along Mike's balls. Mike tasted good, male and sweet and salt, just the barest bit bitter.

Jessy finally pulled off and slowly trailed up to Mike's mouth, sharing the kid's own flavor with him. Mike watched him with stunned eyes, their lips clinging together.

He settled back next to Mike, hand stroking the sweet belly.

"Thank you."

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

"You're welcome." He grinned and kissed Mike again.

"Anytime. Well. As long as it isn't within a week of a meet."

Mike chuckled. "I'll just have to jack off and remember. Lots."

He growled softly. "Jacking off is still sex, baby."

"Oh, now. A guy can't go without tugging off." Mike cuddled, almost purring.

"You can sure as hell try." He grinned suddenly. "And now, I'll know, too."

"I'm sneaky." Mike licked his smile.

He laughed. "Thanks for the tip."

"You saved my birthday. It had been going downhill fast."

"Oh, we couldn't have that." He nuzzled Mike's neck again. "You smell good."

"Mmm ... That feels good."

He licked, taking the flavor of Mike into himself. He had that taste locked in now, would recognize it anywhere.

"You're a sensual boy, aren't you?"

"Am I? I just like the way you make me feel."

He nodded. "It was a compliment, Mike. Just nod and say yes, sir."

Mike nodded. "Yes, Jess."

Laughing, he nibbled at Mike's ear. "That'll do."

Mike's laughter was low, sensual, and unconsciously sexy.

His cock throbbed and went from half hard to seriously interested. And he wasn't a young man anymore—testament to Mike's sex appeal. Thank God he didn't have to fight it anymore.



Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

Mike's hand dropped down, fingers stroking and petting his prick.

Groaning, he pushed into the touch. "Damn, Mike. You're inspiring."

"I try." Mike watched, eyes warm, curious.

"Feels good. Don't stop."

He let his own hands wander, going back to see if Mike was still as sensitive in his nipples as he'd been to start with, see if stroking Mike's belly still made it ripple. Mike's cheek ended up on his shoulder, arms protecting those sensitive little nipples.

He chuckled, the sound turning into a moan as Mike's thumb brushed the tip of his cock. "You know that just makes them more tempting, don't you?"

"They ... I didn't think they were supposed to feel so much."

"Has no one ever touched them, Mike?" he asked, suddenly wondering just how experienced the kid was.

"Not really." Mike met his eyes, pinking just a little. "Seemed sort of a girly thing, you know? And the couple of guys I dated were ... well, they had girls on the side, you know?"

He growled a little, pissed off on Mike's behalf. The kid deserved someone full-time, someone who cared and wanted to make Mike fly. "So you just jacked each other off, or what?" His fingers worked their way beneath Mike's arm, sliding across the hard little nubs.

Mike twisted, slid against him, hand tightening. "Yeah, pretty much. I've sucked a couple times."

"I bet you're great at sucking," he murmured. "Awesome breath control."

Mike blushed dark. "I did it under water once. Wicked."

A shudder went through him. "Oh, I bet. Damn."

He met Mike's mouth, rolling on top of Mike, pushing into the warm hand that held his cock. Mike groaned, opened right up, purring for him, hand pumping. He wrapped his own hand around Mike's prick, returning the favor, tongue plunging into the sweetness of Mike's mouth.

So eager, so hard again, just driving into his hand.

He wondered for a second if this was going to tire the kid out, but then nothing mattered but driving his cock through Mike's hand, feeling that long prick slide against his own palm and the taste as he plundered Mike's mouth. Mike lasted longer this time, pushing, moaning into his lips.

It was good; bodies working together toward the same goal, it was more than good. He moved them faster, the pleasure making his balls draw up tight against his body. Mike's fingers squeezed tight, insisting, so good.

He cried out, the sound muffled by Mike's mouth, spunk flying from his prick, the push through Mike's hand suddenly easy and smooth. Mike tumbled right after, entire body shaking, slumping to the mattress.

He let Mike take his weight as he caught his breath and then slid to the side, utterly wrung out. He lay on his back and tugged Mike over, head on his shoulder. It felt good to hold a lover again. Good to hold this lover for the first time.

Mike cuddled in, already sound asleep, no fussing, no tossing, just *gone*.

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

He smiled, maybe even purred a little with satisfaction.

There were a lot of reasons why this was a bad idea, starting with him being the coach and Mike being his swimmer. There was only one compelling reason why it wasn't a bad idea, but it kind of trumped everything else.

It felt right.

\* \* \* \*

Mike woke up in the guest room with Jessy stretched beside him. It was still dark when he slipped out of the bed to pee.

Oh. Oh, man.

Ow.

Okay.

Ow.

He pissed and took four aspirin and a hot shower before heading down to the pool for his middle-of-the-night swim, which took the place of his before-breakfast swim.

The water was cold and man, his abs and groin were pissed at having to move—well, they were going to have to. He wasn't having Coach say he couldn't handle shit.

He had no clue how long he'd been out, though he'd put in his fifty laps of all his strokes and was just going, working the kinks out of his muscles, when a long body dove through the water and slid next to him.

Oh. Oops.

He kept going, moving nice and steady. Coach hadn't told him he couldn't swim at night.

Not yet.

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*by Sean Michael*

They swam a few lengths together before Coach's hand slid along his back and they stopped at the end of the pool, hanging off the edge.

"You do this often?"

He nodded. "When I wake up at night."

Coach didn't look overly happy. "You need your sleep, Mike."

"I don't sleep sound a lot." He stretched, twisting.

Coach shook his head. "Four orgasms and you don't sleep through the night. You're something else.""

He winked. "I had to pee."

That had Coach laughing, one hand sliding on his shoulder. "Come back to bed, Mike. Let me give you a reason to stay there."

He nodded, brushing up against Jessy and hugging him before sliding out of the pool, shivering in the wind.

"Want a shower to warm up first?" Jessy asked, hurrying him inside.

"T ... took one before I went out." Mike grinned at Jessy and winked again. "How many a day am I allowed?"

"That depends on how you feel about making love in the shower." Jessy's blue eyes were trained on him, looking into him and full of heat.

"Oh, I bet I'm way in favor of it."

"Let's go find out." Jessy grabbed his hand and tugged gently, pulling him up the stairs and into the bathroom in the master suite.

Jessy's bathroom was warm, done in dark blues and greens, with a huge tub. It felt real, homey, comfortable.

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*by Sean Michael*

Jessy turned on the water and tugged him into the spray, closing the shower curtain and enclosing them in a warm, dark place.

"Oh..." He cuddled in, the happy sound that escaped him echoing.

Jessy hummed, hands sliding over him, slick with soap, cleaning him. Oh, that was like magic. He purred, rubbing them together, the steam and the dark making everything so erotic.

"See? You're a sensualist." Jessy's voice was low, quiet, thrumming through him.

"Uh-huh." Like he was going to argue when everything felt so good.

Jessy's fingers slid over his ass, tips teasing along his crease as their fronts rubbed together, hard cock on hard cock. His nerves, still so awake, so sensitive, made him jerk, shiver.

That made Jessy moan. "So sexy, baby. You make me want like nothing ever."

Oh.

Oh.

He lifted his face for a kiss. Please.

Jessy gave it to him, mouth dropping onto his, tongue pushing in, want clear and sure. He opened wide, let Jessy have him, let Jessy in. Jessy's finger slid inside his ass, movement echoing Jessy's tongue. His breath caught in his chest, nerves awake and so easily aroused. A soft sound of pleasure filled the shower, Jessy moaning or whimpering.

Oh, he did like making love in the shower. Hell, yes.

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*by Sean Michael*

Jessy rubbed against him, their cocks sliding together.

Jessy was hot, slick. Wet. Perfect. "So good."

"Yeah." Jessy made another noise and rubbed hard, fingers searching for his nipples as the kisses grew deeper.

Mike gasped, going up on his toes for a second. "Oh!"

"Oh, yeah, love how sensitive you are." Jessy tweaked one nipple and tugged gently on the other, that finger inside him working faster.

"Gonna. Gonna come again. Oh. Damn."

"That's the idea, baby." Jessy growled and rubbed harder, faster, their cocks sliding together so hot and hard and good.

He bucked, coming hard, his cry loud and happy.

Jessy groaned. "Baby..." Then heat splashed against his belly, soon taken away by the water as Jessy stilled against him.

Oh, wow. He leaned in, breathing hard. Wow.

Jessy's finger slid out of him, the strong arms wrapping around him. "Come to bed with me, Mike?"

He nodded, just cuddling right in like he belonged there. "Yes, please."

"Good."

Jessy turned off the shower and wrapped him in a towel, took one for himself, and in no time they were lying on Jessy's big king-sized bed.

"Wake me if you're up before seven."

He curled close and yawned, settling in. "Will. Night."

"Night, baby," murmured Jessy.

The beat of Jessy's heart was steady, solid, and it sent him right to sleep, quiet and still.

## Chapter Four

Jessy made avocado and bean sprout sandwiches on twelve grain bread for lunch. There was apple juice and Evian water already on the counter. Evian wanted to sponsor Mike, and they'd sent over a couple dozen boxes worth of bottles. There were worse companies to be associated with.

Mike was just finishing up his laps and had a free afternoon scheduled and Jessy was hoping they could spend it together. Watching movies, going for a spin on Mike's Bonzo ... making love some more. Christ, he felt like a teenager.

Mike bounced up the stairs, all smiles, hair sticking up all over. "Oooh. Sandwiches. I'm starving! Can we have tomato on them, too?"

He grinned, trying not to be obvious as he looked Mike over. "Sure thing."

He bent and pulled a tomato out of the crisper. He heard Mike's chuckle about a second before those hands landed on his ass. Grinning, he pushed back into Mike's hands. Well maybe he could be obvious after all.

"Mmm. Pretty." Mike leaned down, kissed the small of his back. "Is there hummus for 'em, too, Coach? Breakfast didn't stick to my ribs today."

He stood, frowning. "You threw up?" He pulled the hummus out of the door and took a couple tortillas to warm up for dipping.

"Huh? Nope." He got a grin and a kiss. "Just *really* hungry. Stomach was growling that last fifty."

"All the extra activity," he suggested with a wink.

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

"You know it." Mike wiggled for him, grinning ear-to-ear. "Hell of a new workout."

Jessy couldn't help grinning back, responding to that happy look. "You've got a free afternoon," he noted.

"I do. You do, too?" Mike sliced up the tomato, adding it and a huge spoonful of hummus to his sandwich.

He nodded. "I'm pretty much free when you are. Makes it easier."

"Cool." Mike dug in, eyes shining over at him. "We could go to the movies. Go shoot pool." The grin widened. "Stay home and make love..."

He grinned back, putting another slice of avocado into his own sandwich. "I could go for any of those. You got a preference?" Look at him, all casual like he didn't want to jump the kid's bones right there, right now.

"Well, duh." Mike chuckled. "I mean, movies and pool are cool, Jessy, but way not *you*."

He just beamed, pleased as punch. "You make an old man feel good, Mike."

"You're not old. Eat before the green stuff gets slimy."

He grinned and started eating. He sure didn't feel old around Mike.

Mike ate heartily, chattering idly as two and a half sandwiches disappeared. He wolfed his own down, less because he was hungry than because he wanted to be done with lunch, wanted to get on with their afternoon off.

"So. What do you want to do?" Mike took his plate, rinsed both of them off, and shoved them in the dishwasher.



Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

"I imagine the same thing you do, baby." Was that his voice? All growls and want?

"Oh. Yeah. I meant more sort of where, yeah?" Mike was panting, nodding.

He grinned. "Anywhere. Your bed, my bed, the kitchen floor."

"Your bed. It's soft." Those eyes twinkled. "And it smells like you."

Bam. There went his cock. "Christ, kid. You say stuff like that and I will take you on the floor."

"It's true." Mike stayed just out of his reach. "It's so good. Rich and strong and ... Wow."

Grinning, he started to stalk the kid, letting Mike stay ahead of him, leading them upstairs. Mike was playing, teasing, shaking it for him. He'd be damned if he'd had this much fun in ages.

He grabbed for that fine ass as they crossed the threshold to his room. Mike squeaked, shivering for him, pressing back into his hands.

"You make me want, baby."

"I do? Just me?" Those brown eyes looked back at him, wanton, warm.

"Just you." He kissed Mike hard, gazing into those brown eyes.

Mike groaned, eyes wide. One hand reached back, cupping his jaw, deepening the kiss. He moaned into it, pressing against Mike. Wanting so hard. Mike turned, sliding against him, that hard long cock rubbing his thigh. He walked Mike back toward the bed, devouring the sweet mouth.

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

"Want you. Really, really." Mike tugged his shirt up, fingers sliding over his skin.

"I know the feeling." He didn't have much to do to get Mike naked, just push the swimming trunks down and he had warm, naked flesh in his hands.

Mike pressed against him, holding on tight, little nipples hard against his chest.

"So sexy." He slid his hands over Mike, one moving between them to play with the sensitive nipples, to tweak and tease.

"Mmm ... no touching. They're so sensitive..."

He chuckled. "That's hardly going to make me want to stop."

Mike grinned, fingers covering those pretty nipples. "No touching."

He pouted. "Maybe I should tie you down and then I can touch them as much as I want."

He saw Mike's cock jerk. "T-that's a cute pout."

"Yeah? Maybe I should use it on your nipples." He filed away Mike's reaction to his suggestion that he tie Mike up as he bent his head and licked at one hard little point.

"Oh. Oh." Mike moaned, fingers tangling in his hair.

He wrapped his lips around Mike's nipple and tugged, his hands sliding around Mike's waist and holding onto the long body. Mike shivered, cock leaking against him.

"Bed," he growled, pushing gently.

"Uh-huh." Fuck, the kid was pure sex.

He pulled off his jeans and climbed up onto the bed, going to town on Mike's nipples, licking and sucking and moaning.

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

Mike pressed closer, then twisted away when things got too intense. He licked the closest flesh he was left with, Mike's side, just below his ribs.

Mike giggled, squeaked. Laughing, Jessy tickled with his chin, loving the happy sounds. Mike wrapped around his head, so happy, so hot.

He shifted to that sweet belly, tongue tracing the six pack, sliding through Mike's navel.

"Mmm ... so warm. So soft." Mike's chuckles turned to moans.

"And hot," he murmured, turning his head to rub his cheek against Mike's cock, its heat like a fire.

"Uh-huh..." Mike's thighs spread, so long, so open.

He settled between them, licking at Mike's belly, cock, balls, taking his time exploring. Mike, as impatient in this as in everything, moved restlessly, moaning for him. He slid his hand up, fingers playing with those sweet little nipples to distract Mike.

"Oh. Jess. That. Uh. Oh."

He chuckled and took one of Mike's balls into his mouth, sucking vigorously. Mike's shoulders left the pillows, those dark eyes huge. He hummed around the sweet nut in his mouth and slowly released it to give the other one the same treatment.

"Oh. Jess. I. That's huge." Mike shook, gasped. "Huge."

He hummed again, fingers sliding over Mike's skin as he sucked.

Mike pulled away, gasping. "Damn. Oh, damn. You're something else."

"Where are you going?" he asked, thinking that the tying the kid down thing was looking more and more like a good option.

"It's ... I mean, you. Your mouth. Damn."

"Christ, you're cute when you're incoherent." He grinned and then shifted, taking Mike's cock into his mouth, going all the way down on it just to hear the reaction.

"Jess!" Mike pushed up, ass bouncing on the bed.

He chuckled and put a hand on each of Mike's hips, pressing the kid back down into the mattress as his head started bobbing over the long cock. Mike met each thrust, body just pushing, stomach gone tight.

He slid one finger into his mouth along with Mike's cock, slicking it up just a little. Mike's head fell back, long throat working. He let his finger slide out and teased the hot, little hole, grunting a bit when Mike bore down and just swallowed his finger up. Fuck, that eagerness was heady, addictive.

"So good. Shit. Jessy. So good. Don't stop." Mike squeezed his finger, cock throbbing.

Stop? Hell, no, that was not the plan. He sucked all the harder on Mike's cock, pushed into the tight heat faster. There would be no stopping until Mike had come.

Mike groaned, arched, spunk filling Jessy's mouth just like that, hot and strong. He swallowed around Mike's cock, even after his mouth was empty of everything except that long heat, making Mike shiver and shudder, ripple with aftershocks.

"Uhn." Mike groaned, slumping onto the bed.

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*by Sean Michael*

He slowly let go of Mike's cock and worked his way up the long body, leaving soft, sucking kisses as he went. When he was finally at Mike's mouth, he licked at the red lips and then slid his tongue in between them.

"So good to me." Mike purred, opening, hands sliding down his sides.

"You're easy to be good to." He smiled down at Mike, loving that he could give Mike all this for the first time.

"Yeah? Cool." Mike's kisses slid down his throat.

"Yeah. Mmm ... feels good, Mike. Real good."

Mike moaned, licking and lapping, tongue drawing lazy circles. He shivered, his own hands stroking Mike's skin, his cock rock hard. Mike was so giving, so willing to reciprocate, making him feel so good.

"It's good, baby," he murmured, encouraging the sweet licks.

"You taste good. Hot." He was petted and stroked, nuzzled and tasted, Mike curious and wanton.

"Taste all you want. Feels fucking good." He was pushing into Mike's touches, just flying on the sensations.

Mike reached his nipple, lips fastening around, tugging, sucking.

"Oh, baby, don't stop." He pushed his body toward Mike, cock sliding along that fine belly.

Mike hummed, sucking hard, hands sliding down to stroke his cock.

"Yeah. Oh, yeah." He pushed into Mike's hold, on fire.

Sweet and steady, Mike just drove him higher and higher, the innocent, curious touches maddening.

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*by Sean Michael*

"Gonna make me come." It wasn't really a warning or a plea, just him letting Mike know.

"Oh, good. Can I taste?"

"Oh, God." Shit. He knew he was clean. "I'm clean, Mike. But taking a man's word for it in the middle of fucking isn't the best idea."

Those brown eyes were so earnest. "You're not just a man, Jessy."

Oh, fuck, if he didn't know how innocent the kid was he'd think it was a line. "Then, yeah, baby. You can taste. Please."

"Mmm..." Mike's mouth dropped down, lips circling the head of his cock and sucking, tongue sliding around the tip.

"Oh, fuck!" He managed to keep himself from bucking, from shoving deep, but fuck, it had been so long and Mike's mouth felt so damned good.

He whimpered, hands dropping to slide through Mike's hair. Oh, Mike hummed, sucking and purring, wanting him, pulling at him. He shuddered, balls tightening up, cock going even harder as his body prepared to shoot. He didn't want to, not yet, but it was too damned good.

"Mike ... gonna!" With a cry he came, body shaking.

Mike licked and groaned, taking what he could and lapping the spillover away.

"Baby, that was something special." He stroked Mike's cheeks, smiling down into those sweet brown eyes.

Mike hummed, nuzzling into his touch.

"Come give me a kiss," he murmured, wanting to taste himself on the kid's lips.

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*by Sean Michael*

Mike pushed up into his arms, those lips smiling as they pressed together. He groaned at the taste of his own come on Mike's lips, his hand sliding down to Mike's waist, tugging their hips together. Mike snuggled right in, cock half-hard again, heavy against him. He chuckled softly, hand slipping down to brush by it.

"Oh..." Mike moaned, breath tickling his jaw.

"Mmm ... gotta love that recovery time." His fingers stroked again, teasing gently.

A soft chuckle sounded, Mike's cheek heating. "You're inspiring."

He grinned, biting back his chuckles. "And you're nineteen."

"Yep." And just a pup, all bright eyed and eager to please.

He brought their mouths together again, fingertips sliding across the tip of Mike's cock, letting one linger and press into the slit. Mike peeped, hips pulling away then pressing close.

"Oh, yeah, do that again." Mike buried that hot face in his shoulder, hips jerking again.

So fucking sweet, so hot. He wrapped his hand around the hot cock, sliding it up and down.

"Make me want. Over and over."

"That's a good thing." Made him feel like a fucking stud.

"Yeah? Yeah. Yeah." Those dark eyes shone at him.

"Yeah." He leaned in, licking gently at Mike's lips, almost teasing as his hand did anything but tease.

Mike was shaking, panting, not holding anything back. He rolled Mike beneath him, hand working hard.

"Jess!" Mike nodded, swallowing hard. "Yes."

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*by Sean Michael*

"You like that, don't you? Like it when I hold you down."

Those thin cheeks turned a deep red. "I..."

"Yeah, you love it." He grabbed one of Mike's hands in his, pulling it up over Mike's head. Mike tugged, arched, rubbing against him. Fuck, that was sexy, Mike's hand tugging to get away from him, that sweet body rubbing hard.

"Jess..." Oh, yeah. Desperate. Needy.

"Right here, baby. Right here." He squeezed that sweet cock, thumb pressing into Mike's slit.

"Gonna. Oh. Oh, Jess. Don't stop."

"Not stopping." He pushed Mike down with his body, working that long cock.

Mike came with a sharp cry, wrists twisting in his hands, heat spraying between them.

"Beautiful," he murmured, licking at Mike's mouth, his lips sliding down along the arched neck. "Just beautiful."

Mike moaned, relaxing beneath him, just purring. He let go of Mike's wrists, hands sliding down the long arms, face buried in the warm neck.

He was starting to get used to this.

\* \* \* \*

Backstroke, butterfly, freestyle.

His body knew what he was doing.

His mind? Somewhere else.

It flicked from biology class—still passing, just barely—to Jessy's hands holding his wrists, to the next meet, to the fact that he wanted mashed potatoes, to the fact that Thanksgiving was coming.



Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

Thanksgiving. He wondered if Jessy was going to Houston. If Jessy did? He'd order pizza and monster movies and a case of Dr. Pepper.

Jessy's shadow fell over the pool.

Maybe two cases. He stopped at the edge and smiled up. "Hey, Coach."

"Hey, Mike. You're looking good this morning, how's it feel?"

"The water? Wet." He grinned, pushing off the wall and moving lazily.

Jessy laughed and shook his head. "I meant your body and the swimming, smartass."

He grinned. "The swimming is good. The body?" He dove deep, staying down until his lungs screamed and popped back up, gasping. "All good."

Jessy checked his watch. "Eh. Not bad." He got a wink.

"Bitch." He was way better than not bad.

Jessy chuckled. "You about done?"

He nodded, grinned. "Yep. All lapped."

That earned him a slow, amazing smile. "Great. Wanna come upstairs?"

"Oh, yeah." He swam over to the coping, holding that hot gaze. "Please."

"I thought we'd try something new."

He let Jessy help him out. "New?"

"Well you liked when I held you down well enough. I thought maybe we'd make it more. I've got some leather cuffs..." Jessy said it casually, almost like he was saying "nice weather we're having, isn't it?"

"Leather?" He blinked, stomach going tight, cock jumping.  
"Really?"

"Yeah." Jessy's blue eyes had gone hot and he was given a long, slow once-over. "Really."

"Oh." He shivered, cock filling his trunks.

"You like the sound of that. I like it, too. Especially when just talking about it makes you hot."

Mike pinked, ducked his head. "I ... Yeah."

Jessy chuckled, the sound husky. "Come on, baby. Let's go tie you up."

"I ... Okay." He slid his hand into Jessy's, not really nervous, just ... holding on.

Jessy tugged him up against that rangy body, bringing their mouths together in a kiss that started slow and grew hot.

Oh. Okay. Yum. He just melted, moaning happily.

Jessy eventually let him go and tugged him inside and up the stairs. "The bed in the spare room has the right kind of headboard for cuffs."

"Perv." He chuckled, following right behind, nerves just firing madly.

Jessy stopped suddenly, hand on his cheek, looking right into his eyes. "If you don't want to do this, for any reason, you just say so, okay?"

He nodded, smiled. Like Jessy'd hurt him. Ever. "Okay."

Jessy grinned suddenly. "Okay. Of course that means you're a perv, too."

"Only a Junior-level perv..."

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*by Sean Michael*

"Oh, not for long, baby. You're a natural." Jessy's hand slid along his body to tweak a nipple.

He gasped, pulled away. "No touching."

"No touching? That's going to make making love to you very difficult." Jessy's eyes were twinkling.

He chuckled, hid his nipples with his fingers. "I meant these."

Jessy grinned and laughed. "Oh, let's get upstairs; I can't wait until you can't do that anymore."

Mike grabbed Jessy's hand, both of them hard and eager, laughing together.

Jessy led him into the spare room and nodded at the dresser table where two leather cuffs with attachments for the headboard were sitting.

"Wow. They're big." Mike walked over, held them up. "They'd be hard to break."

"That's kind of the idea, Mike." Jessy stood behind him, head on his shoulder, fingers tracing the edges of the cuffs. "They'll bite a bit if you really tug on them."

"You'd let me out if I really wanted out." It wasn't a question at all.

And Jessy didn't hesitate to answer it anyway. "Absolutely."

"Yeah." He handed Jessy the cuffs, watched how they were fastened to the headboard.

Jessy kissed him gently, tongue sliding through his mouth. "Go on, baby. Lie on your back and I'll get them on you."

"Okay." He shivered, slipped off his trunks and laid back. "It's okay to be nervous?"

Jessy nodded. "Sure. Long as you talk to me. What's got you nervous?"

"I ... Well, it could be less good than my fantasies, yeah? Which screws up the jackoffability of them. I could love it and you think I'm a perv..."

"I thought we'd already agreed you were a perv." Jessy grinned down at him, hands sliding along his arms, massaging them all the way to his wrists, not making any attempts to put him into the cuffs yet. "You've been jacking off to fantasies of me tying you up?"

"Maybe. Sometimes. Yeah." He blushed dark. He had lots of fantasies.

Jessy made a noise that was part moan, part purr. "Since I held you down the other night or before?"

"Before." God, how embarrassing.

Jessy moaned again, hand sliding to cuff one of his wrists. "Tell me about one." His other hand was taken, stretched up to the second cuff.

"Jessy ... They're *fantasies*."

"And they sound fucking hot. Not to mention maybe I can make some of 'em come true." Those blue eyes just stared down into his own.

"I ... I think about you sometimes, holding me down, touching me, knowing I have to just feel..." God, he felt exposed.

"Oh, yeah. That's what it's all about, baby." Jessy bent and kissed him, mouth hot and hard.

He groaned, arching up into Jessy's heat. "Yeah..."

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*by Sean Michael*

Jessy's hands slid from his wrists down his arms, moving inward to tease his nipples. "You're at my mercy now, baby."

He grinned, trying to pull his arms down to protect the sensitive bits of flesh. Jessy grinned evilly at him and bent, lips closing over one nipple and tugging on it.

"Oh." He rocked up into the touch, moaning low, heels digging into the mattress.

Jessy moaned around his nipple, hand sliding down to pull at his cock. Fuck, he was ready and so fast, too. Hungry and hard and close.

Jessy moved to tease his other nipple, hand working his prick. He just went crazy, humping Jessy's hand, head rolling.

"That's it, baby. Give it to me."

"Jess. Jessy. Love." He cried out, so turned on, spunk just pouring from him.

Jessy moaned, mouth leaving his nipple in favor of cleaning his belly and cock clean. Mike moaned, eyes falling closed. Oh, yeah.

"Sweet, baby. Good." Jessy lingered at his navel, tongue sliding.

"So good." His belly went tight and his hips rolled.

"You taste great." Jessy worked his way back up, stopping at Mike's nipples before coming to his mouth.

He opened wide, groaning into Jessy's lips, rocking up.

"So sexy. You turn me on, Mike."

"Yeah? I want to. I want to excite you."

"Christ, Mike, you make me feel like a teenager again."

"Then we're equal."

Jessy nodded. "Here we are."

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*by Sean Michael*

He nodded. "Yeah. Here we're lovers."

"Yeah, we are." Jessy's voice was low, husky, the strong hands starting to move on him again.

He hummed, stretching out under that touch.

"I could do anything I want to you," Jessy murmured, lips exploring him so gently. It was maddening, really.

"What do you want to do?"

"I want to get something to hold your cock tight. A cock ring. Leather and steel and plastic. I want to clamp your nipples and make you fly." Each suggestion was accompanied by licks and nibbles to cock and nipples. "I want to put a plug in you and then make you go swim with it in."

His eyes went wide, body shuddering. "A ... a plug?"

Jessy nodded, hand sliding down to push between his legs, teasing his hole. "It goes in your ass, keeps you open, filled."

"Oh..." Mike's legs parted, hips pushing up.

"You like the sound of that, don't you. Christ, you're hot for it. Makes me hot how much you want it. They come in all shapes and sizes, you know. Like dildos."

"Really?" Mike gasped, wanting Jessy's fingers. "I ... I haven't. Oh, man."

"I have one or two around here somewhere." Jessy grinned suddenly, the smile greedy, aggressive. "But I want you. It'll have to wait." That single finger continued to tease, only maddening him more.

"Jessy. Jessy, I want." His hips bucked and he stretched, trying to get more.

Jessy chuckled, the sound a little evil. "I know you do, but that's up to me now, isn't it?"

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*by Sean Michael*

"So mean." He stretched farther, chains rattling.

"Mmm ... cruel to be kind." Jessy nipped at his throat, licked and sucked his nipples.

Heat washed over him, body rocking and pushing. "Damn."

"Uh-huh." Jessy's finger got a little more serious, tip pushing hard against his hole. "I want to fuck you, baby."

"Oh, yes. Please." He nodded, knees drawing up and out.

"Wanton." Jessy reached over to the side table, picking up a tube of Astroglide.

"Yep." Oh, he did feel good.

Jessy laughed softly, the sound good, making him shiver. Then one hot finger returned, pushing inside him in a single, easy glide.

"Mmm..." He whimpered, hips moving steadily, rocking on that finger.

Then the stretch and burn were increasing, Jessy pushing another finger into him.

"Mmm ... Yeah." He was addicted to that stretch, to that sweet heat and pressure.

Jessy smiled down at him, fingers working, hitting that spot inside him and stretching him wide.

His eyes flew open, body going stiff. "Oh. Again. There."

Jessy growled and pushed harder, nailing his gland. He whimpered, bucked up, a cry pushed from him. Oh. Oh, so much, so good.

"Wait for me, kid. I want to feel you come around my cock."

"Not a kid."

Jessy chuckled. "That's right. Old man."

He laughed, the sound a little breathless and hoarse.  
"Yeah."

Jessy was serious all of a sudden. "Seeing as you've sucked me already, what about my not using a condom?"

He met Jessy's eyes. "You wouldn't hurt me, Jessy. I trust you."

"No, baby. I wouldn't hurt you for the world."

Those fingers slid away, Jessy settling between his legs, cock so hot as it nudged against his hole. He smiled, just letting Jessy in deep, the smooth glide of skin amazing. Jessy groaned, eyes on his, hot and needy.

He tried to reach for Jessy, the pull of the cuffs surprising him. Jessy grinned wildly at him, hand sliding across his belly and then up to tease his nipples.

"Jessy." He squeezed tight, gasped.

Jessy groaned and started thrusting, pushing into him again and again.

"Oh. Oh, good. So good." He was soaring, eyes rolling.

"Yeah. Hell, yeah." Jessy moved faster, driving that thick heat into him.

He needed to touch himself, make himself come, but he couldn't. Jessy just kept moving, cock so hot and hard, hitting his gland, making him fly higher and higher.

"I. Oh. I need. Please. Jessy. Oh." He couldn't think anymore.

"Need this?" Jessy asked, voice rough, almost hoarse. Jessy's fingers tugged on his nipple.

"Uhn ... More." His whole body went tight as a board.



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*by Sean Michael*

Jessy's fingers tightened, pinching sharply before moving to the other nipple, which was pinched just as Jessy's cock pushed into his gland again.

Yes.

Things went a sparkly, silvery grey, his body bucking hard as he shot.

Jessy's moan was loud, that cock driving hard into him, and then he was filled with heat.

Mike just melted, slumped into the sheets, panting. Jessy's weight landed on him, hot breath on his neck. He couldn't move, couldn't even think.

"Christ, baby, that was good." Jessy's hand slid along his body, warm and soft.

"Uh-huh." He blinked up, nodded.

Jessy licked at his skin, groaning softly. "Love the taste of you. All salty and sweet."

"Mmm. I just love you, Jessy." He cuddled in, then blinked, realizing what he'd said out loud.

Jessy's head came up and those blue eyes looked down at him intently, a slow smile spreading across the tanned face. "Of course you may just think that because I'm the first man to give you a blow job."

Mike blushed dark but shook his head. "No. I did before." Mike suddenly felt extremely vulnerable, really exposed. Sort of like a stupid kid. He wiggled his wrists, looked up at them. "Undo 'em?"

Jessy nodded. "In a minute. I want your full attention."

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*by Sean Michael*

Jessy waited until he was looking up into those blue eyes again. "I love you. And that you love this old fool, too? Makes me damned happy."

"For real?"

"Do you know me to be in the habit of saying stuff I don't mean?"

He grinned, shook his head, heart just pounding. "Nope."

"There you go then. I love you."

He couldn't stop grinning, smiling into those warm eyes. "Wow."

Jessy was smiling back. "Yeah. I'd say that's a good word for it."

Jessy's lips slid across his, warm and easy, one hand reaching up to undo the cuff around his right wrist. As soon as his arm was free, he wrapped it around Jessy, held on. Jessy smiled and undid his other wrist, this time massaging it before letting it go.

"Mmm..." He nuzzled, moaned. "Feels good."

"It does," Jessy agreed, kissing his face, his neck and shoulders.

He chased Jessy's lips, moaning as their lips met, tongues sliding against each other. Jessy rolled off him, arms going around him and tugging him into the long body. Yeah. Yeah, good. He cuddled right in, humming. Jessy pulled the covers up over them, pressed a kiss to his head.

"Mmm ... naptime."

"Yep." Jessy's hands slid on him in slow, even strokes that encouraged sleep.

Oh, he was getting way fond of his afternoon nap.

## Chapter Five

Jessy spoke to his brother on the phone, making his usual excuses for not going home for Thanksgiving. He got on well with his brother, and his folks were less psycho than a lot he knew, but they did better getting together once a year at Christmas for a couple days and leaving it at that. Still, Bruce invited him for Thanksgiving every year.

He figured maybe this year he wouldn't be spending the holiday alone. They'd brought the subject up on Mike's birthday, but never really made any firm plans.

It was coming up fast, too—Bruce's call was late this year, as if his brother was growing resigned to his consistent refusals.

He went out the back, looking for Mike poolside. It was getting cold and Mike was hurrying, pushing himself hard so he could get in the hot tub. They could talk there, discuss the matter and then make love. Or make love and then talk.

He grinned, waiting for Mike to be done.

For the first time, Mike hurried out of the pool, visibly shaking as he ran to the hot tub.

Jessy stripped and climbed in with Mike. "Maybe it's time to hold all practices in the pool at UT. I don't want you getting sick."

"I won't get sick until January." Mike floated over, snuggled in.

He snorted, arms wrapping around his swimmer. "I don't want you getting sick at all."

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*by Sean Michael*

"I get sick after Christmas every year. I'll try not to this year."

"Every year? Like since you were little?"

Mike nodded. "Pretty much."

"Huh. I wonder why. You usually get overexcited at Christmas?"

"Well, when I was little, yeah. My folks died on the 20th of December, so not after that, really."

"Oh, that might explain it." Well, at least it hadn't been right on Christmas itself. Still, he bet that first year was a pretty fucking shitty holiday.

Mike leaned against him. "Jess? Are you ... are you going somewhere for Thanksgiving?"

"Nope. I'm staying here. Just got finished confirming that with my brother, actually. I was wondering if you'd spend it with me, given you're what I'm most thankful for this year."

He got a warm, wondering look, the smile just huge. "Oh. Oh, yeah. Yeah, that would be cool."

He smiled, Mike's reaction making him feel good right down to his bones. "What would you think about not going the whole turkey and stuffing our faces routine and making our own tradition instead? 'Cause that's an awful lot of work to go to for just two people." Especially when half the traditional stuff was on Mike's do not eat list.

"What do you want instead?" Mike didn't look opposed, more curious.

He shrugged. He hadn't really thought about it much. He usually ate whatever was in the fridge. "Well, we could go out to dinner."

"On Thanksgiving? Jessie, that's just wrong."

"Oh. Well, what do you think we should do?"

"Uh ... I was going to eat three pizzas and drink a case of Dr. Pepper." Mike grinned. "How about a turkey breast or something? I don't like dressing, but mashed potatoes? Yummy."

"Wait a minute, back up the truck there, kid. We'll leave aside the case of Dr. Pepper; if eating out is wrong, how is eating three pizzas right?"

"Well, because eating three pizzas and a case of Dr. Pepper is feeling sorry for yourself because you're alone at Thanksgiving, Jess." The words were matter-of-fact.

He tugged Mike close, hugging him. "Well, you're not going to be alone feeling sorry for yourself on Thanksgiving."

"Nope. I'm going to watch the parade with you and eat and we can pretend to care about football, if you want, or we could watch monster movies." Those eyes just danced. "Pie. We *have* to have pie."

"I could go for pie. And monster movies. Because football's okay, but it's not swimming." He winked at Mike.

"Well, no. It's not even water polo."

He laughed happily. "All right. Turkey breast, mashed potatoes, a ton of green vegetables and monster movies it is."

"And pie. Don't forget the pie."

"You got a favorite kind?"

"Mmm ... Chocolate pecan. Or apple. Or butterscotch. No. Chocolate pecan."

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

"No pumpkin? I mean, it *is* Thanksgiving." And Mike wasn't supposed to be eating chocolate.

Mike wrinkled his nose. "Pumpkin cheesecake?"

He shook his head. "No, pumpkin pie."

Mike shook his head back. "I don't like it."

"But you like pumpkin cheesecake?" He could negotiate. If he had to.

"Yeah. I like chocolate pecan best, but if you don't like that, we can find one we both like. How about cherry?"

He nodded. "Yeah, cherry works for me."

He smiled down at Mike. "You can have the chocolate pecan for Christmas, okay?"

"Okay. Kerbey Lane's is the best." Just like that, he had Thanksgiving plans and a happy swimmer.

He grinned, unable to resist teasing. "You mean you're not making me cherry pie from scratch?"

"I meant the chocolate pecan. The cherry we'll order from the store." Mike grinned. "I'll make the mashed potatoes, though. I know how."

"Do you mean you don't know how to cook except for the odd thing?" Damn, he shouldn't have been just making everything Mike ate, he should have had the kid help, learn how.

"I can make mashed potatoes and fried bologna sandwiches and ... Oh! Those bacon-wrapped hot dog thingies."

"Oh, we need to do something about that, Mike. We might even have to work 'making supper' into the schedule."

"We get to have bacon-wrapped hot dogs? Cool!"

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*by Sean Michael*

He chuckled. "Well, yes, you can make your ... culinary specialties, but you'll also need to learn how to make more. Man cannot live on bacon-wrapped weenies alone."

"Nope. That's what the bologna sandwiches are for." Mike's eyes lit up. "I can make chocolate covered frozen bananas, too."

"You know what we could do with chocolate covered frozen bananas?"

Mike's eyes went wide. "No way."

He laughed. "Well maybe not with a chocolate frozen banana, but there's dildos you can fill with water and freeze. We should check out the Internet. We're sadly lacking in interesting toys."

Mike chuckled, cheeks flushed—more from excitement than the heat, Jessy'd bet.

"Come on, Thanksgiving's settled and you've been in the hot tub long enough. Let's dry off and check out the digital sex shops."

"It's cold out there. Can't we just move into the tub?" Mike winked, kissed him before standing up and running to the house.

He followed, laughing and catching up with Mike in the kitchen where his swimmer was putting away a glass of juice.

"I'm gonna drive to the store and buy stuff for dinner. I'll cook." Mike looked excited, pleased, just a little wicked.

"Are you saying I should go online and choose the toys myself?" Oh, if Mike abandoned him on this, he'd be sure to buy the biggest dildo he could find.

"Oh!" Mike grinned, pinked. "I didn't think you were serious."

"The hell I'm not. We talked about it the other day—got you all hard. You think I'm not going to follow up on that kind of thing?"

Those cheeks got darker, Mike pushing right into his arms, cock half-hard already.

He purred, hand sliding down to cup Mike's balls and then slowly coming up to wrap around the long cock. "I'm going to find the frozen banana style one, too."

"No way." Mike shook his head. "Wanna look in bed?"

"Yes way and yeah, let's bring your laptop." The kid didn't need to know yet that you could fill it with warm water, too.

Mike followed behind, carrying the little laptop in one hand and a glass of juice in the other.

They settled together in his big bed, under the covers, and he booted up Mike's laptop, opened up a browser and searched for a sex shop they could order stuff from. Mike leaned against his shoulder, fingers drawing circles around his bellybutton.

"Are you trying to distract me?" he asked as his cock took definite notice.

"Huh? Nope. Just touching."

He turned and kissed Mike's forehead and then went back to the computer. "Here we are. Anal toys. We'll check the dildos first."

"What're we checking them for?" Mike licked one of his nipples, grinning.



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*by Sean Michael*

He groaned, skin going tight, cock just throbbing. "To see which ones we want to put up your ass."

"Oh..." He felt that long cock jerk and fill. He hid his grin. Mike wasn't the only one who could distract.

Mike cuddled closer, eyes on the screen. "What do you like?"

He pointed out one that was medium sized and covered in little, raised bumps.

"Bumpy. Can you feel them?"

"Inside you? That's the idea. You'll certainly be able to feel them sliding in and out past that tight little ring of muscles."

"Jess!" Mike's cheeks pinked, hips rubbing that cock against his leg.

"What?" He grinned and pointed to another dildo, this one with what looked like a scrub brush on the end of it. "Of course this one would play your gland like crazy."

"That's obscene." Mike chuckled, shook his head.

"Okay, so we want one of each of those. How about the long hung dong?" It was a huge thing, scary even. He wondered how Mike would react.

Mike snorted. "That's for show."

"You think?" He added it to their shopping cart. "Let's add the bumpy one as well."

Mike blinked but didn't argue, just sort of stared.

Fuck, the kid was cute all wide-eyed like that. "We should get a 'normal' one, too, don't you think?"

"A normal one? Okay. What makes it normal? I mean, those," Mike pointed, "are cock-shaped, but those look like what people call dildos."

"I meant size, really—you can pick the style you like. Or, hell, we'll buy one of each. You like the screaming neon pink one?" He was just teasing now, waiting to see how Mike would react.

Mike chuckled. "The pink would clash with my skin tone."

He laughed and turned Mike's chin up, kissing him hard. "Then we'll get the purple one." Mike's laugh tasted so good, sweet. It would be so easy to get distracted in that taste, in his lover's mouth.

Mike's fingers circled his nipple, tugged.

He groaned. "If you didn't ... want to get the uh ... purple one, you could have just uh ... said so."

"Hmm?" Mike licked his lips.

He growled, pushing the laptop aside and rolling onto Mike, deepening the kiss.

"Oh..." Mike's legs wrapped around his waist, holding on tight. Those hot lips opened up for him, eager, easy.

Always so hot for it—it was heady, exciting.

He fucked Mike's mouth with his tongue, hips picking up the rhythm. Mike purred, rocking harder, faster, pushing them. He went with it, letting Mike set the pace, hips working furiously to slide their cocks together.

He got a low groan, Mike's fingers tightening. "Oh. Jess. Yeah."

"Love you," he whispered, hips moving harder.

Mike jerked, heat spreading over his belly.

He purred, hand searching the side table for the lube.

"Love that smell."

"The smell of me?" Mike was panting, relaxing.

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"Yeah. Of your skin, of your come. It makes me want." His fingers caught on the tube of slick stuff and he grabbed it, getting his fingers slippery.

"Oh. Wow." Those dark eyes smiled.

He smiled back, sliding his fingers along Mike's body, leaving shiny, slick trails. When he reached Mike's crease, he teased his fingers in.

"Mmm..." Mike groaned, body tight and hot around him.

"Just imagine," he murmured. "In a few days I could be doing this to get you ready for one of those dildos..."

"Oh." Mike squeezed him, arching.

"Christ, you are sexy." He pushed a third finger into Mike, stretching him wide.

"Oh. Full. Full, Jess." Mike twisted, riding him harder.

"Be my cock in a minute. That'll be even fuller." He pulled his fingers away, needing now. Now.

"Yes. Yeah. Please. I need."

Groaning, he pushed in, slowly going deep and deeper.

"Oh. Damn." Mike tilted, moaning low.

"So hot. Tight." He moaned and shuddered, body nothing but pleasure.

"Yours."

"Yeah. Yeah." He nodded, the word, the truth of it in Mike's voice making him moan and start to thrust, pushing deep on each in-stroke.

"Uh. Oh. Oh, Jessy. Yeah." Mike's hands were on his ass, tugging him deeper.

Groaning, he lost himself in Mike's body, in the rhythm and heat of their coupling. It was so easy, to fly, to float along,

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held inside Mike. Nothing could last forever, though, and as he felt himself get close, he wrapped his hand around Mike's cock, tugging with each thrust. Mike grunted, bucking into his hand, head rolling.

"That's it, baby, show me how good it is."

"S ... so good. Oh, Jess. I ... More."

He tightened his hand and drove harder into Mike, bending to fuse their mouths together in a hot kiss. Mike groaned, coming hard, heat spraying over his hand. The hot body squeezing him tight forced his own orgasm out of him, his seed pushing deep into Mike. He kept moving, small thrusts that made them both shudder and then he collapsed onto Mike.

Mike curled around him. "Oh. Yeah."

"Mmm. Yeah." He nuzzled into Mike's neck, breathing in deeply. He was addicted to this scent, needed it.

Mike purred, holding him, rocking them slowly together. "Love."

He nodded and licked at Mike's neck, whispering the word back to him.

"Mmm." His head was stroked, Mike petting him, loving on him.

He purred, sated and happy.

It was good. Damned good.

Worth making a Thanksgiving dinner good, even.

\* \* \* \*

Okay. So.

Hot dogs.

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Buns.

Chili.

Chips.

Twinkies.

Dude.

Mike packed the groceries in his saddlebags, shivering a little in his leather jacket. Man, he liked it being his night to cook.

He hurried home, the rain turning to sleet about halfway there, the traffic hideous and snarly. By the time he made it to the house, he had actually walked Bonzo the last mile, the roads slick enough to be dangerous. Jessy met him on the driveway, mouth tight, eyes worried.

"Your cell phone busted?"

He tilted his head, patting his pockets 'til he found his phone. "Don't have a signal, Coach. Damn, it's slicker than snot out here. I walked the last bit."

"I know, I thought you'd wiped out." Jessy grabbed Bonzo and wheeled her into the garage. "I bet you're an icicle. Go jump in the shower, I'll unload."

"No. I didn't want to risk a bad fall, you know?" His teeth were chattering. "Man, does the news say it's gonna be evil tomorrow?"

"Yeah, next couple three days. Go on. Get warm. Now."

He nodded, hurrying upstairs, stripping as he went. The shower felt good, and he turned the heat up, getting warm all the way through. Jessy eventually joined him, hands sliding over his skin, mouth finding his shoulder and sucking the water from it.

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"Mmm ... Hey. I bought ... uh ... supper stuff.... "He arched, moaning low.

"Is that what you're calling Twinkies these days?"

"That's dessert, man. You said to get something I knew how to cook." He smiled at Jessy. He'd been good. No chocolate. No soda.

"I threw them out. I'll make butterscotch pudding." Jessy's fingers slid over his cheek, caressing.

"You..." He frowned. "But I was *good*."

"Did I say you weren't?"

"Well. No, but you threw our dessert out."

"It's not on your approved foods list, baby, that's all." Jessy chuckled. "Especially when coupled with hot dogs, chili and chips."

"Our other option was fried bologna sandwiches." He tried not to pout. Really. "Can we have whipped cream on the pudding?"

"If we have any—you're not going back out." Jessy licked his lower lip. "I'm definitely going to have to teach you how to cook."

"I do okay. I can order pizza." He rubbed his nose against Jessy's. He didn't think he'd mind cooking, really. He liked doing things.

Jessy laughed and licked his lip again, tongue sliding into his mouth for just a moment. "You're not allowed pizza either, baby."

He chuckled, cuddling close. "Meanie."

"Oh, that doesn't make me a meanie. This," Jessy pinched his ass, "makes me a meanie."

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"No pinching!" He laughed, rolling his eyes. "Be good or no chili dogs for you!"

"Can't have that—how would I ever survive?"

Mike chuckled. "I don't know. You tossed the Twinkies."

Jessy laughed, goosing him. "Brat."

"Yours." He turned the water off, finding them both a towel.

Jessy looked at him for a moment, eyes serious. "Yes. You are."

He smiled, stepped forward for a kiss. "It's our first ice storm. Gonna keep me warm?"

"You know it, baby. You absolutely starving or can I convince you we need a pit stop in the bedroom first?"

"I'm never that hungry..." He shivered a little, tugged Jessy into the bedroom with the big, warm bed.

"Well, not for food anyway," murmured Jessy, pushing him down onto the bed and following.

He wrapped the comforter over Jessy's back, legs wrapped around Jessy's waist. "You're better than food."

"Oh, baby, you do know how to make an old man feel special."

"Hey. My old man. Mine." He held Jessy tight. "You don't be mean."

Jessy chuckled. "Mean? Me? Never."

"No. No, you're not." Jessy was hard, but not mean.

Jessy's hand cupped his chin. "You're one of the first to say so, baby."

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He tilted his head. "You aren't easy sometimes, but you love me. You take care of me." He understood how this worked.

Jessy nodded. "It all rests on you, baby—you're everything. That's a hard truth. My job is to prepare you for that."

Jessy grinned suddenly, the smile seductive. "That, and this, too." Jessy's mouth moved slowly until their lips were touching.

He moaned, fingers sliding on Jessy's cheek, watching those warm eyes.

"Love you, baby."

"I know. Kiss me."

Jessy did, mouth taking his with obvious pleasure. He moaned, lips parting, tongue sliding against Jessy's. Jessy moved against him, tongue dancing with his, teasing and loving and good. They rocked, nice and steady, warm and cozy beneath the blanket.

Jessy whispered into his ear. "Rain, rain, go away..." The words matched the slow, easy movement of their bodies.

"Gonna be ice, Jess. Gonna be an excuse to snuggle tomorrow."

"You don't need an excuse for that, baby."

"No?" He smiled, heated all through. "Good."

Jessy kissed him hard. "No."

Another kiss, hard before it softened, Jessy's hips moving fast, solid on his. Mike arched, rubbing, meeting Jessy's passion head-on. Jessy's fingers slid down his body, going behind his balls and teasing, slick.



Mike nodded. "Yeah. Yeah, please. I want."

Two fingers slid right into him, Jessy going straight for his gland.

"Oh!" He arched up, hips rocking to feel the spark, the rush again.

"Hedonist." The accusation was fond, almost sweet, accompanied by another peg to his gland.

"Uh ... uh-huh." He could be one of those. Sure. Just don't stop.

Jessy slid in another finger, stretching him wide.

Oh...

He stretched, arched. "So full."

"Just wait, baby. It'll be me in a moment."

"Oh. Please. Yes. You."

Jessy's fingers slid out, replaced a moment later by the hard, blunt heat of Jessy's cock. They were still surrounded by the blanket, Jessy stretching him, spreading him wide. Jessy moaned, body moving slow and easy.

Oh, Jessy just warmed him all through.

"Baby, you feel so good."

"You make me warm..." Mike nodded, leaned up for a kiss.

"Not warm, you're hot." Jessy smiled, hips moving, working.

He chuckled, meeting each thrust. "So funny..."

Jessy just purred, fingers of one hand sliding across his nipple.

"Oh..." He nipped Jessy's lip. "More?"

"Yeah, baby." Jessy moved harder, faster, cock pushing into Mike again and again, the fingers teasing his nipple getting more serious, pinching and flicking and rubbing.

Mike reached down, pumping his own cock, driving himself hard.

"So good, baby." Jessy bent and licked at Mike's lips before pushing his tongue in and fucking Mike's mouth.

He arched, balls drawing tight.

Jessy broke the kiss and licked across his lips. "That's it, baby. I want to feel you on my cock."

Oh. Oh. Mike whimpered, bearing down on Jessy's cock, balls emptying.

Jessy groaned. "Yeah. Yeah, baby." Two more thrusts, jerky and hard, and Jessy filled him deep.

He cuddled in, licked Jessy's shoulder. "Gonna have a couple of snow days?"

Jessy chuckled. "Are you trying to con me into canceling practice?"

"They'll close the UT pool if it's too bad." He smiled up.

Jessy shook his head, but he was grinning. "All right, Mike. You can have your snow days. But I expect you to spend them with the old man."

"Like I'd want to spend them with anyone else."

"I don't like to presume." Jessy gave him a wink.

"Especially when I've just tossed away your Twinkies."

"You didn't *really* throw them away, did you? They're fresh." Well, as fresh as Twinkies could be.

"They're nothing but sugar, Mike. I really threw them away."

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"But they really do make the chili dog meal."

"You'll have to learn to live with pudding as the capper to a chili dog meal. Not that you should be eating chili dogs very often."

"Only on the nights I cook."

"That's it; we're spending some of our snow days teaching you what cooking means." Jessy settled next to him, tucking the covers in around them.

He chuckled, nodded. "Whatever you say, Coach."

Jessy purred, snuggled closer. "That's what I like to hear."

"I love you."

Jessy's fingers slid along his belly, stroking and warm.

"You too, baby."

"Mmm." Mike cuddled in, eyes closing, warm. Happy. Right there.

\* \* \* \*

The chili dogs had, predictably, made Mike sick. It had taken a day or two before his swimmer had bounced back and Jessy figured it was long past time the boy learned how to cook a few meals that tasted good, were nutritious, and wouldn't make him sick. He'd decided to start with chicken parmigiana with fettuccini alfredo and garlic bread because it sounded fancy but was actually pretty easy to make. They were going to do peach cobbler for dessert because peaches were cheap and plentiful and it was too easy to screw up.

Mike was at the grocery store, armed with the shopping list.

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Jessy was sitting in his arm chair, watching the lumberjack contest on the Outdoor Life Network. Watching men climb up and then whip back down fifty foot plus poles in under two minutes was good entertainment.

The ice hadn't made it yet, but he'd insisted Mike take the sedan, leave the bike at home. He had to admit, he was more than pleased that Mike had walked the last bit the other night. The kid wasn't foolhardy. Young, but not foolhardy.

Of course, Mike had the credit card and the intent to buy three-days' worth of supplies, just in case.

He wasn't worried though. Much.

And he wasn't looking at his watch to see how long Mike had been.

Of course, he'd been getting regular phone calls.

"Hey, Coach. Are Ding Dongs better than Twinkies?"

"Hey, Coach. What's your stance on bacon?"

"Coach? When you say cream, do you mean Cool Whip?"

No, Ding Dongs were not better than Twinkies. He'd asked Mike to buy a pound cake, and anything wrapped in individual little packages was strictly off-limits. Bacon was full of salt and phosphates and if Mike wanted to clog up his arteries, Jessy could go find a syringe and they'd do a proper job of it, and cream was not and never would be Cool Whip.

"Just stick to the list, baby."

Mike opened the door, arms full of bags, cheeks pink with the cold, eyes shining. "Hey, Coach. I did good. I only got some stuff not on the list, but you didn't have stuff for hot cocoa and we gotta have that, and they had cranberries and I like those and thought we could make muffins, and the

grapes looked good, too. And I bought real popcorn and nuts in the shell."

He chuckled and went to help Mike unload. "Sounds like you did good, baby. I'm going to have you doing the groceries and cooking full-time at this rate."

Mike chuckled. "Maybe together. I *really* wanted a chocolate bar."

"You didn't get one, though, and that's what counts." He bumped hips with Mike, not questioning for a moment whether Mike had or not. The rule was no chocolate, so Mike hadn't had any.

Mike nodded, grabbing a banana and eating it as they put things away. "I rented some movies, too, and bought more toothpaste."

"We're almost out of lube, too."

Mike nodded, blushed dark. "Got razors and shaving cream, too."

He purred, cock going hard. "Gonna let me shave your pubes, Mike?"

He moved in close, hand pushing into Mike's jeans, sliding through the dark curls. "Gonna let me make you smooth all over, baby?" They weren't competing at the moment, but that didn't mean Mike couldn't be bare all over.

Mike nodded, nuzzled, cock jerking into his fingers. "Uh ... Uh-huh..."

Purring, he wrapped his fingers around Mike's cock, squeezing. "I can't wait to taste your skin down here."

"I..." Mike's lips parted, eyes dark and hot. "You make it worth skipping the chocolate..."

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He chuckled, pleased down to his toes. "I do my best, baby."

He started to work Mike's cock, hand hampered by the close quarters inside Mike's pants. Mike started jerking, hips driving that hard cock into his hand. He popped the top button of Mike's jeans open, giving them both more room, but he didn't pull down the zipper.

Mike's hands landed on his shoulders, holding on. "Oh ... I..."

"Yeah, baby. You." He took Mike's mouth, tongue pushing in deep. Mike arched, pulling him in close.

Mike's cock was hot in his hand, and he could smell his lover's need now, sharp and musky. Up on his toes, Mike cried out, bucking, cock swelling. He moaned as Mike's come splashed over his fingers, the scent suddenly strong.

"Oh. I. Wow." Mike blinked, panted.

He chuckled, but his laugh was husky, needy. "Love you, baby."

"Love you." Mike leaned in for another kiss. "Wow."

He grinned. "So. Are you ready to cook?"

"After I wipe up and remember how to walk again, yeah."

"You don't need to walk to cook, baby." He winked and kissed Mike hard, doing the kid's button back up.

"You sure?" Mike groaned, eyes shining. "What are we cooking?"

"Chicken parmigiana with fettuccini alfredo. Peach cobbler for dessert." He smiled and licked Mike's lips. "Sound good?"

"Mmm ... I like peaches..." Mike leaned toward him.

"I know you do, baby." He watched Mike all the time, was learning all the kid's secrets.

"What else do you know?"

"I know you're a sexy, little hedonist with a thing for going fast. Whether it's in the water, on the road, or in bed."

Mike's cheeks went bright red, head ducking. "Yeah."

He laughed, utterly taken by Mike. Like he always was. "All right. Food first, more fucking later."

"Okay. Yeah. Where do I start?" That was his baby, eager to try new things, to learn, to do.

"I like to take out all my ingredients and have them on the counter, so I don't have to go looking for stuff once I've started the cooking process. So for chicken parmigiana you need tomato sauce, grated mozzarella and the chicken breasts." He pulled out the long pan. "You bought the six breasts, right? I like to make extra, then you've got another night's meal without cooking."

"So we're having both sauces? Is that legal?"

"What do you mean, both sauces? Parmigiana is tomato and cheese."

Mike nodded. "But the alfredo's a white stuff, yeah? The one we share over at Venice's?"

He nodded. "That's right. We don't have to make both, but I like it."

"Kay." Mike worked with him, laughing and playing, making the act of cooking more like fun than a chore.

Granted, there was more mess.

More kisses, too, though.

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They got the chicken prepared and into the oven and the alfredo sauce warming up on the stove.

"We just want to put the cobbler together so it's ready to slide into the oven when the chicken comes out. Now, vegetables. What did you get us?" He'd just put "vegetables" down on the list.

"Well, I didn't know which ones, so I got these." A bag of a dozen cans of vegetables—corn, carrots, green beans, peas, three cans of each. "And these." Another bag of frozen vegetables—broccoli and cheese; cauliflower and cheese; potatoes and peas in cream sauce; broccoli, rice, and cheese.

"Oh, these are cool. And if we get stuck here for a few days at least we won't run out of veggies." He took out three cans of vegetables. "We'll have these with tonight's meal. You can put the rest away."

Mike nodded, humming along to some song in his head, putting the last of the things away, looking out the kitchen window. "Man, it looks bleak out there."

"Yeah. A good day to be nice and warm and cuddled inside. Let's get this cobbler ready to go, and we can sack out on the couch and watch a movie while the chicken cooks." He let his eyes drag along Mike's body. "Or something."

Mike grinned, pinked, and put the pan in the oven with a stick of butter. He started skinning peaches, only half paying attention. Mike was extremely distracting. Mike managed to follow the recipe okay and they got the cobbler ready and the timer set, the counters wiped off, the sugar and flour put away.

"So we've got a while before supper, baby. Wanna play?"



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"Uh-huh." Mike pushed into his arms, humming.

"Front room, Mike. I'm too old to be doing it on the kitchen floor."

"Not old. Pushy." Mike rubbed their noses together, eyes warm.

He laughed, grabbed Mike's hand and tugged his lover into the front room, pushing Mike down onto the couch once they got there. "Might as well be hung for a lion as a lamb," he said with a wink, sinking down onto Mike's body.

Mike's arms wrapped around his neck. "Am I the lion or the lamb?"

He laughed. "Oh, I'm the lion and I'm going to eat you right up." Mike's chuckle was low, sweet, delicious.

He took Mike's mouth, tongue pushing in as his fingers pulled the kid's T-shirt out of his jeans, hands sliding over that sweet belly. Mike sucked his tongue, fingers pushing down his spine.

He groaned. Yeah, good. He got Mike's T-shirt up far enough that he could play with those sensitive little nipples, making them push up hard. Mike started wiggling, moaning, nipples hard as little stones. He broke their kiss so he could slide down and lick and suck and bite at Mike's nipples, pushing the T-shirt up over Mike's head.

Mike groaned, hips pushing up against him, rubbing. He pushed back, giving Mike some friction, mouth working those little titties hard.

"So much. Jess. S ... so much."

"Yeah, baby. This? Is everything." He worked Mike's jeans open, groaning as Mike's hot cock pushed against his

stomach. Mike always wanted, always needed more and harder. Always needed him.

He bit one last time at Mike's nipple and kept moving down, licking the sweet abs, finding that navel with his tongue.

Mike chuckled, desperate, little motions easing. "Oh. Jessy. Good."

"I know, baby."

Mike's cock bumped his chin and he turned his head down to lick at the tip, moaning as the taste of his lover exploded across his taste buds.

"Mmm..." Mike's legs spread. "Hot. Your tongue is hot."

He chuckled and took the tip of Mike's cock into his mouth, fingers sliding to play with Mike's balls and then the sweet, soft heat beyond them.

Mike started rocking, slow and easy, just so sweet. He purred, head bobbing as he went up and down on Mike's cock. Mike hummed, hips sliding, sounds filling the air. It was good, and Mike would make the perfect appetizer for supper.

He slid his fingers back and pushed at Mike's hole.

"Oh..." Mike pushed down against his finger, purring.

He chuckled around Mike's cock, pushing his finger in, knowing Mike would be feeling the stretch, the burn. Mike arched, rocking and riding his finger. Little promises and cries filled the air, his baby hungry for him. He sucked harder and pushed a second finger into Mike, searching for the kid's gland. When he found it, Mike bucked, almost knocking them off the sofa.

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Jessy kept pegging it, arm across Mike's waist, holding him down. Mike pushed against his arm, moaning, excitement building. He moved his head up and down, hard and fast, fingers sliding across Mike's gland over and over again.

That's it, baby, he thought, come for me.

Mike squeezed, cried out, cock swelling in his lips before seed splashed on his tongue. He swallowed Mike's come down, taking that sweet, sharp salt into himself, humming. Mike purred, melted into the couch cushions.

He licked Mike clean and then laved the soft balls, loving the taste and the small sounds Mike made. Mike would give him anything, let him taste and touch and explore. Such trust. He spread Mike's legs, licking where his fingers had been, adding wet to the stretching he'd done earlier.

The soft cry split the air. "Jess..."

"Yeah, baby, it's me." He murmured the words and then went back to licking, pushing his tongue into Mike's body.

Mike's heels dug into the couch cushions, long, lean body undulating beneath him. He let Mike do the work, movements of those hips driving Mike on his tongue. Then he moved away, reaching for the lube kept tucked away in the side table, and slicked himself up.

Mike groaned, turned to offer him that fine ass.

"Oh, yeah, baby. You know what I want." He pushed two slick fingers into Mike first, just making sure the kid was good and ready for him.

Mike nodded, pressed back, riding his fingers. He purred, nudged Mike's gland twice and then let his fingers out so he could push his cock into Mike's body. He groaned. So fucking

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tight and hot and good. Mike pushed back, took him in deep, panting.

He moaned as Mike's body held him tight. "Oh, baby, you feel so good."

Mike squeezed, rose up and pushed down. "Yeah..."

He sat back on his haunches, bringing Mike with him, arms wrapping around his lover's chest.

"Oh..." Mike's head fell back, hips just rocking. "So deep."

"Yeah." He nibbled at Mike's shoulder, tongue sliding on the skin he loved to taste. "No better place on earth than right here, baby."

He got a smile, could hear it in the happy little purr. "Yeah."

He chuckled, happy down to his bones. He let one hand drop slowly down to Mike's cock, tugging it easily.

"Mmm..." Mike moved for him, cock filling more slowly, growing hot and hard in his fingers.

"Gonna fly for me again, Mike?" He pressed his thumb into Mike's slit.

That ass gripped him, Mike's cry low and sweet. "Oh!"

He groaned. Yeah, that was it. So fucking good when they worked together.

Mike turned his head, lips open and swollen, begging a kiss. Purring, he brought their mouths together, tongue sliding along the side of Mike's mouth. Mike hummed, moving a little faster, rocking on his prick. He licked inside Mike's mouth, tongue finding Mike's, tangling together with it. Mike reached up and back, holding onto his neck, arching for him.

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"So good, baby. Love you so much." He pushed up as hard as he could, loving Mike with everything he had.

"Yeah. Yeah, Jess. All yours." Mike gasped, moaning low. "Yours."

Yeah, that was right. "Mine, baby. Mine." He punctuated the words with hard thrusts and then ran his teeth over Mike's skin, not enough to mark, just so his baby could feel him there.

"Yeah." The whisper was sweet, low, the feel of Mike rippling around him as come sprayed over his fingers, just perfect.

He held on as long as he could, loving the sensation of Mike's body milking him, and then he shouted, gave it all up, and filled Mike with his spunk. Mike held him, just kept him close and tight. He petted Mike's belly, shoulders and chest, head resting against Mike's back as he fought to catch his breath.

The storm hit as they came down, the ice and sleet slamming into the windows. He curled up around Mike on the couch, pulling an afghan over them.

"So, baby, you like cooking?"

"Uh-huh." Mike nodded, eyes drifting closed. "Like lots of things with you."

"Good. Good." He kissed the soft skin just below Mike's ear. "Don't fall asleep, baby, the food won't take very much longer."

"Mmm ... 'kay..."

He chuckled, fingers stroking Mike's skin and then pinching Mike's hip.

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Mike jerked, frowned, muttered softly. "Ow. Be nice."

His laughter continued, fingers moving up toward Mike's nipples. "Just trying to keep you awake."

Mike burrowed into the cushions, ass wiggling. Jessy rubbed his nose along Mike's neck, fingers pushing, searching out and then pinching Mike's nipple.

"Mean..." Mike drew his arms in, protecting those sensitive, little nubs.

"Am not. You love it." He found and pinched Mike's other nipple.

Mike snorted, going flat. "Napping."

"No napping. You have to keep an ear out for the timer."

"Napping is healthy." Little shit. Jessy could hear the laughter.

"That dinner burns and I'm making you eat it regardless." He pinched Mike's nipple again.

"You're awake. You can hear the timer."

"Brat!"

"Uh-huh."

He laughed and bit Mike's nape. "Just for that I think you should serve dinner naked."

"No way. I would freeze." Mike wiggled again, playing with him.

"Then behave." He rolled his groin against Mike's ass.

"I was behaving. I was sleeping." Mike rubbed back.

"But I told you not to sleep." It didn't matter that they were talking in circles, what mattered was the way they were making each other feel, the way they were enjoying each

other. And he was enjoying Mike very much, cock struggling to get hard again, his baby such an inspiration.

"But we're having a break. You said." Mike chuckled, stretched beneath him.

"Yes, but I also said no napping." He nipped at Mike's earlobe. "You can't just pay attention half the time."

"I pay attention all the time, but you're not Coach right now, not the boss."

"Not the boss! I thought I was always the boss."

"Nope. Not the boss. Just Jessy."

"Oh, I'm crushed." He had to fight his laughter, but he managed it.

"Uh ... Jess? I'm the one on the bottom..." Mike's laughter bubbled out, body shaking with it.

He slapped Mike's ass, his own laughter making his aim sloppy. "Brat!"

"Yours."

He purred, warm all through. "Yeah, baby. Mine."

He might have started something more at that point, but the timer went off in the kitchen. "Sounds like supper is ready."

"Cool." Mike grinned. "Let's go eat. It smells good."

"It does. I think you did a fabulous job. And now you don't have an excuse to be making chili dogs with Twinkies for dessert." He followed Mike out after slipping on his jeans and shirt, sat at the counter to let Mike dish up.

"I like chili dogs." Mike cleaned up, slipped on a sweat suit from the laundry room. "They just sure didn't like me yesterday."

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"That'll be because you're eating good food now—your body keeps expecting that."

"But how does that work?" Mike handed him a full plate, then fixed another. "There's meat and tomatoes in chili, meat and tomatoes in this."

"Hamburger meat and hotdogs are not the same as chicken breast to start with. And you had onions all over yours."

"Onions are vegetables." Mike didn't have as much alfredo, but he took almost all the green beans.

"They're a spice." He stole a few of Mike's beans.

"Nope. Vegetables." Mike drank his milk, dug in happily. He chuckled and had a taste himself. "Oh, this is excellent, baby—you did an awesome job."

He got a pleased, little smile, a nod. "It's good."

"I'm going to look forward to the nights it's your turn to cook now," he teased.

Mike rolled his eyes. "Right. We should learn to make stew. I like stew. And chicken soup, but only from the can."

"I can teach you how to make stew. Not too many potatoes, though—I don't want it getting too heavy on you."

Mike had to keep his meals fairly light, especially when he was practicing flat-out.

"I like the beans best and the little barleys." Mike met his eyes. "I'm not going to get fat, Coach. I work out *all* the time."

He nodded, serious now. "It's got nothing to do with fat, Mike. Some foods make your body sluggish, others, like pizza, don't give you the nutrition you need and are heavy on



your stomach. That's why you used to throw up all the time." Coaching was his arena, he knew what he was doing. "How many times have you thrown up eating the food I make you eat?"

"Not hardly at all, after the first few days." The fact was, Mike's stomach was just twitchy and handled the steady influx of calories from juices much better than a heavy calorie dump. He couldn't believe the kid used to throw up three and four times a week and thought it was normal. The more frequent meals were doing wonders for Mike's stamina, for helping to deal with the constant little things life threw. "Maybe not at all."

Jessy nodded. "I know a lot of people think I'm a hardass. Hell, I *am* a hardass. But I take care of you, Mike. That's my job. And I'm damned good at it."

Mike nodded. "It's just weird, Coach. I mean, the guys have beers and pizza and Coach Samuels just chuckles. I do what you say, you know? I just sometimes don't *get* it."

"Yeah, but none of them are fast like you are, Mike. None of them are going to shine like you are."

"And if they followed your program, would they?"

"They'd do better than they will on the UT team, yeah. But none of them have your natural talent and your love of the water. Let's face it, Mike, I help a little, but you're born to this. It's yours just for the taking."

Mike ate some more, quiet. "Did you know my folks, Coach?"

He nodded. They'd spoken about it briefly before, but it was natural for Mike to come back to it. "A little. I was behind

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them a few years, but anyone who was swimming when they were has seen them. Your mother..." He shook his head. "I've only ever seen one person move through the water like she did."

"Yeah?" Mike was basically done, just picking now, playing with the food. "I never saw her race. Who?"

He smiled, reached out to stroke Mike's cheek. "You, baby."

Mike smiled, eyes just gleaming. "Yeah? You think ... You think they'd think I was good? You think they'd be proud?"

"I do, Mike. If they were alive, your father would be coaching you. He'd be an even harder ass than I am. Man didn't have the talent your mother did, but he was disciplined. Damn."

"I don't remember that about him, but he was a coach and traveling. I remember him being upset that Mom started smoking, though. He bought her a car to get her to stop."

Jessy chuckled. "Did it work?" He'd bet no, based on the time he'd been at the same venues they had.

Mike shook his head. "She didn't when he was home, but when he left ... I think she was lonely without him."

"That's a shame. She had you, though." He bet Mike was a real cute kid.

"Yeah. We had fun. We swam a lot. I look like her. My dad? Way wide and muscle-y. His speed? All strength."

Jessy nodded. He remembered that. "You're stronger than you look though, Mike. You've a share of his strength in you, as well as her innate ability. If they had a breeding program

for swimming, they couldn't have made a better choice than the two of them. I'm just lucky to be able to coach you."

"I don't know that Pop would have liked me being gay. I'm pretty sure he wouldn't have wanted me to fall in love with my coach." Mike winked. "Mom? She'd have been cool."

He laughed softly. "I'm glad you fell in love with your coach, baby. I'm glad for that every single day, even though I know it complicates things."

Mike smiled. "Not for me. It's the easiest thing ever."

"I thought swimming was the easiest thing ever," he teased.

He got a serious look. "No. No, loving you happened without me even knowing I needed it. I learned to need the water."

He was suddenly warm all through. "Come here, baby," he ordered brusquely, pulling Mike into his arms and holding him close.

Mike cuddled right in, the soft sound purely happy. He purred, burying his face in Mike's neck and breathing the scent in. Mike's fingers stroked his hair, petted, loved him.

"I should do the dishes so we can have cobbler." His face remained buried in Mike's neck, though. Fuck, he loved this kid. With everything he was.

"Mmm ... Hold me a minute more and we'll do them together."

"That's a deal I can't possibly turn down."

So he just held on, just breathing Mike in, feeling Mike's heart beating against his own chest.

## Chapter Six

The house smelled great; turkey and pie and potatoes and green beans and rolls. The food had been yummy, both of them grazing instead of eating one huge meal. The best part was after, though. The two of them curled in comfy clothes under the blanket.

They'd been watching movies, dozing, cuddling. Just *being* there.

If they could do this in the water? Mike thought that would be absolutely perfect.

Jessy was snoring softly, arm draped around his waist. Sleeping during the scariest part of *The Ring*. Still, it was warm, close, Jessy's lips on the back of his neck. Sweet.

Jessy shifted, murmuring and stroking his belly. Mike moaned, ass rubbing back a little. Felt good.

Jessy purred, pressing against him. "Oh, baby ... you do make waking up a good thing."

"Mmm ... you're warm." He brought one of Jessy's hands up, kissed the knuckles.

Jessy turned his hand, fingers sliding along Mike's lips. "You're warm, too. Mmm. And something smells like pie."

"Mmm ... pie." He nibbled a little. "It smells great in here."

"It does. We did good. Happy Thanksgiving, baby." Jessy licked his neck. "Oh, now you taste even better than it smells in here."

"You're just not used to me without chlorine." He smiled, pleased all through, just stupid in love.

Jessy licked again. "No, I don't think that's it."

"No?" He leaned forward, giving Jessy more skin.

Jessy hummed and started nibbling, licking and tasting each shoulder, his shoulder blades, several inches along the line of his spine. "No. It's just you, baby. With or without chlorine."

His blush was going to set him on fire. "Oh. Thank you."

"No, thank you, baby. You've given me a reason to celebrate Thanksgiving."

Mike wasn't sure if that was sad or beautiful. He turned to face Jessy, eyes searching his lover's. "You have to have had other lovers, people who made you feel good."

"No one's ever made me feel like you do, baby. Ever."

"I just love you." He took a kiss, smiled. "When did you know you wanted me?"

"Almost from the start. You were ... everything I ever wanted in a lover, in a swimmer." Jessy shrugged, gave him a smile. "If I could have built you from scratch you're what you would have been."

Oh. He buried his face in Jessy's throat, heart pounding. Oh.

Jessy hummed, hands sliding along his back. "That doesn't mean I'm not going to ride your ass again on Monday. Or that you can have chocolate."

"You said I could have chocolate pecan pie on Christmas."

Beside, Jessy was going away for Christmas. He could indulge.

"On Christmas Day. But that's it." Jessy growled for him.

He chuckled. "You won't even be here. I could have a Dr. Pepper party."

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"I thought you were coming home with me?"

"I am?" They'd talked about it, sort of, but he didn't know if he could. What if everybody hated him?

"I'm not leaving you here by yourself for Christmas, baby. If you don't want to come home with me, I'll stay here with you."

"I don't want you to miss your family, Jess." He lifted his face for a kiss.

Jessy's kiss was soft, full and rich. "Then come with me."

"What if they hate me?"

"They aren't going to hate you, baby."

"You sure?" He hummed, licked and nibbled at Jessy's lips.

"I'm sure." Jessy's mouth covered his, tongue pushing in as he was rolled onto his back, Jessy lying on him.

Mike just melted, Christmas and pie and everything fading away. Purring, Jessy plundered his mouth, took everything he was and made it Jessy's. His world spun, hips rocking up against Jessy, lips open and eager. Jessy moaned, pushing back, pushing him into the couch.

Mike panted, unable to get a full breath, cock going full as they rubbed. Jessy kept kissing him, kept devouring his mouth, weight solid and heavy on him. Little groans and moans filled the air, warmth becoming heat, heat becoming need.

"So fucking sexy, Mike." Jessy's arm slid to rest against his throat, blue eyes glittering down at him. "I've been watching you, baby."

"Watching me?" His heart pounded, his eyes trapped by Jessy's.

"I see what you do in the pool when you jack off," Jessy murmured, arm pressing just a little, not cutting off his breath, but the threat was there. The promise.

His eyes went wide, cheeks flaring, filling with a mixture of worry and need. "I ... I didn't think anyone ... I..."

"I see everything you do, baby." Jessy brought their lips back together, the touch gentle, almost not there. There was no censure in the blue eyes, only love and heat. "I can give you what you want, baby. What you need." That arm across his throat pressed a little harder, making him struggle for each breath.

He whimpered, hands trembling as they slid over Jessy's shoulders. God, he was scared, hard. Needing. His heart was racing, eyes wide, so close, just from the threat.

"You like this, baby?" Jessy asked, licking at his lips, hips pushing against his, pushing his ass into the couch.

His lips parted and he found himself nodding, meeting Jessy's eyes. "It's okay?"

"As long as no one gets hurt there isn't anything that isn't okay, baby." Jessy tightened the pressure a little, cutting his breath off further.

He arched, body responding, needing this, needing more.

"So sexy," murmured Jessy, free hand finding his cock, stroking it.

Oh.

Oh-oh-oh.

He grunted, hips bucking, eyes just rolling.

"That's it, baby. Just go with it, feel it."

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His eyes rolled, pushing hard against Jessy's hand, balls drawing tight. Fuck. Yes. Yes. Jessy moaned, hand tugging his cock hard, arm pressing harder across his throat, really cutting off his air now. He came hard, entire body bucking, flailing beneath Jessy's weight, world greying out.

When the colors came back again, Jessy was next to him, curled around him. Jessy's long fingers stroked his skin, soft kisses dropping on his face. Mike buried his face in Jessy's throat, feeling so exposed. He'd never told anyone. Never. Never intended to.

"Oh, baby, I love you so much." Jessy's hands just kept touching, kept holding him.

"Love you." He held on tight, letting Jessy surround him.

"You better." Jessy chuckled, hands sweeping over him.

"You better."

"You ... you don't think I'm sick?"

Jessy felt his forehead with the back of one hand. "You haven't got a fever, baby." Mike was given a wink and then Jessy shook his head, blue eyes holding his. "No, baby. I don't think you're sick."

"I never told anybody. Never."

"You didn't have to tell me, baby. I watch you. I know you. And I love you."

He nodded, lifted his face for a kiss, moaning low when he got it. Love. Jessy's hands held his face, licking at his mouth, tasting him thoroughly. Yes. Moaning, purring, he opened, offered Jessy anything, everything.

"You're mine, baby," Jessy murmured, rubbing against him, cock hard, leaking. His Jessy wanted him.



"Yours. All of me. Yours."

"That's right, baby. Mine. All of you. All of it. All of it."

Jessy kissed him hard. "Everything."

Mike spread, legs wrapping around Jessy's hips. "Yes."

"Need you, baby. So badly."

"Yours. Take me." He felt like he was flying, soaring.

Jessy reached up for the lube, slicking his fingers and pushing them in deep.

"Oh..." He pushed back, riding the burn, the stretch.

"More."

"So hungry, baby." Another finger pushed into him, spread him.

"Yes ... Yes. You make me need." His shoulders left the cushions, entire body rocking.

"Gonna take care of your need, baby. Gonna fuck you so deep."

"Please. Want to feel you." He needed it, needed Jessy.

Jessy purred, fingers sliding away, leaving him cold and empty. But only for a moment, then Jessy's cock was pushing into him, sliding deep. He bucked, taking Jessy deep, muscles going tight.

"Oh, baby. Yes." Jessy started fucking him right away, long, hard strokes that felt like Jessy was going for the gold.

He nodded, bucking into the thrusts. "Jessy! Yes."

Jessy just kept fucking him, eyes glittering down at him, watching him. Seeing him. Mike threw his head back, hips moving wildly, pushing them. Jessy growled, pushed into him again and again.

He demanded, took, gave ... anything, as long as Jessy wouldn't stop. Jessy didn't stop, didn't slow down, just kept thrusting into him, filling him.

"Yes." He bucked, hands gripping Jessy's ass, pulling him deep.

"Baby..." Jessy groaned, arms starting to shake.

"Yes." He squeezed, gripping Jessy's cock as hard as he could.

Jessy cried out, jerking into him, filling him with seed. It was almost as good as his own orgasm, watching Jessy come. Those blue eyes went dark, sightless, reflecting his own face back at him. At last Jessy relaxed against him, seeming boneless.

He held on tight, purring, the scent of sex heady and rich. Perfect.

\* \* \* \*

Jessy had been watching Mike, waiting for the right time to test his theory about Mike's ... unique needs. And he'd been right. In spades. The look on Mike's face as he'd come, gasping for breath had been ... nothing short of amazing.

It seemed he was as turned on by doing it and watching as Mike was by having it done.

He'd ordered a collar a few weeks ago. Had it waiting upstairs, waiting for him to confirm what he knew. Waiting for Mike to be ready for him to know.

They'd gone to UT for practice, eaten on their way back home. He turned to Mike as he unlocked the door. "I have something for you, baby."

"For me?" Mike smiled, looking relaxed and happy, dark eyes shining.

"Yeah. Well, I guess it's for both of us." He winked.  
"Upstairs. In the bedroom."

"Cool." Mike had finally stopped sleeping in the little bedroom he'd started in, both of them using the room for storage.

He stopped Mike, gave him a kiss. "I'll lock up and meet you in there."

"kay." Mike bounced up the stairs, whistling Christmas carols, almost laughing.

Jessy chuckled and locked the door, wondering if Mike would open the box on their bed. Wondering if Mike would know what the leather collar was for. He heard the water start running, Mike brushing his teeth, washing his hands. His water-baby. If the kid only had gills, he'd live in the water full-time.

Grinning, Jessy headed up the stairs.

The box had been moved, but not opened, Mike coming out of the bathroom half-dressed as Jessy walked in. "What's in the box, Jess?"

"That's your gift, baby. Go on and open it. I hope you like it."

"Early Christmas?" Mike bounced on the bed, opened it, one eyebrow lifting. "A dog collar?"

He chuckled. "No, baby. It's not even a traditional slave collar. It's got one very specific purpose. You see how the closure is easy tighten, even easier release?"

Mike played with it, nodding, frowning for a second, before those black eyes went wide.

He grinned. "Exactly."

Mike swallowed hard. "You. I. I. It'll be weird, doing it on purpose. Planning it." Those fingers kept stroking the leather, petting it.

"Will it?" He leaned in and licked at Mike's neck. "Or will it make it better? More exciting?"

"I. Oh. I don't know." Mike might not have known, but his body did, flushed and hot.

"Put it on, baby." His body knew, too, his cock growing hard in his pants.

Mike's hands were shaking, sweaty, finally managing to get the collar around his neck.

He reached over, slipped the leather end into the fastener. "You tighten it, baby."

Mike tightened it a little, then a little more.

Purring, Jessy went slowly to his knees, opening Mike's jeans and pulling them down. His lover's prick was hard, leaking. He looked up Mike's body, licking his lips, eyes on the collar.

"Wh ... what do you want me to do?"

"I'm going to suck you. What you do with the collar is up to you, baby." He reached up and tugged on a nipple, licking at the tip of Mike's cock.

"Oh..." Mike shifted, eyes going sultry, heavy-lidded, fingers playing with the collar.

"Mmm ... so sexy, baby." He licked again and then circled the head of Mike's cock, sucking.

"Jessy..." Mike shifted, toes curling into the carpet, fingers tightening the collar, just a little.

He hummed around Mike's cock, sliding down on it. Mike moaned and watched him, hips rocking up, pushing into his throat. He hummed, sucking harder, taking Mike in deep. Mike's head fell back, throat working, fingers tightening the collar again.

His own head bobbed over Mike's cock, eyes glued to his lover's face, to the look on Mike's face.

Mike's cheeks were pink, flushed, eyes huge and desperate. "G ... gonna. S ... s ... s ... soon."

Yes. Yes, Mike. Do it. He hummed and pulled harder, fingers sliding up to tweak again at one hard, little nipple.

Mike twisted his fingers in the collar, tightening it, hips jerking steadily.

So hot. So sexy.

Spunk filled his mouth, Mike relaxing back on the mattress, fingers sliding free. He swallowed Mike down completely, fingers reaching up to make sure the collar was loose. It was, Mike moaning and breathing easily.

He kissed his way up Mike's body, his own prick hard, needy. Mike moaned, hands sliding up his arms.

"So sexy, baby. I want you." He pushed Mike's legs back, nudged that sweet hole with his cock.

Mike nodded, spread, the collar still black against that long throat. He pushed in, moaning as Mike's tight heat swallowed him up.

"Oh. Oh, yes." Mike nodded, hips sliding and bucking, riding his cock.

"Yes," he growled, pushing hard.

Mike took his hand, brought it up to the collar. "Please."

He tightened the strap, making it snug. "Good? Or you need more, baby?"

"Oh. Oh, more." Mike's ass was so tight around him.

He tightened the collar, watching as Mike started to fight for breath. He could feel it, around his cock, in Mike's muscles. He started to thrust, cock sliding slowly inside Mike's body as he watched his lover's dark eyes. Mike was lost in their lovemaking, moving, undulating, feeling.

He reached out to tighten the collar a little bit more and then moved faster, harder. Mike groaned, hips grinding, eyes just rolling.

"So sexy, baby," he murmured, shifting slightly to find Mike's gland.

Mike convulsed, hands reaching for headboard, lips moving, forming the word 'more.' Groaning, he reached up to tighten the collar further, watching the pleasure in Mike's face. Mike jerked, body fighting for breath, ass milking him, the sensation maddening. He slid his fingers around one of Mike's nipples, tugging, pinching.

Heat sprayed from Mike, entire body tight and hungry, flying. Roaring, he followed Mike over, jerking into that sweet body a few times before his seed pushed from him into Mike. He collapsed onto Mike, gasping, fingers hitting the quick release to free his lover's throat.

Mike groaned, melting into the mattress. He slid out of the sweet heat and curled around his baby, stroking the fine skin.

Mike cuddled into him. "Jess..."

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"Yeah, baby. That was pretty good, wasn't it?"

"Uh-huh." Mike nodded, just humming.

He chuckled, stroked Mike's skin. "Christ, that looks good on you, baby."

"Hmm? What does?"

"Pleasure, baby."

Mike smiled, sliding and rubbing against him like a lazy cat. He stroked Mike, fingers moving over pleasure damp skin.

"Love you..." Mike cuddled in, eyes blinking slow, still passion-drugged.

"I love you, baby. Lots."

Mike nodded, hand sliding over his waist.

He held Mike close. The collar had definitely been a good idea.

Now to see what his swimmer thought of all the plugs.

## Chapter Seven

Wow. The US Open.

Wow.

He didn't belong here.

Not yet.

But Jessy insisted, so they got on a plane and signed up and shit and here he was.

With famous guys.

And he just *knew* he was going to get a cold. He could feel it in the back of his throat, in his joints.

Maybe it was nerves.

Maybe it was bad luck.

Maybe it was fate saying he didn't belong here.

Jessy's hands landed on his shoulders, rubbing. "You're not thinking about the wall, Mike."

"How do you know?" How did he always know?

Jessy chuckled. "Body language."

"You know I can't beat these guys, right? You won't be upset?"

"I don't want you to beat them. I want you to beat yourself."

He chuckled at the thought. "Perv."

Coach snorted. "Brat. Now you focus on the wall. I expect a lot of personal bests here, Mike. The US Open? This is where you push yourself to do your best."

Mike nodded. Yeah. He knew. He also knew no cold meds, no sinus meds. No failing the drug tests. No caffeine. No chocolate. No pizza. No nothing.



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Not even sex.

Or advanced snuggling.

Why was he swimming again?

Coach's breath was warm against his neck, his ear. "The wall, Mike." The words were little more than a growl and he was given a slap across his ass.

"Right." He jumped, blushing dark. "Hardass."

"You know it."

Coach stayed with him, rubbing his shoulders, until they announced the first heat of the men's two hundred freestyle. "The wall, Mike."

Mike nodded. "Yeah."

He shrugged out of his jacket. The wall. Yeah. He could do that.

The smell of the chlorine sort of eased him somehow, cleared his sinuses, and he got up on the blocks, lane three. Ready to swim.

The buzzer sounded and he dove in. He pushed hard, forcing himself to give everything and then a little more. It was just a heat, but they only took the top two for the finals and...

The wall, Mike.

The fucking wall.

He took the first turn and pushed on, focusing on it now, not thinking of anything except getting to the wall faster than he ever had before. He could hear Jessy's voice in his head, urging him on.

Second turn. Third and home. Hit the wall. Do it. Come on. Fuck.

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He did, breathing so hard he couldn't even see, couldn't think.

The crowd wasn't huge on this first day, but it made a lot of noise as he hit the last wall, popping up to look at the numbers. Holy fuck—he'd taken second place and a personal best at that.

Dude.

He'd made the finals.

He pulled himself out of the water, Jason from the next lane clapping him on the back. "Great race, man."

He found Coach, Jessy's face beaming at him. He was given two thumbs up, Coach staying back just a bit, letting him accept the congratulations of the other swimmers.

Brandon, a veteran on the national team who'd taken first place, came up to him and shook his hand. "Good race, kid."

"Thanks." He blushed, nodded. "Congratulations."

"You too, man. See you in the finals."

Coach and Coach Samuels came up to him, each clapping him on a shoulder. He grinned, not sure exactly what to say, what to do, because, wow.

Just wow.

Coach laughed. "Well done, Mike. Let's go get your warm-up suit back on you. The 200 butterfly heats go in four hours and you need to be ready."

Coach Samuels shook his head. "Give the kid a few minutes to celebrate, Jessy."

"He can celebrate in his warm-up suit as well as he can without it. He's got a lot more racing to do in this meet."

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Mike grinned, got himself warm and cozy again, headphones back on, Coach's hand on his shoulder, leading him away from the crowds.

They found a quiet corner and Coach smiled at him, blue eyes shining with love and pride. "That was amazing, Mike. You flew, just flew. If you'd not been distracted that first length, you might even have won it."

He grinned, shook his head. "You *always* know."

"It's my secret power." Coach gave him a wink. "Once you got going, though, Mike, you were amazing. That congratulations from Brandon was well-deserved."

"Thanks. Felt pretty good. Finals are tomorrow, right?" He didn't think he could fight the cold until Sunday night.

"For the freestyle. Butterfly's not until Saturday. And if you make the 200 that'll be Sunday."

"Kay." He nodded. He'd just do his best and hold on.

"This time next year you'll be doing six or seven races, but I think we made the right choice in letting you get your feet wet slowly on this." He realized suddenly that Coach was practically bouncing.

Mike grinned. "No more coffee for you."

"It's not the caffeine, Mike, it's you. You're here. Doing it." Coach gave him another grin and squeezed his shoulder. "I'm so proud of you."

"Yeah? I did okay?" He shook his head. "It doesn't seem real."

"Give it time. Besides, you need to race again, so not focusing on this one's a good idea. The wall." Coach winked.

"Right. The wall. What do you want to go do? We have four hours."

"Sightsee, light meal, back to the hotel for a massage. Your choice, Mike."

"I don't want to eat." He'd throw up. "Massage sounds good."

Coach nodded. "My magic hands are at your disposal."

"Cool." They headed up the stairs to the hotel. Coach had gotten them a room right next to the pool, nice and close.

Coach stopped to ask the front desk for some yogurt and ginger ales to be delivered, and then that hand was back on his shoulder, guiding him to the elevators. The heat in the room was on, making everything toasty and cozy.

Coach pulled the covers off the bed. "Strip."

"Bossy." He pulled his clothes off, sniffing a little, rubbing the end of his nose.

"It's in the job description." He got a wink and a look. "You need to eat right this week, Mike."

"Huh?" How on earth could he eat better?

"Lots of protein. Chicken soup. You're eating that yogurt, hungry or not."

He wrinkled his nose. He could eat yogurt, but he didn't really like it.

"You're not getting sick this year," growled Coach, as if he could ward off the cold just through sheer will.

"I'm not?" He stretched out on the bed, cuddling in.

"Nope." Jessy straddled his ass, fingers starting to work on his shoulders. "I'm not letting you."

"Oh. Okay." He moaned, relaxing into the mattress.  
"Good."

"I know." That was Coach, confident and sure.  
He nodded, eyes closing. "Gonna melt me."

"That's the idea, relax you so you can go out there and find that wall."

He nodded. "It felt good. The first race."

"Yeah? You looked fantastic. Just flying. I saw some of the other coaches noticing you. They'll be watching you the rest of the Open."

His eyes flew open. "Why? You ... You're not ... I mean, I don't want another coach."

"Oh, I'm not planning on going anywhere, baby. But that doesn't mean someone won't make you an offer you can't refuse." Jessie's hands kept working his muscles. "I don't think someone with a team can give you the same kind of personal attention I can, but I'm not handing out cars or college educations either."

"I..." He shook his head. "No. No, I want to be with you."

"You should be with whoever's gonna support you the most, baby."

Tension filled him, building from deep inside. Oh. Okay. He nodded, eyes closing again. What if ... What if this was Jessie's way of saying it was time to move on. What if Jessie saw someone else? What if...

And Coach knew, just like he always did. "Baby, I am not planning on letting anyone be a better coach for you than me. I just need you to know that in the end that decision is yours."

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"No one will be. You ... You're my coach." His lover. His heart.

Jessy's mouth touched the back of his neck. "I am, baby. And more."

"Yeah. You ... I love you, Jess. Nobody can offer better."

"I'll make sure you never regret that, baby."

"Never will." He relaxed again, took a deep breath.

Jessy nuzzled his neck a moment and then shifted down his body, fingers working the muscles of his ass. "Now I want you to focus on the wall."

"Yeah. The wall. Right." He nodded, really relaxing, not thinking, not worrying.

"That's it, baby. Just enjoy it. Massage from your lover, swimming. What more could a guy ask for?"

Mike grinned. "Pizza."

Jessy laughed. "After the meet's over, baby."

"Yeah. I did my personal best. I get pizza. Go me." He chuckled. "Maybe ... maybe I'll make more than one final."

"There's no reason you can't, baby." Jessy was working his legs now, fingers pushing in. "But I want you thinking about the wall."

"Right. Wall." He spread, breath slowing, imagining himself in the water, heading for the wall.

"That's it, baby. You can do it."

He nodded. Yeah. Yeah, he could.

Maybe.

Maybe he did belong here.

\* \* \* \*

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Mike hadn't qualified for the butterfly, but he'd swum another personal best and Jessy figured this would light a fire under the kid's butt to work his least favorite stroke a little harder. Today's race was a final. The 200 freestyle. Mike had a chance. An honest-to-God fucking chance.

Jessy was nervous as hell, rubbing Mike's shoulders, pretending to be calm and easy. "The wall," he murmured, more for his own sake than Mike's this time out.

Mike nodded, rubbed the tip of his nose for the eightieth time. The kid looked like Rudolph. "Yep. The wall. I'm in the seventh lane. I don't like the seventh lane."

"Baby, the wall is the same no matter which lane you're in."

"I know. I know." Mike nodded. "Is it time yet?"

He chuckled. Mike was like a kid asking if they were there yet every two minutes. "Relax. It'll be—" He was interrupted by the announcer calling the race over the PA system. "Yeah, baby, it's time."

"Cool." Those dark eyes met his. "I'll do my best."

"That's all I ask, baby." It was all he ever asked, but it was what he expected, too. Nothing but Mike's best.

Mike handed Jessy headphones and jacket, putting on his cap and padding over, looking good. Strong. Lean.

He didn't think Mike would medal; they took fifth in the 200. Hopefully they'd do as well here. He managed not to pace, but his hands were balled into fists.

This was the hardest part.

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

The watching. The waiting. The not being able to do a damned thing but throw all his support mentally to his swimmer.

Mike arched into the water, getting good time off the starting block, looking fine. Looking focused.

Jessy nodded, grinning as Mike hit the wall and turned, less than a second off the front runners. The longer they raced, the faster Mike would get, as long as all his swimmer focused on was that wall.

"Come on, baby. Come on."

Mike struggled through the first fifty, just like before. Mike needed that first fifty to focus, still, but then. Damn. Look at his boy go.

After the second turn he changed his mind. Mike was going to do better than fifth. His swimmer might even medal on this one. Christ. "Go, Mike!"

Mike was still in fourth at the third turn, trailing one of the USC boys by half a body length. Mike came off the wall like a man possessed, pouring all he was into the last fifty, eating up the yards. Sure enough, Mike had enough speed and enough room, moving up, making up the distance.

Jessy roared as loud as anyone as Mike's hand touched the wall a moment before the fourth place swimmer.

Bronze.

At his first Open.

Fucking sweet.

Mike's eyes were wide, huge, face as red as a beet.



Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

Jeff was hooting beside him. "Hell, yes. That's the way. Jessy, that boy ever swims a decent first fifty, nothing'll stop him."

"Give him a year, Jeff." He grinned over and then looked back at Mike, all his attention on his swimmer.

Mike's eyes met his, all lit up, shining. "Personal best!"

He chuckled, nodded. Yeah. Personal fucking best.

Mike pulled himself out of the pool, sneezing twice as he did, that smile not fading a bit.

Jessy watched the other swimmers congratulating his boy, gave them a few minutes, but then he was striding in to give Mike a big hug. "You did it! Bronze. At your first Open. Good for you."

"Yeah? You're happy?" Mike grinned at him. "I did good?"

He laughed. "What do you think?"

"I think so." Mike laughed. "Pizza for me!"

He nodded, grinning wide. "As much as you can eat."

"Cool." Mike was bouncing, just absolutely floating.

He backed away a bit, giving the UT kids and other swimmers room to congratulate Mike, letting his baby bask.

Jeff came back up to him, grinning. "When are you both going back? I thought I'd take all the team out. Let UT spoil them rotten."

"You can ask him, but I did promise him a pizza if he won."

Jeff nodded, headed over to talk to Mike, the guys. Mike's head shook, his swimmer chuckling and pointing over at him. He gave Jeff a grin and smiled at Mike. The kid had a good head on his shoulders, knew what was important, knew he didn't have to turn a celebration into throwing up.

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

Jeff shook his head, patted Mike's shoulder, then frowned. "Your swimmer's running a fever, Jessy."

"Just need some dayquil, Coach."

"Chicken soup and a hot shower. He claims he gets sick every winter." Jessy was going to break that cycle.

Jeff nodded. "His aunt told me that. Said as soon as the season was up and the pressure was off? Pneumonia city. Happens with a lot of them."

Jessy nodded. "Doesn't have to, though."

Mike chuckled, nose wrinkling. "Come on, Coach. You owe me a pizza."

"I do. You earned it." He nodded to Jeff and the UT team. "Good job out there today, boys. Mike wasn't the only one who swam personal bests."

A number of hands raised, pinkie and index fingers raised. "Hook 'Em Horns!"

Chuckling, he returned the symbol and then put his hand on Mike's back. "Come on. The pizza's getting cold."

"That's for breakfast." Mike grinned as the rest of the guys nodded and laughed, everyone heading to leave or change.

He waited for Mike to change. "You want to go to a pizza place or have it delivered?"

Mike sneezed again. "Can I have a Dr. Pepper either way?"

He laughed. "No."

"Then delivered, I guess." Mike grinned. "Pizza places are overrated."

He leaned past Mike to open the door. "Well you can't fuck in them," he murmured.

Mike blushed, grinned. "No. No you can't."

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

He chuckled. "I know what you want."

Those dark eyes danced over at him. "Yeah?"

"Oh, yeah, baby."

He got a grin, a low chuckle. "Come feed me."

"To start with." He winked and headed for the elevators.

Mark followed, sneezing a couple times, sniffing.

"Gotta do something about that cold, baby. You're not keeping it."

"Kay." Mike nodded, agreeing, not even really listening to him.

He took that chin and looked into those dark eyes. "You're not getting sick, baby. It's not on the agenda."

Mike blinked up. "You can't just wish a cold away."

"Why not?"

"Well ... Uh ... 'Cause germs don't care?"

"Your body does, though. You own it. You keep it healthy. Will-power isn't everything, baby, but it's something."

"Do you think I do it on purpose?" Mike almost looked hurt. "I don't like being sick every Christmas, you know."

"Oh, baby, I'm not saying you do, but you've come to expect it now. It's Christmas, it's time to be sick. And, hey, if you're sick, you won't have to pay attention to the fact it's the anniversary of your parents' death."

Shocked eyes met his, eyebrows drawing into a frown. "I ... It's not about that."

"No?" He let Mike into their room. "Maybe not consciously."

"I'm going to take a shower, get cleaned up."

"Not talking about it won't make it just go away, baby."

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

"There's nothing to talk about. They died. I didn't." Mike headed for the bathroom, arms around his belly.

He sighed. Christ, this was not how he wanted to celebrate Mike's victory. He put off ordering the pizza and followed Mike into the bathroom. The music was playing, Mike stripped bare, standing under a hard, hot spray.

Jessy stripped himself and turned the music down, but not off, letting Mike know that he was there and that they were going to talk. Mike sighed once, but didn't turn him away, didn't say anything. It made him proud, that Mike let him in, even for this.

He wrapped Mike in his arms, letting the water sluice over them both. Mike leaned back into his arms, just like that. He held on, hands stroking, offering comfort and love. Mike's tension faded completely, eyes closing, breath coming slow and steady. He picked up the soap and started to wash Mike, making it a pseudo massage.

"Mmm ... I got a medal, Coach. At a big meet."

"Yeah, baby. And you swam a whole lot of personal bests. I am damned proud of you."

"Thank you. We're good together."

He purred, rubbing his cock along Mike's. "We sure are."

Mike nodded, stepped closer.

"Oh, yeah." He rubbed them together some more.

Mike's cheek came to rest on his shoulder, lips on his throat. Moaning, he slid his hands over Mike's back, down to the kid's perfect ass so he could pull them still closer together.

"Mmm..." Mike's face lifted for a kiss.

Humming, he gave it freely, licking his way into Mike's mouth.

"Oh..." Mike arched, pushing closer, skin hot and slick against him.

"So sexy, baby." Jessy pushed Mike up against the tiles, mouth sliding over his face, his neck.

"I ... I need, Jess. Please."

"I know, baby. I know what you need." He licked the length of Mike's collarbone, sucking in the water that collected there.

"A ... always. Always." Mike's fingers slid around his head, held him.

He groaned, pushing against Mike, sliding them together in a hard, urgent rhythm.

"Oh, Jess. I." Mike's moans filled the air, needy, low.

He hummed and kept licking, nibbling while his thumbs searched out Mike's nipples, pressing against them, nails scraping along them.

Mike nodded, hips thrusting, rocking. "Yes."

He did it again, this time twisting Mike's nipples between his thumbs and forefingers. Those dark eyes went wide, Mike jerking, come splashing between them.

He purred. "Oh, baby, I love the way you need me."

"W ... with all I am."

He nodded, rubbing against Mike's belly. "Want you with all I am, too."

"Anything." Mike kissed him, eyes warm.

"Everything, baby." He wanted it all.

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

Mike nodded, hand wrapping around his cock, pumping.  
"All of me."

"Yeah, baby." He put his hands on Mike's shoulders, pushing his lover down onto his knees.

Mike slid down, lips parted, open, hungry for him. "I love you."

"I love you, baby." He groaned. Oh, yeah, felt so good.

Mike swallowed him down, taking him easily, eagerly. His moans filled the air. Those dark eyes stared up at him, loving him. Mike's tongue dragged over his cock, lips pulling. He stroked Mike's cheek, purring, hips starting to move.

Mike opened, head bobbing, eyes fastened to his. So lovely, so damned good. Groaning, he moved faster. Mike's hands wrapped around his hips, encouraging, pulling him in deeper and deeper. He just went with it, trusting that Mike could take it, could take him.

It was so damned good, with the water falling on him, Mike's mouth hot around his cock, and it wasn't long at all before he was shouting, calling out Mike's name as he shot. Mike drank him down, moaning around his cock.

"Mmm ... so good, baby."

Mike's hot cheek leaned against his belly.

"Come on, baby. Let's go to bed."

"Nap and then pizza?"

"Nap and then pizza." And some gentle probing of Mike's psyche if the opportunity presented itself.

"Okay." Mike nodded, stood and turned off the water.  
"Sounds great."

He wrapped Mike in a towel, taking his time drying his lover off. "How're you feeling, baby?"

"Okay. Tired, a little." Mike returned the favor, kissing his skin, his lips.

He hummed, licking Mike's lips, kissing the warmer than usual skin. They slowly moved toward the bed, stretching together, Mike close, snuggly. He got Mike settled and curled around the lean body, stroking the smooth skin.

"Mmm..." Mike's hands slid over his skin, stroking, petting.

"You're hot, baby," he murmured, broaching the subject cautiously.

"Am I?" Mike kissed his shoulder, eyelashes tickling his skin.

He chuckled, wiggling a little. "Yeah, baby. You are."

Mike grinned, licked. "Cool."

"I meant feverish, baby." Not that Mike wasn't also sexy hot, but his swimmer had a fever. "I'm going to get you some Tylenol."

"I thought I wasn't allowed to be sick." Mike gave him a wink.

"You aren't. And dealing with this fever is the first step to making you not sick."

"Oh. Okay." He got one of those looks that meant Mike was going along because he was Coach, not because he made sense.

Chuckling, he got the Tylenol and handed it over to Mike along with a glass of water. Then he sat on the bed, next to Mike. "You want to talk about it?" he asked quietly.

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

"Talk about what?" Mike took the pills, finished the water before a warm cheek landed on his thigh.

He stroked Mike's hair. "Your parents," he said softly. Softly enough that if Mike really wanted to, he could pretend he hadn't heard and Jessy would let it go for today.

"I ... They were good people, Jessy. They loved me."

"I know, baby. And then they left you."

Mike nodded. "No one knows what happened, exactly. They were on vacation with the girl Pop coached."

He nodded. "And there was a boating accident."

It was amazing, really, how much Mike still loved the water despite the fact that it more or less took away his parents.

"Yeah. They didn't find my mom for a few days, but Pop and Ronnie—Veronica—they found them right off." Mike sighed. "I had been at my Granny's, getting ready for Christmas. We kept hoping they'd find Mom, swimming away."

He squeezed Mike's shoulder and stroked the short hair. "I'm sorry, baby."

"It's okay. I did okay." Mike closed his eyes, cheeks red as he fought back tears.

"Did you grieve, baby? Or did you hide it all inside and throw yourself into the swimming?"

"I stayed with Granny until school started, then Aunt Kathy took me. I never even saw our house again. They sold it."

"Were you ever asked what you wanted? How you felt?"

Mike laughed softly. "You haven't met Aunt Kathy yet, have you?"



"A force of nature, is she?" He stroked Mike's cheeks, fingers drying the few tears that had been allowed to slip through. "You can't just pretend it didn't happen or that it didn't affect you, baby."

"I don't. It was a long time ago. I ... I was lonely for a long time, but it got better."

"When did it start getting better?" He figured if they just kept talking about it, eventually Mike might spill the reason why he was getting sick every Christmas, year in and year out.

"Hmm ... I guess when I got into high school. There was a swim team there and at the club, so I swam for both of them. All fall, all spring."

He chuckled. "It's always about the water, isn't it."

Mike nodded. "I hated winter break. Aunt Kathy had her kids there; the pools were closed and it was so loud."

He bent and kissed Mike's head. "And it was the anniversary of your folks' death and your cousins had *their* parents with them."

"Yeah. Christmases before they died? We went to the beach, just the three of us. It sounds stupid, but that's how they fell in love—during the winter on the beach."

"It sounds romantic and like something you'd miss having, that time for just the three of you."

Mike nodded. "It was neat. We would gather shells Christmas Eve and decorate the tree with them."

"Oh, that sounds like fun. We'll have to do something special to start our own traditions."

Those dark eyes blinked up at him. "You'd want that? With me?"

He frowned. "Why wouldn't I, baby?"

"Well ... because you have family, traditions, a plan. You have a real family."

He chuckled. "Oh, Mike. I show up on Christmas Eve. We go to church. We do presents and the big meal the next day. I go home. It's hardly a big, important tradition. It's more a habit. I want to have a tradition with you, to share the holiday with the most important person in my life."

Mike blushed dark, face hidden against Jessy. "Oh."

He rubbed Mike's shoulders. "If you didn't know that, baby, I obviously haven't been doing a good enough job letting you know."

"No. No, it's not that. I just ... I'm not used to being ... looked at, maybe?"

"You're going to have to get used to it, baby, because not only am I not going anywhere, but the more medals you win, the more interested people are going to be in you."

"I'm good at being not-noticed, Coach. I just want to swim."

"I know, baby. But I'm never not going to notice you. In the water and out."

"Never?"

"Never, baby." He bent and kissed Mike softly.

Mike pulled away, just a little. "You might get my cold."

"Somehow I don't think so, baby."

"No?" Mike cuddled in, kissing him again. No, not with the fact that the reason Mike was sick was a depressed immune

system stemming from years of routine, not at all. And he was planning on breaking that routine, on making a new one between them.

"I love you, baby."

He got a wide, sweet grin. "I love you, Jess. Honest."

"I don't doubt it, Mike. At all."

He pressed another kiss onto Mike, tasting his lover's mouth. Mike opened wide, rubbing against him, snuggling in. He moaned, hands moving on Mike, just enjoying the sensation of satin skin. So sensual, so eager for sensation, for touch. Sweet, lonely boy.

They were actually a lot alike—both loved the water, swimming was their lives, they were both quiet, loners, alone. Lonely. He pushed Mike back into the pillows, following, need suddenly strong. Mike's hands wrapped around his shoulders, holding on. No. Not alone. Not lonely. Not anymore.

Never again.

He rubbed against Mike, their cocks full, hard and hot, sliding.

"Love you." Mike leaned up, slammed their lips together. So hungry.

He met Mike's hunger with his own; they were together in this too, in the need shared between them. Mike rubbed beneath him, panting, needing.

"Want you, baby."

"Yours. Take me."

"Yeah, mine." His fingers moved down to tease at Mike's hole. Mike spread, moaning low, ring of muscles shifting

under his touch. He pushed the fingers of his other hand into Mike's mouth. "Get 'em good and wet, baby."

Mike nodded, sucking hard, making him ache. He moaned, pushing hard against Mike, pulling his fingers out of Mike's mouth with a pop. Mike's head actually lifted up, lips following his fingers.

"Fuck, you're sexy, baby." He shuddered, Mike making him want so badly.

"I just need you." Mike drew his legs up and back, making a clear offer.

He just purred, pushing two fingers into Mike, the heat and tightness amazing. Mike moaned, hips sliding, body taking him in. "Oh, baby. Yes." He groaned, fucking Mike with his fingers, mouth finding a nipple and biting.

"Jess..." Mike bucked, moaned. "M ... more."

He pushed in another finger, always willing to give Mike more loving. Mike took him in, squeezed his fingers tight.

"Christ." He bit down hard on Mike's nipple, wanting to send his lover as over the moon as he was.

"Yes! Jess!" Mike bucked, groaned, riding his fingers. "Gonna."

He growled, finding Mike's gland and pegging it as he moved to Mike's other nipple and bit it as well.

Mike shot, shaking hard, eyes rolling. "Oh. Oh, Jess..."

"Yeah, baby. 's good."

He waited until Mike's ass loosened around his fingers and then slid them out, replacing them with his cock.

Mike nodded, still lost in the lingering aftershocks. "Good."

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

He pushed right in, moaning as his prick was swallowed up. His Mike looked so sexy, so right, filled and loved and happy. Groaning, he started to move. Christ, it felt good. Fucking amazing.

"Love you. So much." Mike stretched up tall. "So full..."

"Yeah, baby. Full of me." He kept moving, sliding in and out.

Mike nodded. "Need this. Need you."

"You got it, baby." It was good not to need alone.

Mike's legs wrapped around his waist, tugging him close. He groaned, fucking Mike harder, searching out that sweet gland.

Mike shifted, shook, then those dark eyes flashed wide. "Jess!"

"Oh yeah, baby. Right there." He kept hitting that spot, sending them both flying.

"There. Fuck. There, Jessy. Please."

"Yeah, baby." He kept hitting Mike's gland, Mike's ass tight and hot around him.

Mike arched, panting, cock leaking and dark, slapping against Mike's flat belly.

He wrapped his hand around it, tugging hard. "Beautiful."

"Y ... y ... yours. Yours. Yours." It was like a prayer.

"Mine," he growled. "Mine."

Harder and harder he thrust, Mike like a drug in his veins, making him soar. Mike squeezed him, coming hard, the cry raw and needy. He met it with a cry of his own, seed pushing deep into Mike's body. Mike moaned, relaxing into the mattress.

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

He let Mike take his weight, face burying into Mike's shoulder, breathing in the scent of them together.

Mike cuddled. "Love."

He reached up to stroke Mike's hair. "Yeah, baby."

Mike yawned. "Pizza later, need a nap, Jess."

"Sleep, baby, I've got you."

"kay." One hand wrapped around his shoulder, eyes closed.

He shifted just slightly, so he wasn't crushing Mike, his hand sliding possessively around Mike's hip. Mike sniffled a couple of times, then just eased into sleep, a little smile on that face.

He stayed awake, watching his baby.

## Chapter Eight

Mike grinned as he hung up the phone, Aunt Kathy teasing him about becoming a merman and making sure the check she sent was good for a few months. She made him crazy, but she loved him, was never mean to him.

Still, he was looking forward, sort of, to the holidays with Jessy. The school pool was closed, they were off-season. He wasn't sure what they were going to do.

Jessy was in the kitchen, humming a Christmas carol as he unpacked and put away stuff from his "big grocery run."

Mike wandered in, grabbed Jessy's ass. "Hey. Aunt Kathy says merry Christmas."

"That doesn't feel like Aunt Kathy grabbing my ass." Jessy turned, wrapping him in warm arms.

He laughed, lifted his face for a kiss. "You get anything fun at the store?"

"Chocolate whipped cream in a spray can." Jessy gave him a light kiss and then another. "And a few other things."

"Mmm ... yummy." He wasn't sure if he was talking about the kisses or the whipped cream.

Then Jessy's tongue licked and pushed its way into his mouth and he was pretty sure he meant the kisses. He just pressed close, rubbing, snuggling. Feeling.

Jessy purred. "Ten days, baby. With nothing to do but enjoy each other's company."

"Sounds like heaven." He rubbed their noses together, loving the warmth in Jessy's eyes.

"Yeah." Jessy kissed him again, tongue licking at his lips before sliding along his jaw line to his ear.

Mike shivered, panting a little, toes just curling. "Yeah."

"Uh-huh." Jessy murmured, sounding more than a little distracted.

"Love you." He licked the curve of Jessy's shoulder, moaning low.

Jessy groaned, head dropping back. "I know, baby."

Mike smiled, nuzzling in, kissing and licking and sucking.

"Christ, baby, if we do nothing but this for the whole holiday..."

"Then it'll be a merry, merry Christmas." He chuckled, feeling good, easy, happier than he could ever remember.

"Yeah." Jessy locked big hands in the small of Mike's back and lifted his feet off the floor, carrying him into the front room.

"Show off." Mike laughed, just relaxing, letting Jessy move him.

Jessy chuckled and let him down, tugging them both down onto the sofa. He snuggled right in, humming nice and low, pulling Jessy's sweater up and off.

Jessy purred for him. "Someone's hungry."

"Always. Always for you."

Jessy took his mouth, tongue sliding in, fingers pushing beneath his sweater and sliding on his skin.

The kisses melted, one into the other, making his head swim. Mike just rubbed and nuzzled, humming low. His sweater was pushed up, too, their kisses breaking just long



enough for it to go over his head, then Jessy's mouth was on his again.

Oh. Good. He met Jessy's eyes, hoping that his needing and happiness and everything were visible. Those blue eyes gazed into his own, and he thought he could read that same need and happiness there.

His fingers traced the tanned skin—forehead and temple, jaw and cheek. All the while, their tongues slid and slipped and tasted. Jessy's hands weren't still either, long fingers finding his nipples and teasing them until he wanted to scream. The kisses got sharper, harder, his hips rubbing restlessly.

Jessy pushed a hand into his jeans, pressing against his cock.

"Oh. Jess." His fingers squeezed, hips just bucking.  
"Please."

Jessy squeezed his cock and then opened his jeans and started to stroke him. He purred, arched up, rubbing against Jessy's touch. Jessy didn't say anything, just loved him, hands sending him flying, mouth finding his nipples and finishing it.

His orgasm was rich, deep, tingles moving all through him. Jessy hummed, mouth sliding along his neck, licking and kissing.

"Mmm ... s'good. So good." He just purred, rocking slowly. Jessy's hand was still wrapped around his cock, moving with him. "Yeah, baby. So sexy."

"For you." The pleasure was almost too big, too vast.

Jessy pushed him down onto his back on the couch, covering him. He held on tight, fingers stroking the wide shoulders.

"Want you, baby." Jessy started tugging off Mike's jeans.

He wiggled, helped, hips lifting off the sofa. Jessy kind of growled and slid down his body with his pants, tongue licking at his cock, eating him up.

"Oh!" He blinked, pushed up harder, cock twitching.

"Jessy. Hot."

Jessy looked up at him, blue eyes twinkling, shining. "You are, baby."

"I just ... I'm just me. Just love you." He reached down, touched Jessy's face.

Jessy nuzzled into the touch, smiled. "Yeah. Christ, I'm a lucky man." Oh. Oh, that warmed him all through, made him blush and smile, made him ache.

Jessy licked at his balls, nuzzling them, taking each one into the hot mouth and sucking gently. His lover's long fingers weren't still, teasing his hips, his thighs, his belly, staying away from his nipples. His cock slowly filled, resting against his belly, so hot.

Jessy hummed, fingers moving up his body again, almost touching his nipples this time as Jessy's tongue slid beyond his balls.

"T ... tease." He chuckled, shoulders lifting up.

Jessy grinned, head popping up. "Me?"

One finger just barely brushed over his left nipple.

"Uh ... uh-huh." His nipple drew up hard and tight.

"Mmm ... so responsive, baby." Jessy treated his other nipple to the same almost touch.

"Oh." His thighs parted a little, hips tilting.

"Wanton," Jessy accused, smiling at him.

"Yours." He leaned up, begging for the touch.

Chuckling, Jessy slid back up him, licking at his nipple this time. He moaned low, twisted beneath Jessy, heat filling him.

"So sensitive, baby. I should give you one of your Christmas presents early." Those blue eyes were dark with passion, looking into him.

"Yeah?" He licked Jessy's lips, moaning low. He liked presents.

"Mmm ... yeah." Jessy pressed a quick, hard kiss on his lips and took off into his office.

Mike sat up, grinning a little, shaking his head. "Do you want me in there?"

"No, I'll bring it."

Jessy came back a moment later, holding a small box wrapped in silver paper. "Happy early Christmas, baby."

"Oh. Thank you." He took it and pulled Jessy down into a kiss, happy with whatever it was already.

Jessy chuckled into their kiss, tongue sliding along his lips as their mouths parted. "Open it, baby. And then we can go back to playing."

He slid the silver paper off, popped the box out. Inside were two small silver ... clamps? Jessy was grinning, looking at him expectantly.

He tilted his head, picking them up. "They're shiny."

Jessy chuckled. "They're partly for ornamentation."

"Ornaments?" He opened them, closed them, trying them on his finger. Firm.

"Partly." Jessy was watching him, letting him figure it out for himself. "But mostly they're meant for sensation."

"Sens..." He blinked, looked up. "Oh. Oh, do they hurt?"

"Some. These have fairly dull teeth—they're more tight grip. Some have sharp teeth to add a bite." Jessy grinned. "I thought I'd start you off slow."

"Sharp? Really?" He closed them around his finger again, cock jumping at the bite.

Jessy nodded and sat next to him, mouth close to his ear. "They don't go on your fingers though, baby."

"I ... I know." He shivered, goose pimples raising up all over him. "I know, Jess."

Jessy blew into his ear and then licked the shell of it. "Good."

"I. Uh. Oh. I want."

Jessy growled, turning his head and kissing him hard, pushing him back down onto the couch, body moving. Jessy's jeans rubbed against his bare cock, not quite painful. He met Jessy head-on, so hungry, so needy.

Jessy ground down against him, one hand guiding his fingers to his nipple, pressing the metal against his skin. He whimpered, arched. God, he felt so ... sexy. Sensual.

"Put it on," Jessy growled, eyes so hot as they gazed down at him.

"I..." His fingers fumbled, unsure. Jessy's fingers guided his, helping him get the clamp closed over his nipple. "Oh." Oh. It. Not hurt. But. Oh. Oh, wow.

"How's it feel?" Jessy asked, looking down at his nipple, fingers circling the flesh and then moving the clamp.

"I. Uh. Jess. It squeezes."

Jessy chuckled, the sound low and sexy. "Good squeezing, baby?" His other nipple was pinched between Jessy's fingers.

"Uh-huh. Uh-huh." It was almost as good as the collar.

Humming, Jessy took the other clamp from him and place it on his nipple. "Christ, you look sexy."

"Oh. Oh, I. Damn." He couldn't stop rocking, couldn't stop shaking.

Jessy kept purring, pushing down, giving him something hot and solid to rock against. His mouth was taken, one of Jessy's hands in his hair, tilting his head so Jessy could kiss him deep. He opened wide, holding on tight and moving, rocking against his Jessy, his lover.

Jessy pressed a hand between them, undoing the offending jeans, pushing them down and kicking them off and then they were rocking together, skin on skin.

"Yes." He groaned, hissed the word into Jessy's mouth.

Jessy rocked them together harder, faster, those blue eyes staring right into him, penetrating him.

"Fuck. Fuck me. Please. In me. Jess."

"Anything, baby." Jessy reached over to the side table and came up with lube. "I had a hunch we'd end up in here."

Mike laughed, the sound a little wild, a lot desperate. "In here. In there. Everywhere."

Jessy grinned and kissed him again, hard and needy and just long enough to distract him until two hot, slick fingers were pushing into his body.

"Oh. Yes." His shoulders left the couch, hips slamming down.

"Yes," growled Jessy, fucking him with those two fingers, twisting and curling them, pushing them in until they hit his gland.

Mike cried out, bucking, riding hard, nipples aching.  
"There. There. More."

"Yeah, baby." Jessy kept pushing those fingers into him, driving him wild, making him throb from nipple to ass to cock.

"Gonna. Gonna. Jess. Jess. Please." He was babbling, moaning, flying.

"Wait for me, baby. Just wait." Jessy's fingers disappeared, that thick heat pushing into him a moment later, all Jessy.

"Oh..." The room just spun, lights sparking behind his eyes. "Need."

Jessy nodded and started to fuck him, strokes long and fast. Everything got bright, passion filling him, soaring inside him. All he saw was Jessy. Those eyes.

Jessy's hand wrapped around his prick, lips finding his. He shot, balls aching and hard, heart just pounding.

"Mike!" Jessy growled, jerking into him, filling him deep.

He just nodded, moaning, whimpering. Jessy collapsed against him, face buried in his neck, shoulder pressing the clamps against his skin.

He shivered, panting. "Oh. Oh, love."

Jessy growled softly, tongue gentle and hot against his neck.

Best Christmas ever.

"Love you, baby," murmured Jessy. "Lots."

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"Love you. Thank you."

"You're welcome, baby. Just wait until you see the rest of your gifts." Oh, those blue eyes were positively wicked, Jessy's fingers releasing the clamps without warning.

His eyes popped open, ass squeezing Jessy's cock. "The rest?"

Jessy just laughed, rubbing his nipples and then tugging him in close.

He cuddled in. Oh. Wow. More.

Merry, merry Christmas.

\* \* \* \*

Jessy decided that making love for three hours was definitely the right way to start Christmas morning. He was enjoying this making their own traditions thing. Making love, napping. And now presents. If they could drag their asses out of bed to the tree that was.

Either way he was having a good time.

Mike reached over, grabbed some juice and offered him a nice, long drink before finishing the glass off.

He grinned, hand stroking Mike's side. "You think we should make our way to the front room? Or just make love some more?"

"Mmm ... Next year? Presents in the bedroom." Mike grinned, snuggled.

"Oh, now, that's a good idea, baby. It's not like most of mine won't wind up in here anyway." He gave Mike a wink.

Those dark eyes went wide, meeting his. "Oh. Maybe we should go open them."

He laughed, hand sliding down to find Mike's ass and goosing him.

Mike squeaked, pushed against him. "Bitch!"

Jessy just kept laughing, hand sliding over the skin he'd pinched, teasing. Mike dipped his head, teeth finding a nipple, biting. Jessy gasped, hips jerking, his already worn-out cock trying to get hard again.

Mike chuckled. "Come on. If we don't eat and move, we'll stick to the sheets."

"You say that like it's a bad thing, baby."

Mike's eyes danced. "Maybe not a *bad* thing..."

Laughing, he rolled Mike, kissing his baby hard. Then he stood and hauled Mike up. "Come on, I want my presents."

"And breakfast." Mike wiggled, laughed, cheeks flushed, eyes dancing.

"I'm thinking another shot of cream'll do me for breakfast," he murmured, fingers sliding along Mike's chest.

"Jessy..." Mike pinked, cock jerking a little.

"Yeah, baby?" He smiled, let his fingers slide lower.

"We're getting presents..." Oh, that was a sweet, husky sound.

"Oh, that's right." He slid his hands around to the small of Mike's back, fingers stroking. Then he bent to kiss gently, licking those sweet lips. "Present number one. Merry Christmas, baby."

Mike just melted into him. "The best one."

He walked them slowly down the hall, pressing kiss after kiss onto Mike's lips. Mike moved easy, trusting him, loving him.



He gave Mike one last kiss. "No fooling around on the stairs, baby." He took Mike's hand and led the way down.

"Always taking care of me." Mike squeezed his hand, held him.

"That's my job, baby."

He led Mike into the kitchen, figuring they needed food first or they'd never get to it.

Mike grinned and grabbed the oatmeal and the brown sugar. "It's Christmas. Hot cocoa?"

He gave Mike a look that said don't think I don't know what you're up to, but he nodded his head. "Warm the milk up on the stove—it'll taste better."

Mike nodded and bounced, humming "Deck the Halls." Just what Mike needed. Chocolate. He shook his head. Of course he knew what to do with that bounce. Mike made cocoa and oatmeal, ass just wiggling, while he made toast.

"You keep moving that and you aren't going to get fed."

"You are supposed to be focusing on toast."

"Dry bread? You want me to focus on dry bread when your ass is in view?" He chuckled, bumping their hips together.

Mike nodded. "Yep. The *toast*, Coach. Focus on the *toast*."

He laughed, grabbing Mike's chin and tilting his head, taking a hard kiss. Mike opened right up, laughing into their kiss. He loved it, seeing those eyes so happy.

He grabbed Mike's ass with his free hand, squeezing as he deepened the kiss and then gentled it again. "Oatmeal and cocoa, baby." He winked.

"Mmm ... Yeah. Then presents. You want bananas, applesauce, or peaches in your oats?"

"Oh, I like bananas." He waggled his eyebrows.

Mike swatted his ass, then grabbed two bananas and some walnuts. His swimmer was becoming quite the cook. A moment later, they were eating, the food good. Almost as good as Mike looked, all tousled and naked.

There was chocolate whipped cream on the hot cocoa, Mike drinking deep, foam forming the hint of a mustache on his upper lip. Chuckling, Jessy leaned in and licked it away.

Mike grinned, pinking, looking pleased as anything. "Merry Christmas."

"Merry Christmas, baby. Come on, are you finished? There's presents."

"There are. I am." Mike tossed the bowls into the sink. "Did you get Aunt Kathy's box?"

"Under the tree." He grabbed Mike's hand. "Dishes can wait."

Mike nodded, bouncing beside him. "Hell, yes. Dishes are so not Christmassy."

"I knew I should have nixed the cocoa."

"It's Christmas." Mike dropped down by the tree, tossed him a box from Kathy's care package.

He opened it, grinning and tossing the pair of socks at Mike. "She has real imagination, your aunt."

Mike grinned, holding up a box of chocolate covered cherries. "She's a goddess among women."

He held his hand out for the chocolates. "We can bring it to UT when the pool opens again."

"Uh-uh. Mine. My Christmas. There's a box in here somewhere for you." Mike tossed him another box, identical to Mike's.

"No chocolate, baby. No exceptions." He hated to be a hardass on Christmas, but he'd already broken the rule once today.

Mike just put the box to one side, gave him the patented "we're not fighting about this" face. "What do you want next? There's an envelope from Kathy and stuff from me."

"What's in the envelope?" He was far more interested in presents from Mike.

Mike shrugged. "Gift certificate? Check, maybe? Gift card?"

"I want something from you, baby."

"Kay." Mike handed him a box wrapped in shiny, red paper. Inside there were a pair of fuzzy dice and a steering wheel cover that had "Coach" embroidered on it.

He laughed, grabbing Mike's arm and dragging him over for a hard kiss. "Awesome, baby."

Mike grinned, beamed. "Yeah? Cool. I thought they'd be fun. Oh, here's another one." This one was a little bigger, a lot heavier.

"You gonna open any of yours, baby?" He shook the package to see if it made any noise.

"Sure." Mike grabbed a box, grinning as it jingled and rattled. "Just open it."

Laughing, he opened the package, finding a shaving kit complete with his favorite shaving cream and aftershave.

"This is great, baby."

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Mike grinned and nodded. "There's everything you need. Nail clippers, toothbrush, soap. Everything. So you won't have to repack."

"That's awesome, baby, thank you." He leaned over and took a nice, slow, long kiss.

Mike cuddled in, skin a little chilled, warming under his touch. "Open your present, baby."

Mike nodded, tearing the paper off.

He hoped Mike liked it; the guy at the garage had assured him this was the best tool kit for motorcycle repairs.

"Ooh! Oh, man! This rocks." Mike pushed into his arms, kissing him hard.

He wrapped his arms around Mike, humming into their kiss.

Oh. Thankful Mike? Very hot and snuggly.

"I'm glad you like it, baby." He slid his hands along all that smooth skin.

"You're good to me." Mike pushed closer, rubbed against him.

"It's in my interest to be," he noted, rubbing back happily.

"There are more presents..." Mike's lips brushed across his jaw.

"Yeah. I think you should open a few more of yours." They could have fun playing if Mike did.

"Okay. There's only two more for you. Which one should I open next?"

"The gold wrapped one." It was a silver necklace with Mike's name. He figured once Mike opened the dildo they wouldn't be opening any more presents for awhile.

Mike opened it, grinned wide. "Oh, cool." Those eyes twinkled over. "Is this so you don't forget my name?"

"Brat." He chuckled. "*That* is what I should have had put on that instead of Mike."

"Then you'd have *never* remembered." Mike winked, put the necklace on, the silver chain glinting.

He laughed and tousled Mike's hair. "There anything more for me under there, baby?"

"Yeah, two things." One good-sized square box was handed over, a motorcycle helmet and denim jacket inside, both labeled, "Coach."

"Baby ... you shouldn't have." He beamed over at Mike, though, let Mike know that he loved them. "Now everyone'll know who's on Bonzo with you."

"Yeah. I thought they'd look good on you." Mike grinned. "And you needed a new jacket."

"You saying there's something wrong with Old Faithful?"

"Uh ... it's older than me?"

"Well, old doesn't mean useless, baby." He gave Mike a wink and then reached for the smaller present, wanting his final gift to Mike to be opened last.

The smaller gift was a little, plastic, expandable folder with elastic closing it, meant for cancelled checks. He gave Mike a look, then opened it. There were monthly tabs, each one with something inside—two tickets for minor league baseball in July. Gift certificates for bowling. Movie tickets. Ren faire tickets. Something for them to look forward to each month, something for both of them.

"Oh, baby..." He opened his arms, gathering Mike close. "I love it, baby."

"Yeah? I thought it would be something fun." Mike searched his eyes, smiling wide.

"It's awesome. Thoughtful and fun. I really do like it." He kissed Mike softly, humming, happy. Mike relaxed, cuddling in, looking self-satisfied as fuck. Chuckling, he licked at Mike's lips, hands wandering along the warm, smooth skin. "There's one more for you under there, baby."

"Yeah? Should I open it?"

"Yeah, I think you should." He grinned, eager to see Mike's face when he opened it and found the ribbed dildo. It was thick and long, with lots of bumps.

Mike leaned over, unwrapped the dildo, eyes wide, cheeks flushing dark. "Jess!"

He chuckled, leaning close. "I've washed it already. We can play right away."

"I ... It's big." Mike rubbed against him, groaning.

"'Bout as thick as I am." He slid his hand to Mike's ass, encouraging the movements. Christ, he loved it when Mike got all hot like this.

"It's not you, though." So hard, hot, Mike shifted faster, harder.

"You don't want to play with it?" he asked, surprised.

"I ... I didn't say that." Mike blushed, ducked his head.

He chuckled. "Oh, I see."

Mike hid his face, cheeks blazing. Jessy put his fingers beneath Mike's chin, turning his face up and bending to take those sweet lips. Mike's mouth still tasted of chocolate and

cream, tongue sliding against his own. He grabbed Mike's tongue between his lips, sucking on it. Mike gave a low groan, hips rocking up against him, cock leaving wet kisses.

"Want the plug?" he asked, grabbing it and sliding it along Mike's back.

"Oh. I. Uh-huh. Uh-huh." Mike shivered, humping him.

"Love how you need, baby."

"Need you. Make me want so much."

Growling a little, Jessy reached for the lube on the side table, slicking up the dildo and then pushing a couple of slick fingers into Mike's body, stretching him and opening him up.

"Oh. Oh, I want. I. Jess." Mike shifted, almost falling off the sofa.

"Let's take this upstairs, baby. I want to be able to fuck you good and hard. With this and then with my cock."

"Oh. Oh, yeah." Mike nodded, stood, hard cock just bobbing.

Moaning, he leaned forward and took the tip of Mike's cock into his mouth, licking the pre-come from Mike's slit. Mike arched, rising up onto tiptoe. He purred and sucked a little harder, feeling Mike's cock throb.

"You ... you'll make me. And we won't be able to..."

He pulled off with a chuckle. "You won't get it up again for me?"

"We've come how many times today?" Mike winked.

"I was having too much fun to keep track. Besides—it's not like I expect you to go swimming today." He got up, passing Mike the slick dildo.

Mike's fingers slid, the dildo slipping, both of them laughing hard as it moved.

"It's alive!" He pushed against Mike again, taking his baby's mouth.

Mike chuckled, eyes just dancing as they kissed.

"Brat," he murmured as their lips parted. He slapped Mike's ass and grabbed his hand. "Come on. Bed."

"I'm right behind you." Mike wielded the dildo like a weapon, fixing to prod him up the stairs.

He almost tripped he was laughing so hard, just happy as could be.

"Watch it, I'm armed and dangerlubed!"

He sat down on the top step, tears coming out of his eyes. "Oh, God, Mike."

Mike was leaning against the wall, red-faced, laughing hard.

Happiness looked sexy on his baby.

He finally caught his breath and stood again, hand reaching for Mike's. "Bed, baby."

Mike nodded, both of them leaning against each other, swaying as they headed for the bed.

"Can't wait to fuck you with that, Mike. See you on your hands and knees, taking it."

"Jess..." Mike blushed, belly to hairline.

"Yeah, baby?" He slid his fingers along that sweet stomach.

"You make me all fluttery when you say shit like that."



He purred. "Mmm ... fluttery." He let his hand drop to Mike's cock, squeezing, weighing the full prick. "You don't feel fluttery."

"I ... I feel fluttery."

"It's a good look on you." He pushed Mike into their bedroom. "Hands and knees, baby. You know what I want."

"I. Yeah. Yeah." Mike was so sexy, so hot, spread and arched for him, skin flushed pink.

He got onto the bed behind Mike, grabbing the dildo and sliding it along his lover's crease. Mike leaned back toward it, ass tilted, begging for it.

"Christ, baby. So fucking sexy." He pushed the dildo against Mike's hole, pushing just the tip in.

Mike's head dropped down. "For you."

"Yeah, baby." He groaned, pushing the dildo in further, watching it disappear into Mike's body.

"Oh." Mike shuddered. "Oh. Hard. It's. Oh."

He bent forward and kissed the small of Mike's back. "Just relax, baby. Let it in."

"I ... Yes. It ... it feels. Oh, Jessy." Mike panted, eyes rolling, fingers fisting in the sheets.

"Good, baby?" He moaned, pushing the dildo in until he was just holding onto the end. Then he slowly turned it so the bumps would slide on the inside of Mike's body.

"Oh..." Mike rippled, a sweet, low groan filling the air. "Jess."

He took that as a yes and bent to place another kiss on Mike's back and then started moving the dildo, fucking Mike

with it. Fuck, his baby was sexy. Mike rocked back, hips shifting and sliding, riding the dildo.

"Sexy, baby," he said, voice hoarse enough he didn't recognize it himself.

"Yours." Those muscles shifted, tensed and relaxed.

He purred. "Yeah, baby. Mine."

He moved the dildo faster, watching the bumps and curves disappear into Mike's body again and again. His own prick throbbed and he could see Mike's slapping his belly as he moved, dark with blood, dripping Mike's need.

"Jess. Jess. I. Oh." The soft, low babble just went on and on, Mike shivering and jerking, heat pouring off him.

Jessy slid his other hand beneath Mike, cupping that hot, hard cock, letting Mike's own motions drive it through his hand. Mike's head lifted, hips pushing harder, faster, driving.

"That's it, baby. Take what you need." His own hips were pumping the air.

Mike grabbed the headboard, uninhibited, wild, fucking himself on the dildo, letting Jessy see it all.

"Fuck. Baby. Oh." He moaned, just watching, pushing the dildo and squeezing Mike's cock tight. It was ... the most amazing thing he'd ever seen.

Mike threw his head back, crying out as spunk sprayed. He jerked, the feel of it, the scent of it, and the sight of the flush going up Mike's back sending him over until he shot over Mike's side.

Mike's head fell forward, his baby just panting. "Oh. Wow."

He purred, rubbing his and Mike's come into all that warm, smooth skin, mixing it with Mike's sweat, making his baby

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glow. "So sexy, baby. Just ... the best." He eased the dildo out.

Mike settled on the mattress, shivering, breath slowing. "Love you."

He curled up around Mike, tugging the covers up. "Yeah, baby? Well, I love you, too." He grinned and kissed Mike's nose, hand sliding possessively over Mike's hip. "Merry fucking Christmas."

"Uh-huh. Merry fucking." Mike blinked, grinning like a fool.

He laughed, tugging Mike close. "You wanting a nap, baby? Or to see just exactly how many times an old man can get it up with the right incentive?"

"We should have both." He got a kiss. "Nap, then incentives."

He purred and licked Mike's lips. "It's a deal."

"Like your deals." Mike's eyes drifted closed.

"Yeah, baby." He kissed the top of Mike's head. "Sleep now, baby. You're going to need your energy."

## Chapter Nine

The music was loud-loud, making his head pound. It was the traditional back-to-school bash at the Delts' house, though, and all the UT team was there, so Jessy had told Mike to go, have fun. No soda.

Which was really sort of hard, given his choice was beer or Coke. He found some 7-Up in the fridge though, and had that. The guys were dancing and drinking, laughing hard. He joined into a dart game in the back, finally, away from the noise.

Walt, one of the new guys, came out, offering to fetch a round for everybody, and he held up his mostly gone bottle, tossing darts and kicking Harry's butt. They all played forever, then headed to watch *Resident Evil* on the big screen, the lights flashing, music almost alive. Wow. Just. Wow.

They were all piled together, laughing, smoke filling the air, the whole world odd and off-kilter when the yelling started, Coach Samuels hollering and pulling at people, shaking him.

"What the hell are you doing? You stupid, kid?"

Mike blinked, frowned. "What?" What had he ... The room spun a little and he sat down, hard.

"I'm putting you all on automatic suspension." That was Coach. His coach. Jessy. "Every last damned one of you."

He could hear Samuels arguing with Jessy.

"Forget it, Jeff. Three months for all of them, and if they're caught using again I'll make sure it's a year. You tolerate this

kind of thing once and they'll do it again." God, Jessy sounded mad. Furious.

He shook his head, tried to clear it. "Suspension?"

"For drug use." Jessy's face looked like death. "You stay put, I'm helping Jeff round everyone up and make sure they get home. I'll be back for you in ten minutes."

Drug use? Who? Who would do that? Mike stood up, frowning as the room spun. What the fuck?

Jessy put a hand on his shoulder and pushed him back down into the couch. "I said. Stay. Put. I don't want you wandering around who the hell knows where high as a fucking kite."

"But Coach, I..." How could he be high? He hadn't even had caffeine in his soda.

"Just stay put, Mike. Use your time to come up with a good reason why I shouldn't ship your ass back to your Aunt Kathy with extreme prejudice." Coach growled at him and then was gone, hustling kids out of the Delt House.

He just sat, trying to figure out what had happened, what he'd done, why everything was so fucked up. He'd hadn't done anything wrong. Had he? He'd played darts. Watched a movie.

That's it.

That's all.

It didn't feel like anytime at all before Coach was back, hand on his shirt hauling him up. "I'm taking you home."

"Jessy. Coach. I." He was shivering, scared, confused as anything.

"Need a cold shower and a hell of a lot of water. And starting tomorrow you are swimming laps until you can't see straight. For the whole three months of your suspension." Coach was just growling, hand hard on his arm, dragging him along.

But why was he suspended? He hadn't done anything.

"I didn't."

They were out on the sidewalk and Jessy stopped, letting him go and rounding on him. "You're not high? Is that what you're telling me, Mike? Fine. I'm parked three cars down, here's the keys. Get to the car and get yourself into the passenger side."

He stepped back, more than a little scared, the world spinning wildly. "Don't yell at me."

"I'm not yelling, Mike. I'm not yelling at all. You're fucking high and all your senses are wacky."

"I didn't take anything." Not even caffeine. Not even a sip.

Jessy snorted, grabbing his arm again. "Bullshit, Mike. You're high."

He looked over at Jessy, suddenly cold and more than a little sick. Jessy didn't believe him. Jessy didn't believe in him and ... "You're going to send me back to Plano?"

"You got a compelling reason why I shouldn't? I've got rules, Mike. You know them. You know them inside and fucking out. And you know the fucking doping rule is a big one, one the governing body takes every bit as seriously as I do. Christ, baby. I just can't believe you did this."

He sat in the car, completely numb. He wasn't sure what was happening. Surely it was all a dream. A sick, fucked-up,

weird-ass dream. Three months. About as long as he'd been with Jessy. Weird, how things like that worked.

Jessy didn't say a word the entire drive home. Mike didn't either, he just stared at his fingers and tried to think, tried to figure out what he'd done.

If he was high, shouldn't he be having fun?

They got home and Coach came around and opened the door for him, standing over him and waiting for him to get out. He stood, making sure not to touch Jessy, making sure not to sway. Jessy snorted and took his arm, hauling him along again. He just followed, stumbling on the stairs. He didn't know what to do. What to say. Where to go.

Coach didn't seem to have that problem, Jessy leading him straight up the stairs and into the bathroom. Coach turned on the water and then started stripping him down.

"I can do it." He stepped away, arms wrapped around his belly.

"Then fucking do it. You need to get sober. Now."

"Okay. Okay." He stripped down, got into the water, shaking hard. He washed himself quickly, not sure how this was going to help, but willing to do almost anything to stop Jessy from glaring at him.

Jessy stood outside the shower, hands across his chest. Quiet. Still. When he'd done washing, Jessy leaned in and turned the hot down. He curled into himself a little, the cold water chilling him all through. Oh. Okay. So, he really wanted to go home now. Really.

It felt like Jessy made him stay in there forever before finally leaning in and turning off the water. Jessy tugged him out and toweled him down roughly.

"What now?" He was going to be sick, was going to cry, and he wasn't going to do it in front of Coach. No way.

"Now you sit and start drinking water. And then you go to bed and sleep it off."

He nodded and moved away, went to find a pair of sweat pants and a shirt. Socks. He needed some socks, too.

Jessy disappeared for a couple minutes, coming back with a glass of water and a large pitcher filled with the same.

"Start drinking."

"I'll throw up."

"Possibly." The glass was thrust toward him.

He took the glass and drank it, almost gagging, but forcing himself not to. Eventually this would be over. It would. It had to be.

Jessy fed him two more glasses before starting to pace. "Do you have any idea how disappointed I am in you? You of all people, Mike. I never expected this from you."

He didn't say a word. It didn't matter anyway. His coach didn't believe him. Hell, Jessy didn't believe him. He was suspended. It just didn't matter. He drank another glass of water, teeth almost floating.

Jessy went on a little longer, finally winding down. "Go to bed, Mike. We'll discuss what we're going to do about this tomorrow."

He nodded, watched Jessy storm out of the bedroom, back all stiff. Then Mike ran for the master bath, throwing up until



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there was nothing but bile, and then he sat on the bathroom floor, dug his cell phone out of his jeans.

It was late enough that the voice that answered the phone was part angry, part scared.

He sniffled and then cleared his throat. "A..aunt Kathy?"

"Mikey? Mikey, what's wrong?"

"Can I come home? Please? I want to come home."

"What happened? What's wrong?"

He shook his head. "Can I come home?"

He heard her soft sigh. "Always. Do you need money?"

"No. I have my Christmas money still. I'll be home before lunch, okay?"

"Sure, honey. You be careful, now. It's raining and I know those bikes are dangerous."

"I will. Love you."

"I love you, Mikey. Don't you worry, now. Whatever it is, we'll fix it."

He nodded, hung up. He needed to go home.

Just...

Home.

\* \* \* \*

Jessy spent the night in his office.

He paced. He fretted. He growled. He dozed.

He finally fell asleep with his head on the desk around four a.m..

He woke up four hours later, stiff and still angry. And hurt. He'd trusted Mike. He'd never believed Mike would ever do drugs. Not performance enhancers, not recreational. Hell, he

didn't let the kid have caffeine, why the hell did Mike think it would be okay if he took something at a party?

Sighing, he ran a hand through his hair and headed for the kitchen. He needed coffee.

He'd bet Mike was probably going to have a hangover. A big breakfast would be in order, followed by a day of swimming at the UT pool. It wasn't warm enough to swim in their pool in the back. He was going to work the kid hard, keep him too busy to even contemplate doing drugs again.

He slammed cupboards closed and made as much noise as he could in the kitchen. And when that didn't produce his swimmer, he headed up the stairs. "Mike!"

Nothing. Nothing at all.

Frowning, Jessy headed upstairs to the still made bed, the empty room. He checked Mike's old room, the spare room. Still nothing. As he passed their room on his way back to the stairs, he noticed the white paper on the dresser. He strode over and picked it up.

The note was simple, scribbled. "Coach. Hope your next swimmer's not a disappointment. I'll mail all the official type papers to Coach Samuels. Sorry. Michael Gaulliet."

He sat down hard, right there by the dresser, almost not noticing his ass hit the floor.

Mike was gone. It was like a fist in his belly, a blow as unexpected and ten times as painful as last night. His baby was gone.

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His room was just the same as how he'd left it. Red bedspread, M&M alarm clock, old black dresser. Just the same.

Mike felt different though. Aunt Kathy had been cool—not asking questions, really, accepting that he wasn't on the swim team anymore with a nod and a hug. She'd gotten him a job waiting tables at Denny's, was trying to find another school—maybe a community college he could go to.

Two weeks gone and everything was suddenly different.  
Or the same.

Something.

He got up, padded to the kitchen and started a pot of coffee, petting the dog. He needed to go to work. He needed to go for a drive. The wind was blowing hard, rain in the air.

He signed the paperwork to send to UT, stamped it.

Maybe next week he'd actually mail it.

Maybe.

Mike poured himself a cup of coffee, added in sugar, and then headed back down the hall, trying very hard not to hear Jessy's voice in his head.

\* \* \* \*

Almost three weeks since Jessy's world had stopped.

He'd called Mike after three days, but Mike wasn't in. He'd asked Kathy how Mike was doing, received a stiff "he's fine" and had declined to leave a message. He missed his swimmer. But more than that, he missed his lover, his baby. It was like he was only half alive. He spent long hours sitting out on the deck, watching the pool. Just watching it.

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He didn't understand why Mike had done drugs in the first place. He didn't understand why Mike had just taken off after that instead of offering him some sort of explanation or apology. Had it really been so easy to just throw everything they had together away?

He'd taken to asking the whiskey bottle that question and, depending on how drunk he was when he asked it, he got different answers.

He wasn't really hung over this morning, though, just grouchy. And going to UT to see Jeff Samuels was not high on the list of things he wanted to do. Jeff had called yesterday, though, told him to come in, that it was important. If the man was trying to set Jessy up with another swimmer, he was going to beat Jeff's ass to a pulp.

He strode into the coach's office, not even looking at the pool. He was done.

"Shut the door behind you. We have to talk." Jeff looked like hammered shit, pale and upset.

He shut the door and leaned against it, arms crossed over his chest. "So talk."

"Walter Shell came to me yesterday afternoon. He's one of our new swimmers. He was at the party with Mike and the rest of them. You need to hear what he has to say." Jeff met his eyes. "It involves Mike."

He tensed, jaw clenching, fingers curling into fists. "All right."

Jeff stood, open the interior door and a short, skinny kid came in, hands twisted together. "I'm sorry. I really am. It

was a joke, a dare. I didn't think anybody'd get in trouble, honest."

"What are you talking about?" he asked, the tension getting worse.

"The guys. I had some X and I offered to get them drinks—Harry, Sammy, Alex had Coke. Ricky and Ollie had a beer. Mike had a 7-Up. I put it in their drinks. They were playing darts." The kid shook his head. "It was a joke. I didn't know they'd get in trouble."

Jessy could feel all the blood drain out of his face. "What?" He stepped forward, towering over the kid, growling. "What?"

"I'm sorry. I am. I didn't think anything bad would happen. They didn't know. None of them. It was just a joke." The kid backed up and Jeff stepped up, getting between them.

"I want him off the team, Jeff. I don't ever want to see him swimming for UT. Ever." And if Jeff blinked he was going to snap the kid in two.

"He's already off. He's been sanctioned by the ISO. Hell, Alex Rogers' mother is suing. Our boys can't compete for three months, but they won't lose ranking, etc." Jeff nodded toward the door. "Go, Walt. Thank you for coming forward."

Jeff turned back to him, eyes serious. "I got the official withdrawal paperwork from Mike today in the mail."

He closed his eyes. Christ. This was even more fucked-up than it had been. He had to see Mike.

He held out his hand. "Give it to me? I'll either bring it or Mike back."

Jeff nodded, handed him an envelope. "As far as I'm concerned? I never saw it."

"Thanks." He shook his head. "What the fuck is wrong with kids these days?"

"Same thing that was wrong twenty years ago when it was hash brownies, Jessy." Jeff sat down hard. "The real question is, what's wrong with us that we didn't believe our boys when they said they didn't do it."

He shook his head again. Mike had only said he hadn't taken anything, and considering how huge his baby's pupils had been, he'd known that wasn't true. And Mike had gone before they could talk about it. "They were high, Jeff. What were we supposed to think?"

"I don't know, Jessy. I mean, there's a couple that are marginal, but Alex? Harry? Mike? They're career swimmers."

More than career swimmers, swimming was his baby's life.

"I know, Jeff," he growled. "Don't you think I fucking know?"

"Yeah. I think you do. Go get him." Jeff sighed. "Go get him and tell him I'm sorry."

"You can tell him yourself in a couple of days." He waved Mike's paperwork at Jeff. "Thanks."

He didn't even bother going home, just got in the car and started driving, heading for Mike's Aunt Kathy. Time to bring his baby home.

## Chapter Ten

Mike poured table six another round of coffee and put the order in for table eight. Tonight was his early shift; he got off at nine and was going to go to the movies.

Something violent and scary.

And bloody.

"Mikey? You've got a table that requested you. They want coffee and orange juice."

He grinned over at Susan, nodded. "Thanks, boss. Which one?"

"Three."

"Okay. I'll get it." He poured a large OJ and grabbed a coffee cup and a carafe, heading toward table three.

Wow, from the back the guy at the table looked like Coach.

He ignored the ache in his chest and then headed over.

"Good evening. Welcome to Denny's. I'm Mike and I'll be taking care of you this evening."

Oh. From the front the guy looked exactly like Coach.

Jessy's blue eyes turned up to him. "Hi, Mike."

"Hi." His hand shook when he poured the coffee, but he didn't spill.

Oh.

Oh, God.

"Do ... do you know what you want?"

Jessy nodded at the seat across from him. "I want to talk to you."

"I'm working for another half-hour." He didn't know what Jessy would want to say.

Jessy nodded. "I can wait. The orange juice is for you."

He blushed dark. He hadn't had orange juice since he came back. "Do you ... do you want something to eat?"

"Only if you'll eat with me."

"I. Uh." His belly cramped, but he nodded. "Okay. What do you want?"

"I'll have the grand slam, baby." Those blue eyes were just eating him up like he was the main course.

"Eggs over easy and just bacon, no sausage." He knew exactly how Jessy wanted it.

He ordered himself a bowl of chili and a side of fries, gave one of his tables their check and the other their food before finishing his soda in the back.

When he clocked out, he went to grab their food and then went over to sit in the booth. "Hey."

God, this was weird.

Deeply.

"Hey." Jessy cleared his throat and then looked at him. "First of all, I'd like to apologize. Walter Shell came forward today and admitted that he spiked everyone's drinks. X in your soda."

Jessy cleared his throat again. "So I'm um ... I'm sorry that I assumed you'd knowingly taken it."

He looked down at his chili, knowing he wouldn't eat it. Couldn't. "Walt? He got us drinks when I was playing darts."

"He said it was a joke. Though I'm not sure what part of it he thought was supposed to be funny."

"Oh." Wow. One hell of a joke. It derailed his whole life.



"Yeah. Oh. So you guys are still suspended for three months, but you'll be reinstated as soon as that time's up, no loss in ranking. Walter's been sanctioned by the ISO, he won't ever swim again. Christ, baby, I'm sorry I didn't give you a chance to explain, but you didn't wait around to talk to me about it, either—you just ran away."

"It didn't matter." He pushed the chili away. "You didn't believe me. There wasn't anything to talk about."

"Baby, you were telling me you didn't take anything—I could plainly see that you were high..." Jessy looked away, voice husky. "I was angry and hurt and all that I could see was that you'd thrown everything we were about into the toilet for a night of fun with your friends."

Mike nodded. "I know. That's why I left. If you thought I would do that? We sort of were in two different places." He gathered up his uneaten food. "Thanks for letting me know. I would have always kind of wondered what had happened."

"Mike, please. Sit down."

He sighed, but nodded, sat, looking at his hands. Everything hurt, just like it had that first morning.

"You know, baby, in the over three months we were together, we never had one fight. Oh, we argued. Especially about the caffeine and chocolate, but we never really fought, did we? And then we hit a doozy and suddenly you're running away." Jessy reached out, fingers touching his. "I know it's going to be a shock to you, baby, but I'm not perfect. And I'm not always going to do the right thing. And you can't punish me forever for this mistake. Well, you can, but then what kind

of relationship did we have if we can't admit to our mistakes and forgive each other?"

"I didn't do anything wrong. I even followed the stupid caffeine rule. I did everything right and you didn't even believe for a second I hadn't taken something." And fuck, but that still hurt.

"Mike. You may not have knowingly taken something, but you *were* high. You ingested a drug. I couldn't believe you'd done it. I didn't want to believe you'd done it. But you were fucking high. I was hurt and angry. You never even tried to explain. I'm not saying it wasn't wrong of me, but dammit, if you're going to hold it against me forever you might as well have knowingly taken that X."

"Huh?" He blinked over. "I got suspended. I got bitched out. I got drugged. I got in trouble. How am I the bad guy?"

"No, I'm not saying you're the bad guy, Mike. Not at all. You didn't do anything wrong. Except maybe the running away part. But if you just let it end like this. You and me ... I screwed up, Mike. I've admitted that. I've said I'm sorry. Come back. Don't close the book on us." Jessy looked at him in the eye again, the look in those blue eyes vulnerable. "And if you won't come back to me, at least go back to UT and Samuels. You belong in the water, baby. You belong on the medal podium, wearing gold around your neck."

"I haven't been swimming since I left home." It hurt his heart. Swimming and Jessy had somehow gotten all tangled up inside him.

Jessy closed his eyes, bit his lip. "Baby ... Come home. Please."

"I..." Oh, Jessy looked so sad. So lonely. "I can't. I sent the papers in already."

Jessy took a familiar envelope out of his pocket and slipped it across the table to Mike. "Samuels gave this to me. I want you to know, Mike—even if you go ahead and send it back to him I still want you to come home. I don't care if you never swim another lap in a race, I'll still want you home with me."

Oh.

"I'll have to follow you. I have my bike here."

Jessy blinked at him for a moment and then hope leapt in those blue eyes. "Have you got a trailer for it or something so we could tow it?"

"Uncle Frank does, in the garage." He ate one of his French fries. "I missed you. Lots."

"Yeah, me, too. I tried calling you a few days after you left. Figured you'd come back here." Jessy was watching him, not touching his own food, just watching. "Your aunt was good enough to let me know you were just fine and that I shouldn't call back."

"Oh. She's sort of pissed off." He'd cried some, thrown up a lot. "It's been real shitty. I hate waiting tables."

"Go tell them you've quit, baby, and let's go home."

"For real?" He met Jessy's eyes, biting his bottom lip.

"Forever, baby."

He nodded. "I promise, Jess. I wouldn't—wouldn't *ever* take something like that. I mean, I still feel bad when I drink my sodas."

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"You should—they're strictly off-limits," Jessy growled at him, but the look in those blue eyes was happy, hopeful. "I am sorry I jumped to conclusions, Mike. I promise to be better about giving you the benefit of the doubt in the future if you'll promise to stick around until we have a chance to talk things out."

He nodded. "Okay. Okay, that's fair." Hell, he'd still been stoned when he'd made it to Kathy's.

"Okay. Well if we're going to head off tonight, we'd best get going." Jessy stood and left some money on the table.

"I'll buy supper." Mike stood, went over to Susan, taking off his apron. "I'm going back to Austin, I think."

She grinned. "Back to swimming, huh? You won't be giving a week's notice?"

"No. I'm sorry. I ... I need to go home."

Jessy's hand slid suddenly around his waist. "I'm sorry for the inconvenience, ma'am. But Mike belongs in Austin." He could practically hear Jessy's silent "with me" at the end of that.

She nodded, grinned. "Mail me your uniform, Mikey. Good luck with the swimming thing."

He gave her a quick hug. "Thanks, Sue. So much."

Then he turned to Jessy. "Let's go."

"Yeah, baby. Let's go home."

\* \* \* \*

Jessy had been good.

He'd followed Mike back to Aunt Kathy's so they could collect the trailer and Mike's clothes. He'd driven and driven

and driven until it was three fucking thirty in the morning. He was done being good.

The next rest stop he found he pulled in, all but crowing when it proved to be empty. He turned off the engine and put the car in park. "Baby. I need you."

Mike nodded, unfastened the seat belt, those dark eyes huge. "Uh-huh."

Christ, he'd been wanting this for three weeks. Jessy grabbed Mike and tugged him over, mouth covering Mike's, kissing his baby hard. Mike opened up, so hot, so hungry. Those hands wrapped around his shoulders, held on. God, he'd gotten to need this.

He tore at Mike's shirt, fingers stuttering as they hit warm skin and then sliding over it to search out those sensitive, little points.

Mike sobbed, moving closer. "Jess. Love you. Missed you so bad."

"Yeah. Yeah, baby." He gave up touching Mike to reach down and find the lever to move the seat back. He found it easily enough and shoved his seat as far back as it would go and then tugged Mike over onto him. "Need you, baby." Mike cuddled into him, the weight and heat delicious, so familiar, so missed.

He took Mike's shirt the rest of the way off and started in on his lover's pants, freeing Mike's hot, hard cock. Mike just kept kissing him, eyes wide open, shining at him, watching him. Those hands slid down his belly, around to hold him tight.

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He moaned, started moving, hand bringing their cocks together, wrapping both their hands around them. "Baby..."

"Yeah. Yeah. I love you. Don't stop, 'kay? Don't stop touching me."

"Never, baby. Never. Need you." He slid his free hand around to Mike's ass, pressing them tightly together.

Mike's kisses were salty, desperate, hungry. He returned them eagerly, hand working their cocks hard. He wanted to fuck Mike properly, wanted to spread him out and send him fucking flying, maybe use the nipple clamps, the collar, everything they had and just fuck for hours. He couldn't do that until they got home, and this would take the edge off.

He hoped.

Mike started humping into his hand, moans filling his mouth, the scent of need strong, heady. He got hold of Mike's tongue and started sucking it, pulling it into his mouth.

Mike cried out, jerked, heat spraying over his cock. Groaning, he came, too, Mike's pleasure spurring on his own. His cock was still hard, his need making him moan as he continued to kiss Mike.

"Mmm ... Love you. Love you, Jess." Mike was purring, lips on his cheeks, his jaw.

"I love you, baby." He let go of their cocks and wrapped both arms around Mike, squeezing hard. "And I'm not letting you go again."

"Promise?"

"I promise, baby. I don't know why I didn't come after you right away this time. Bad call. Bad calls all around." Jessy

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kissed Mike hard and shifted him back into his seat. "I can't wait to get you home."

Mike nodded. "I'm ready. Take me home, Jessy. I want our bed."

Jessy nodded, zipped Mike back into his pants and pulled their seat belts on. "Home. Where you belong."

Mike's hand settled on his thigh. "Yeah."

He nodded and started the engine again, got them out onto the road. His hand covered Mike's on his thigh.

No, he was never letting go again.

\* \* \* \*

Mike slept like the dead for a few hours and then his internal clock woke him and he wandered downstairs to make coffee, still ninety percent asleep and dazed, searching idly for things that weren't where they belonged.

Jessy's arms slid around his waist suddenly, a warm kiss dropping on his neck. "Since when do you make me coffee, baby?"

"Mmm ... Make a lot of coffee these days, Jess." He leaned over the warm arms, cuddling, distracted.

"You're not working at Denny's anymore. You're back to swimming as your job." Jessy's mouth slid on his skin, nibbling, licking.

"Not for three ... mmm ... three months..."

Jessy snorted. "You're not allowed to compete for just over two more months; no one ever said you couldn't swim."

He nodded, agreeing easily. "You stopped kissing."

"You woke up the coach."

"Didn't mean to. Just wanted some coffee." He grinned, shook his head. "Of course, I was still at Aunt Kathy's, looking where she keeps hers."

"No coffee, baby." Jessy turned him, looked into his face. "The rules are back in place. All of them."

He looked away, blushing. "I've been ... way not following the rules." Way as in a twelve-pack of Dr. Pepper a day and chocolate for breakfast even.

"Is this your way of telling me that you're going to be a bitch for the next few days as you break a few habits?"

"Uh-huh." He looked up. "I was really angry at you."

"So you punished yourself? That's not right, baby. Not that I wasn't doing the same thing."

"Yeah. It wasn't on purpose, it just felt like I was in trouble for what I didn't do, so I might as well do things."

"That's faulty logic." He was given a wink and a hug.

"Look, Mike. Truth was you were high. I know now it wasn't your fault, but you were still high. It could have been much worse if the ISO had done a random drug test the next day at the pool. It's not your fault at all. But from now on you're going to have to be more vigilant. Never accept an open drink from anyone but me."

He sighed, shook his head. "I didn't even get to enjoy it."

"I tell you what, baby. Making love beats out being high every time."

"No shit. It's never caused me as much trouble as that stupid party."

Jessy chuckled. "If I remember correctly, that's often the point of frat parties."



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"Yeah." He wasn't ready to laugh about it. Nowhere near. The whole thing still hurt.

Jessy kissed him again. "You really ready to start the day? Or do you want to come back to bed with me and we'll hide under the covers and see what comes up?"

He found a smile, snuggled in. "I think hiding is good."

"No, baby, hiding with your lover is good."

Yeah. Yeah. "I'm glad to be home."

"How glad?" Jessy grinned, eyebrows waggling, starting to back up.

He chuckled. "Pretty glad."

"Suck me off glad?"

"Maybe." Jessy or coffee. Jessy or coffee ... He winked.

Jessy stopped backing up. "Maybe?"

Mike chuckled, grinned, feeling mischievous. "I might have forgotten how."

Jessy started to laugh. "You need me to give you a reminder, baby?"

"Maybe." Oh, it felt good to laugh. Really good.

Jessy kissed Mike hard and then went to his knees right there in the hallway, hands tugging down Mike's sweatpants.

Mike's eyes went wide, arching. "Jess?" He thought he was going to be sucking Jessy.

Jessy licked his cock from bottom to tip. "You said you needed a reminder how to do this, baby."

"Hot. Oh. Oh, I thought..." He thought he'd never feel this again, never know Jessy loving him again.

One of Jessy's eyebrows went up. "You're not supposed to be thinking, baby."

"I'm not? See? I told you I forgot."

Jessy laughed and then, without warning, swallowed him down, nose buried in his pubes.

His head slammed back, eyes wide and rolling. "Jess!"

Jessy hummed around his prick, head starting to bob. Mike went up on his toes, hips rocking, pushing deep. Jessy swallowed around his cock, hands wrapping around his hips, encouraging his movements.

"Love. Oh. Oh, I..." He needed. Needed.

Jessy nodded, moving Mike's hips until he was fucking Jessy's mouth.

"Gonna. Love you. So good." Babbling. He was babbling.

Jessy's blue eyes danced up at him, the sucking getting harder. He bucked, eyes rolling, fingers scrabbling against the wall. One of Jessy's fingers slid along his crack, pushing at his hole.

He went still, panted, eyes on Jessy. "Oh, God. Yes. Please. I want you to fuck me, Jess. Need it."

Jessy growled, pulling off his cock and turning him, pushing him up against the wall as hard fingers spread his ass cheeks apart. Then Jessy's tongue was wetting him, pushing into him.

He shouted, hips jerking, hand gripping the base of his cock. "Yes. Yes. Fuck."

"Soon, baby. Let me just get you wet."

He nodded, groaned. "Yeah. Soon..."

Humming, Jessy went back to tongue fucking him, one hand sneaking up his body to tweak a nipple.

"I'll come. Jess. Please. I'll come."

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"Wait for me, baby." Jessy stood, foot spreading Mike's legs a little wider, that thick cock pushing against his hole.

"Oh. Yes. Yes..." He arched, bearing down, the burn sweet and necessary and familiar.

Jessy groaned in his ear, cock pushing into him, filling him. Mike needed, entire body aching, arching, begging for more, deeper, harder. Jessy gave it to him, gave him everything he needed, pounding into him over and over again. One of Jessy's hands dropped to his cock, pumping it.

He couldn't last. He didn't. He just arched and squeezed, coming hard. Jessy groaned into his ear, jerking into him a few more times before filling him with heat.

"Oh, baby..."

"Uh-huh. Needed you."

"Got me." Jessy's face was buried in his neck, arms coming around him, holding on.

He took a hitching breath, squeezing. Home. He was home.

And he wasn't leaving again.

\* \* \* \*

Jessy took Mike back to the pool the next day. He wanted his swimmer back in the water as soon as possible. He wanted things back to normal as soon as possible.

Truth was, he was nagged by guilt over this. He should have paid more attention to what Mike was trying to tell him that night. He should have gone to Kathy's as soon as he'd realized Mike was gone. He should have called back and

talked to Mike. There were a lot of things he should have done.

He paced alongside the pool, watching Mike swim, feeling guilty, wrong in his skin. Mike wasn't focused, wasn't into it, was just pulling himself through the water.

"Mike!" He got his swimmer's attention, crouching down next to Mike in the water. "What are you thinking about?"

Mike looked up, treading water. "I ... Stuff? The last time I was here. The weather. I don't know."

He shook his head. "And what are you supposed to be thinking about?"

"The wall." Mike shrugged. "I just can't."

"Why not?"

"I don't know. I have stuff in my head." Mike started moving again.

"None of it matters. All that matters is the water. Go on, give me some freestyle."

Mike nodded, started swimming again, trying for him, the effort obvious. He'd let Mike swim it out for today and then take him home, fuck him blind. Maybe they'd talk while they were both mellow.

He nodded at Jeff Samuels as the UT coach came up.

"How's he doing, Jessy?" Jeff looked Mike over. "He looks stiff."

"Yeah. Hasn't swum until today. Fell into all sorts of bad habits." He shook his head. It was going to take the two months Mike had left in his suspension before the kid was ready to see a competition. "He'll work it out."

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Jeff nodded. "He will. You considered taking him somewhere? Switching up the training? I mean, your boy's all about routine, but his routine's all cracked. You could take him somewhere where there's nothing but you, him, cleaning his body out, finding the water..."

Jessy nodded. It was a good idea. He'd been so focused on getting them back to their routine, he hadn't considered that maybe they needed to find each other, their centers—the damned wall—first. "You got any suggestions, Jeff?"

"Go up north, maybe? There's got to be a place with a heated pool, somewhere you can get in his headspace again."

He nodded. "I could take him up to Atlanta or Montreal. Go 'round to see the Olympic pools." They could play tourist, there wouldn't be any distractions but the ones they made them for themselves.

Jeff nodded, eyes on the pool. "Yeah. You two need to settle things between you, between him and the water."

"We do. How are your boys doing?"

"The marginal ones? Still marginal. Harry quit, went to Cal Tech. My two serious swimmers? Not sleeping, stressed. Upset."

Jessy shook his head. "You should have let me beat that kid to a pulp, Jeff. A fucking joke. Screwed up a whole bunch of kids' lives."

"Yeah. And the drug itself made it worse, heightened their emotions and made things insane."

"You ever consider the kid might have been planted? Competition making sure UT has to do another year of rebuilding?"

Jeff blinked. "No, man, that kid was scared."

"Well, it was worth considering. Hank over at UCLA's been sniffing around Mike."

"Hank is a jackass, and if you let him have Mike I'll beat you." No rivalry there.

He grinned. "I'm not letting Mike go, Jeff. No worry there."

"Good." Jeff nodded. "I like him. He's a natural."

"He's the real deal. The best." He watched Mike do a few more laps. "All right. I'm taking my swimmer home and then we're going to go find the wall again. Good luck with your boys, Jeff."

"See you in a month or two, Jessy."

He shook Jeff's hand and crouched back down by the edge of the pool, waiting for Mike to come back to the end, catching Mike's attention. "Come on. Let's go home. I've got a proposal for you."

"A proposal?" He got a look, a raised eyebrow. "Okay."

"Brat. Not that kind of proposal."

Mike chuckled, eyes dancing. "Damn."

"Not today, anyway." He gave Mike a wink and held out his hand, helping Mike out of the water.

"So? What's up? I still have a lot of laps left..."

"I was thinking you could finish them at the Olympic pool in Atlanta. Or maybe Montreal." He watched Mike, gauging his reaction.

Mike tilted his head; sometimes his swimmer was such a pup. "Yeah? Why?"

"Because I think getting away together would be good for both us. Let us relax a little and find how we fit again, yeah?"

"Yeah. Okay." Mike nodded, dried off. "I could do that. Be with you."

"And fall in love with the water all over again." Jessy smiled and looked over at the door. "Maybe with me, too."

"I never fell out." Mike got his stuff together, grabbed his bag and they headed for the locker room.

"I know, but it's still there between us a little. What happened." He stopped Mike as they got there, stroked one cheek. "We just need to focus on you and me and the wall with nothing else to distract us."

Mike nodded, eyes serious. "Yeah. I want ... I want things back to normal."

"Yeah, baby. That's the plan." He glanced around the locker room and, finding it empty, leaned in for a real quick kiss.

Mike's eyes went wide, but he got a grin, a kiss back. "Coach!"

He wondered if he looked as sheepish as he felt. "Couldn't help myself."

He headed for the door, opening it for Mike. Time for them to get out of there.

Mike chuckled, nodded. "Right behind you."

"Admiring the view?" he asked, looking back to give Mike a wink.

Mike nodded. "You're a fine man."

He chuckled, feeling good. Yeah, Jeff was right. A holiday was just what they needed to get themselves back on track, to evict the awkwardness that one little asshole and his "joke" had managed to insert between them.

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They'd go away, fuck their brains out, swim until they couldn't go another length, and just be.



## Chapter Eleven

Mike was tired and grumpy and headachy and he wanted coffee in the worst way. Of course, there was a coffeehouse *right* across the street from the tiny apartment Jessy had rented them, just calling to him.

Not that Jessy was going to let him have coffee. Mike wasn't sure he could take a breath without Jessy seeing it.

"You want to go see the pool, baby? Or wait until tomorrow?" Jessy on the other hand, appeared to be in a disgustingly good mood.

"You sure are perky." Mike found a smile, a wink. "Are you really sure about the whole coffee thing? I could so use a shot."

Jessy snorted. "I'm pretty fucking sure, Mike. No caffeine." His hand was grabbed. "Come on, I talked to the owner when he let us in earlier. We're at the base of 'the mountain' which isn't really and is a real nice climb from what I understand."

He chuckled, Jessy's enthusiasm catching, making it impossible to be bitchy.

They headed out to explore, finding the path that led up Mount Royal, discovering once they were at the top that there was a staircase they could have taken. There were several lookout points, letting them stop and check out the city, the St. Lawrence River. Everything was covered in snow and they could see their breath. It was cold as hell and strangely beautiful.

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They didn't linger anywhere and took the stairs down, which was much quicker than winding their way up the footpaths.

"What kind of food do you feel like, Mike?"

He chuckled, bending to tie his shoe and scooping up a bit of snow, sliding it in Jessie's collar as he stood. "Something warm."

Jessie squeaked and jumped and then picked up a big handful of snow, forming it into a ball and tossing it at him. It landed square on his chest, breaking apart and floofing snow up into his face.

"Bitch!" He laughed hard, making a snowball of his own, tossing it and popping Jessie in the shoulder.

Jessie, of course, retaliated and they were both soon breathless, hands like icicles. "Come on, let's go in here," suggested Jessie, pulling him into a place called Tony Roma's, which claimed to be a sports bar with the best Italian food in the city.

"Okay." Mike nodded, suddenly starving, breathing a little hard. The place smelled like garlic and tomatoes and olives.

They got a seat at a booth near the back and Jessie ordered a beer for himself and a hot chocolate for Mike along with fettuccini alfredo and shrimp for both of them.

He chuckled, rolling his eyes, teasing. "And what if I'd wanted spaghetti and big greasy meatballs and tomato sauce?"

"I know what you like, baby."

Mike nodded, leaning back as the waiter brought bread and salads. "You do. Although I did enjoy my daily french

fries and chicken fried steak thing at Denny's." His stomach hated it, but his mouth? Yum.

Jessy made a face, head shaking. "Back on your diet, baby. No more of this eating whatever you want shit."

"I lost six pounds off your diet. See? Proof you're trying to make me fat." He ran his foot over Jessy's ankle, letting Jessy know he was just talking, just pushing to see where they were again.

"That's probably because you couldn't keep anything down off my diet." Jessy's eyes were twinkling.

"I didn't throw up after every meal, you know." God, the salad tasted good. Fresh and crisp and just right.

Jessy laughed, foot finding his leg and returning the caress. "Just every second one, right?"

"Maybe every second and a half. It depended on whether I ate breakfast." He winked, buttered a slice of bread.

Jessy shook his head. "I suppose I can't bitch—I threw up every second morning, depending on how soon I doctored myself with whiskey." He was given a wink and then Jessy changed the subject. "You looking forward to checking out the Olympic pool?"

He nodded. "Yeah. I'm all off my schedule. It's weird. Makes me uncomfortable, like I'm forgetting something."

Jessy took a long sip of his beer. "Your routine got royally screwed. You weren't swimming every day, you weren't eating the food you usually ate, you weren't staying away from the illegal stuff, and I wasn't fucking you silly twice a day. We'll get you back into a routine again in no time."

He sighed, frowned over. "I really need you to stop that."

He hadn't taken the drug on purpose. Hell, he hadn't even taken it by accident. Someone had *fucked* with him, and Jessy kept on like he was to blame somehow.

Jessy frowned. "Stop what?"

"You keep blaming me for the party. You keep insisting that I *took* something, that I did something. I drank a soda that a team member brought me. I didn't even know I was high. Hell, I was still high when I drove to Dallas." Mike shrugged. "I just feel like you think I did something I should feel bad about, and I didn't."

Jessy was still frowning. "I didn't say a word about the party, Mike. All I was talking about was you not swimming and eating stuff you know I won't let you eat, you know—illegal. And I keep apologizing for not believing you at the party, I'm not sure what else you want me to do."

"Oh." He blushed dark, eyes on his salad. Okay, so he was a big moron. "Sorry. I misunderstood."

Jessy reached out and squeezed his hand. "Well, obviously the whole drug thing is still sitting here with us or you wouldn't have. Do you really think I'm blaming you for what happened?"

"Maybe. I think part of you does." He swallowed hard, forced the words out. "Because if you don't at all, then you wouldn't say that I 'took' it. We'd have to ask why you didn't trust me." Because he'd not broken any of Jessy's rules. And the chocolate and Dr. Peppers were way harder.

Jessy ran his hand through his hair, sighing. "I'm sorry if my word choice bothers you, Mike, and I will try to be clear

that I know you didn't take it, okay? And I do trust you. I do. More than I have ever trusted anyone in my life, ever, baby."

Jessy looked at him intently and nodded. "And maybe when you were high and I had no reason to know that you weren't that way through your own efforts, maybe a part of me that I didn't even know was waiting piped up. 'There you go, Jessy, this one's gonna screw you just like all the rest of them have. '"

He nodded, playing with his salad. "There's part of you that doesn't believe in me. I guess that's just normal, huh?" Like the part of him that left without saying goodbye.

Jessy shook his head. "No, baby, you've got it backwards. There's a part of me that doesn't believe in *me*."

"What?" Jessy confused the hell out of him sometimes.

"Did you know that none of my swimmers have ever stayed with me, baby? I'm too strict, my rules are too hard, the west coast is warmer, the east coast is prettier, this coach gives away free cars; that one lets you stay out and party every night." Jessy shrugged. "I guess I keep waiting for you to decide I'm more trouble than winning's worth. Maybe that's why I didn't come after you sooner."

"I don't stay with you because I want to win, Jessy. I stay because I need you." He shrugged. "I just want to swim. I mean, I hate the no chocolate rule, I do, but I do it. I'm not smart enough to do this without you, I just run around in circles. I mean, Aunt Kathy's right, I'm nothing on my own. People don't hire swimmers in the real world."

"I don't ever want to hear you calling yourself nothing again, Michael Gaulliet. You are the most amazing swimmer I

have ever seen. And that was before you even knew who Jessy Turner was." Jessy shook his head. "I like that you need me, though, baby. It's good not to be doing that on your own."

He looked over. "So I'm not leaving. I just want to swim and be with you, maybe watch a movie a week."

"I think we can do better than just one movie a week, baby." Jessy gave him a warm smile, blue eyes looking ... relieved, maybe, and happy. "I love you," Jessy said quietly. "And I need you to know that swimming or no, I want you to be my lover."

Mike nodded. "And I need to swim, so I need you to be both."

"I can be both, baby." Jessy gave him a grin. "I'm damn good at being both."

"Yeah. Yeah, you are." He grinned, sat back as their meals came. "Even if you're unreasonable about the chocolate."

\* \* \* \*

They took the Metro to the pool, meeting up with a city worker who let them in and assured them they had the place booked nine to noon and two to four for the next two months. They needed to go by the office on their way out and sign for a key.

Jessy thanked the gentleman and grinned over at Mike. "Ready for your first taste of the Olympics?"

"I just want to get in the water." Mike was restless, ready, almost bouncing with it.

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He laughed, happy at that restlessness. Mike needed to want that water.

They made their way to the changing rooms and he got into his swimming trunks as well, waiting for Mike to notice—he hadn't told the kid he was going in, too.

Mike's eyes dragged along his body, going wide. "You're swimming with me?" The pleasure in that voice was gratifying.

He nodded, smiled. "I've always wanted to dip my toes in an Olympic pool. Besides, I figure I can coach easier across fifty meters if I'm swimming them with you."

"Cool. Let's go." Yep. Bouncing. Eager.

Chuckling, he followed behind Mike. This was the real thing. Once upon a time, Olympic champions had walked along here with their coaches. World champions still did.

Mike's eyes were on the water, shining. Those arms were swinging, wide shoulders so strong. "Laps?"

"Yep. The usual order, fifty each. Don't worry when you leave me behind."

"Uh-huh. Turn the music on?" Mike wasn't even listening, moving toward the edge like an addict.

He chuckled and set up the CD player, turning on something loud and noisy that Mike liked, taking the time to watch Mike with the water.

He could already see things. See the way Mike took the first few laps to focus, to get into things. Mike did it in races, too. The kid had a slow first leg. Still, it didn't take long before Mike was in sync, pushing, sliding.

Not counting, but swimming.

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He turned off the music, waiting for Mike to stop and look up at him, treading water. "How many's that, baby?" He wasn't called a hardass for nothing.

"Uh ... seven?"

He chuckled. "Start from the top and *count* this time, Mike."

He slipped into the water and started swimming himself, keeping pace with Mike for a while before the kid's pure talent and power left him behind. Mike moved well, staying far ahead. Being in the water like this, Jessy could match Mike's strokes with the rhythm of the music, the beat speeding up, pushing Mike as he tired.

This was the Mike he knew, the Mike who had a love affair with two things in life—the water and him.

He was damned lucky to be a part of both of those.

Jessy finally got out of the water, not even trying to pretend that he could match Mike.

Finally Mike's head lifted, cheeks red, his baby panting. "What next?"

"Short sprints across the short length of the pool. Ten in a row as quick as you can." Jessy was going to push Mike; they both needed to get back into a routine, to get back on track.

Mike nodded, wrinkled his nose, and started. Mike wasn't a sprinter, but even so, he was making good times, finding his rhythm four turns in.

He pondered that, pondered what to do to have Mike not need that first turn to feel the water out. For now, that wasn't a problem, he was more than making up the time on the



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subsequent laps, but they hit the world circuit and Mike would need to up the ante.

He had Mike up out of the water, on the blocks, starting, swimming fifty and then out again. It didn't take four laps before Mike started glaring, breathing hard, rumbling.

He got up on the blocks next to Mike. "Let's see if you can beat me in a simple fifty."

Mike bent over, stretched, breathing hard. "You're fresh. I'm not. That's cheating."

He glanced at the clock. "Okay, we'll save that for this afternoon. We'll break early this morning and you can have a nice, long shower before we do lunch."

"No way." Mike shook his head, eyes going stubborn. "I didn't say I wouldn't swim it."

"But I'm going to beat you and you aren't going to believe it's because you have a slow first fifty. You notice I'm not suggesting a two hundred or a four hundred—you'd beat me in that without even trying."

"I know I have a slow first fifty, Coach. I always have. Otherwise I'd be a sprinter."

He chuckled and went over to Mike. "If you can gain even two strokes in your first lap, Mike, you'll be unbeatable."

"I try. I do, but it's like..." Mike shrugged, sat on the blocks. "I have to find the water first."

"Couldn't you find it in the first ten to fifteen meters?"

"I'm still under the water then, coach." Mike chuckled. "I find it on the turn. You know that."

"I know. I know." He rubbed Mike's arm, trying to wrap his brain around the problem. "What's so special about that first

turn? It's almost like it isn't the water you need to find, but that first wall..."

Mike leaned against him, nodding. "Got to make the turn, push, go go go."

"But you need to go go go right from the start, Mike, not after hitting that first wall." He frowned. "Have you always had that slow first fifty or is it only since I started coaching you?" Could he have somehow warped Mike on this, with his insistence on focusing on the wall?

"I've never won a fifty. Never even qualified in one." Mike shrugged. "Is it my start or my strokes?"

"I'm not sure. I think you're just not pulling hard enough until you hit that first turn. I don't know why."

"It doesn't feel like I'm slacking, Coach."

"No, I don't imagine it's anything you're deliberately doing." He walked around Mike, checked the clock again. "Give me another fifty and I want you to really concentrate on going all out for me. Then you can get out and do it again coming back. I want you to really try, Mike. Give it *everything*."

Mike nodded, got back on the blocks, and got ready, dove in. Jessy could see it, now that he was looking, see the way Mike was thinking about pushing, his body fighting the...

Jessy blinked.

The damned music.

Mike's music.

The first tracks of Mike's training CD—they built up and sped up. Mike trained a slow start.

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He let Mike keep going, didn't change the music. He'd put a different tape in at the two o'clock practice, see if it made any difference.

He was almost bouncing by the time Mike got out of the water, looking despondent. "Come on, Mike, let's go and get some lunch." He gave Mike a grin, clapped the lean back.

"You're cheery." He got a look, Mike shaking just a little, breathing hard.

He nodded and grinned. "You're beautiful in the water, baby. Like a dream. It makes me happy." He was going to keep his discovery to himself, just in case it worked out to be wrong. No reason to get both their hopes up.

Mike rolled his eyes, but grinned. "Weirdo."

He just grinned back at Mike. "Your weirdo."

"What's lunch? Burgers and fries?"

"Sure and you can have a half dozen Dr. Peppers and some chocolate cake to finish it up." He gave Mike a look.

"Actually, there's a place called Ben's. Supposedly the best smoked meat in North America."

"Smoked meat? Like brisket from Rudy's?"

"Yeah, but 'Montreal style.'" He grinned. "Don't ask me—I'm just going by the flyer I found."

He led Mike into the changing room, both of them stripping down and getting dressed.

Mike was grumbling a bit, dark hair flopping into those eyes. "I shouldn't be so tired. I still have another workout this afternoon."

"Doesn't take very long for your body to go soft. Why do you think I insist on training full-time even when you've got months between meets?"

"Because otherwise you wouldn't have a job."

He laughed. "Brat. I do it so you stay in fighting shape. Swimming shape. Racing shape. Whatever." He snapped his towel at Mike and finished getting dressed.

Mike chuckled, slid on jeans and a sweater. "Come on; feed me before I starve to death."

"That's right—you lost six pounds and I need to fatten you up." Jessy grabbed their jackets and helped Mike into his and then they headed out, dropping by the office first to pick up a key so they could come in on their own.

He couldn't wait to get back here at two and test out his theory.

\* \* \* \*

He was full as a tick and half-queasy after lunch and Jessy insisted they go for a long walk, looking at music stores, grabbing the odds and ends for trail mix for the room. By the time they got back to the pool, he was feeling good, energized, ready to go.

Coach didn't get on his swimming trunks this time, but he was eager for them to get out to the pool, for Mike to start swimming, doing that odd almost bouncing thing again.

"Coach? You good?" He stripped and got his spare shorts on, rolling his shoulders. He grabbed his boom box.

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Coach nodded and grinned, grabbing the boom box from him. "I got you some new music. Go on and get ready to do me a few fifty meter sprints. I'll turn it on for you."

"New music?" He frowned. "But ... I've been using the same CD for like ever."

Coach nodded. "I know. I just thought maybe it was time for a change. Oh, don't look at me like that, if you really hate it we can put your CD back in. Now get up on the block."

"Okay." Mike got up, stretched. "I'm ready. Turn the music on?"

Jessy nodded, hitting the play button and the quick opening sequence of a worldbeat piece filled the air. Mike listened for a second, then dove into the water, pushing, moving with the thrum of the music for a bit before he found the quiet inside him and just swam, taking the turn without thought.

The music stopped, letting him know Coach wanted him. He stopped, head popping up. "Yeah?"

"You're supposed to be swimming fifty meter sprints, baby, coming out of the water in between." Coach looked pretty fucking happy, though, for a man who was telling him off.

"Oh. Sorry." He *hated* the getting out of the water part.

He pulled himself up and out, getting back on the block and diving back in. The music came back on just as he hit the water, the beat fast and hard.

He moved across the pool, almost humming to himself, forcing himself not to make the turn. "How many times, Coach?"

"Five more, baby. I want to make sure it's not a fluke."

"Make sure what's not a fluke?" He pulled himself up, setting up again.

"Just do it five more times, Mike."

"Yes, Coach."

One. Two. Three.

Fuck, his legs were humming.

Four. Five.

On the fifth he took the turn and let his body go, took the next hundred and fifty yards, hard and fast, feeling it deep inside.

The music stopped as he came up to the wall and Coach was right there, just grinning at him. "And the crowd goes wild as Gaulliet wins the gold."

"Huh?" He grinned back. "You look happy."

Coach nodded. "You're not up to speed yet, but you weren't fighting the music this time out."

"Fighting the music?"

Coach grinned. "Your usual CD? Starts slow and builds. Just like you swim. You've been training slow out off the block. The new CD is fast to start with, you got into your fast pace more quickly. We'll need to work on it, but it won't take that long to get you trained right up to speed."

He blinked, eyes going wide. "Oh. Oh!"

Coach grinned at him, petted his arm. "Go on, get on the block and start swimming four hundreds."

"kay." He nodded, hopped up and started moving, swimming. For the first time in weeks, he felt ... right.

Natural.

Home.

## Chapter Twelve

Friday night, Jessy was almost giddy. Four days of working on his start with the new music and already Mike was showing a marked improvement on his first racing lap. Mike was swimming well, too, body cutting through the water like he was born to it. Like he used to. With the added improvement of that starting lap being faster.

"What do you want to do to celebrate, baby?" he asked as Mike got dressed.

"Ice cream sundaes? Go for a walk and see stuff?" Mike's voice lowered. "Go back to the apartment and uh ... play?"

Jessy purred softly, cock just leaping. "I'll take door number three. As long as that's really what you want." He didn't want to push his own desires on Mike if the kid wanted to go out and do a little honest partying.

"I want. Really." Those eyes were dark, shining, wanting.

"Excellent. I brought the collar. The nipple clamps. And a plug." Part of the trip was to find themselves again and the ways they played, as well as work on Mike and the water. And that had worked so well, he had high hopes for their sex life.

"Oh..." Mike's hand slid in his a second, squeezed.

He grinned. "Come on, baby. I need you."

Mike was bouncy, eager, feeling good and healthy beside him. It hadn't taken long for Mike's body to respond to the diet, the exercise, the solid sleep. Even the caffeine bitchiness hadn't lasted long.

It felt good, to be back into the rhythm of coach/swimmer again. And once they started playing, they'd get the other

back, too. Not that they weren't making love, doing it as often as possible, but they hadn't played hard at all yet and it was there, waiting for them.

It didn't take long before they were pushing into their small apartment, getting out of the cold. He couldn't believe people lived in this cold on purpose.

"You want something to drink, Jess?" Mike stripped down to jeans and T-shirt.

"Yeah, some water. You should have some, too. And we'll eat later. After. Order a pizza or something."

He took off his outdoor clothes and made sure the door was locked and then went to pull out the lube, the plug, the clamps and the collar. They wouldn't necessarily use them all tonight, but it turned them both on, having them visible. There.

Mike brought the water, eyes staring at the toys, throat working. "Oh. Here. Jess."

"Thanks, baby." He let his eyes rake over Mike, letting the Coach go and embracing the lover. "Naked," he said softly before drinking his water.

"Uh-huh." Mike stripped the shirt off, dark hair just visible on that sweet, flat belly. Mike hadn't shaved in more than a month, dark curls looking almost odd above the long cock as those jeans were removed.

He reached out, fingers sliding, catching on the hair. "Let me shave you first?"

Mike moaned, pushing toward his hand, prick jerking. "Oh. Okay. Yeah."



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He purred. "Yeah, baby. More than okay." He let his hand slide down, wrap around Mike's cock. Mike moaned, hips sliding that cock through the tunnel of his hand.

"Damned sexy, baby," he murmured, thumb sliding over the tip of Mike's cock as he stroked.

"Mmm.." Mike was rocking, pushing, fucking his hand. "So good. So good, Jessy."

"Yeah. Come on, show me how good and then we'll shave you. Play. Fuck like crazy."

"Uh-huh. Want to use the collar. Need you to." Oh. Oh, Mike hadn't ever asked for it before.

He nodded, his own cock pressing hard against his jeans. "Anything you want, baby."

Mike's hands landed on his shoulders, head falling back, hips pushing wildly for a moment before spunk spread over his fingers. Moaning, he kept stroking Mike's cock, making his baby shiver with aftershocks.

"Oh. Oh. Jess. Good." Mike nodded, motions growing jerky, pulling away.

He let Mike go reluctantly and then nudged Mike toward the bathroom. "Need to make you smooth, baby."

Mike moaned, blushing dark. "You make it sound so hot."

He grinned and chuckled wickedly. "Well, I think it is."

"It ... it feels so ... Intimate."

"Yeah, baby? More intimate than the collar? Than sucking and blowing and fucking?" He pressed close, loving the edge of need in Mike's voice.

"I. The collar is ... Wow."

He grinned. "Oh, baby, I love it when you get absolutely incoherent." He started the water in the tub, making sure he had the temperature right.

"You make me all shivery inside."

He purred. "Good. You make me feel like king of the world."

Mike stroked his spine, helping him undress. "You are my world, Jess."

He stopped and just looked at Mike for a moment and then kissed his baby hard. "I love you, too, Mike." Mike moaned, pushing into him, snuggling.

He cuddled with Mike for a moment and then pulled away. "In the tub now. Let me work you over with the razor."

"You want me to stand? Sit? You want the trimmer first?"

"No, I'll do it all with the razor. Go ahead and lie down, stretch out for me."

He moaned as Mike followed his orders, body long and lean, muscles light, wiry. That pretty cock was half-full, lying on Mike's belly, over the dark curls. He got out the shaving cream and sprayed it over Mike's chest. One shot to each nipple, one in Mike's navel and a smile below that. Mike snorted, scooping the cream in his bellybutton and tossing it at Jessy.

Laughing, he rubbed the cream around, spreading it over Mike's chest and belly. "You ready?"

"Uh-huh." Mike was almost purring, so hard, skin hot.

He started shaving the kid, wielding the razor carefully but confidently. Mike was right, it was fairly intimate, doing this to someone else. It was damned sexy, too.

Mike just watched, moaning low, eyes hot as fire.

He rinsed the excess cream away and bent, licking at Mike's skin, testing for missed spots.

Mike whimpered, muscles going tight. "Oh. Oh. Jess."

He purred. "You like that, baby?"

"Uh-huh. Tingles."

He grinned. He could do better for Mike than tingles. He wrapped his lips around one of Mike's nipples and started sucking. Mike's hand landed on the back of his head, pulled him close. Humming, he tugged harder, letting his teeth scrape against Mike's nipple every now and then.

"Oh. Oh. Good." Mike's voice filled the bathroom.

He nodded and switched nipples, eyes on Mike's face.

"Jess. Jess. So big. So much."

"And I've only just gotten started," he murmured.

"Oh. Damn."

"Want me to do your legs, baby? Or you wanna get them waxed?" He would do them if Mike wanted. Take his time, lick them afterward to test their smoothness.

"I..." Mike groaned, shifted. "No one's ever asked before..."

"What? Asked to shave your legs or to have them waxed?" Either way he wasn't really surprised, Mike tended to lose himself in the swimming and he knew he was Mike's first real relationship.

"Yes." Mike pinked. "I just shave them before a meet because I'm supposed to."

"Do you like it, though?" he asked, taking Mike's leg out of the water, propping his foot on the taps. He sprayed more

shaving cream onto Mike's skin. "Like how it feels as you're swimming?"

"I haven't paid attention, really." Mike grinned at him, sheepish. "You know me, Coach. Always distracted until that last fifty."

He laughed. "Well if I remember correctly from my own swimming days, being smooth in the water feels special. I'll shave them for now and next time you need them done we'll find a place that'll do your whole body."

Mike's eyes went wide. "My ... Somebody else?"

"Well, there's kits. I could do it for you, baby, but these things are better off left in the hands of professionals."

"God, when did being a swimmer get complicated?"

Grinning, he licked at the tip of Mike's cock. "As soon as you have a governing body? Things are complicated."

Mike moaned, thighs spreading. "Are you my governing body?"

He chuckled. "I like the sound of that, and I suppose in a way I am. I'm your direct governing body; the ISO is your indirect governing body."

He got a grin, a little moan. "I'm all yours, Jessy."

"I know you are."

He turned his attention to Mike's leg, taking his own sweet time as he slid the razor along Mike's skin.

Mike was trembling, cock hard, balls drawn up tight. "You're making me want, so bad."

"Yeah, it's pretty sexy, isn't it? I've got your other leg to do still, too."

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"It is. What are we going to do after this?" Mike was purring, panting.

"I'm going to put that collar on you and fuck your brains out." Possibly all night long. He needed fiercely.

"Thank God." Mike nodded. "I need, Jess. I need you to fuck me."

He nodded and started to work on Mike's other leg. "I know, baby." He could smell Mike's heat and need under the soap and shaving cream, rich and male.

His cock throbbed again, and he moaned as he pushed Mike's leg into the water, rinsing it. "Oh, fuck, baby. I need you."

Mike nodded, stood to turn the shower on and get the little hairs off. "In the bed. I need. Hard and deep." Mike's voice was trembling, low, but sure.

He nodded, hands sliding over Mike's skin, loath to lose contact, even for a moment.

So smooth, trembling, hot—Mike groaned low, then stumbled out of the tub, tugging him to the bed. Mike ended up on hands and knees, hot little hole offered to him. He pushed his face into Mike's ass, licking at that sweet hole, tongue pushing into Mike's body.

"Oh. Oh. Oh. Jess." Mike's back arched, hips rocking, pushing.

He groaned, started to fuck Mike with his tongue. Maybe the toys could wait, he wanted. No, he needed. And in the worst way. Just had to have Mike. Now.

"Uhn ... please. Please, Jessy. Please. Need." No one begged like his baby, Mike just giving it up.

He teased them both, kept working that sweet ass with his tongue until Mike's begging hit a fever pitch and his own need drove him up over Mike's body, cock pushing in that sweet, tight heat.

"Yes!" Mike arched, rocking into him, muscles rippling around him, holding him tight.

"Oh, baby. Christ." he groaned and then started to move, body working urgently.

Mike braced against the headboard, driving back against him. He kept moving, harder and faster and more and fuck, it was really good. He reached around Mike, grabbing that hard cock so they would tumble together. Mike jerked, hips snapping, ass gripping him hard.

"That's it, baby. Come for me. Come on my cock." He gripped Mike tighter, just fucking loving it.

"Jessy!" That squeeze intensified, Mike's body jerking as heat sprayed over his fingers.

He cried out Mike's name, jerking into his baby's body and coming hard.

Panting, he collapsed onto Mike.

Mike hummed, relaxing beneath him. "So good."

He nodded, petting Mike. "Yeah. Yeah, baby." He nuzzled Mike's back, slowing catching his breath. "Just wait for round two."

"Mmm ... round two." Mike cuddled back, ass squeezing him. "Sounds perfect."

He purred, fingers reaching to stroke Mike's neck. "It does."

"Love you, Coach. Honest."

He purred, hugged Mike tight. "I know, baby. I know."

Mike stretched, sliding on his prick. "Good."

His cock throbbed, thought about staying hard and maybe getting harder again.

"I slid the toys into the bedside table drawer, baby. You think you can reach the collar and the clamps?" He wanted to play, but he sure as hell didn't want to slide out of Mike.

One of those long, long arms reached out, fingers digging in the drawer. Each stretch squeezed him.

He shuddered and whimpered. "Christ, baby. I'm not even going to get soft here at all."

"Is that bad?" He got another squeeze.

His chuckle turned into another moan, his hands finding Mike's hips and just holding on. "No. No, baby, it isn't." Except maybe he was too old for this.

"Oh, good." Mike laughed and he felt it, all around him.

He closed his eyes and just held on, feeling Mike's body, enjoying the heat and wonder of it. "Love you, baby."

The toys were put on the bed, Mike rocking beneath him. Humming, he picked up the collar, sliding it over Mike's skin and slowly pulling it up into place around Mike's neck.

"Oh..." Mike swallowed, flushed, suddenly hot beneath him.

He moaned softly. "You do like the collar, don't you, baby?"

"Uh-huh ... Is that okay? You don't mind?"

"Shit, baby, if I minded I wouldn't have bought it for you. I wouldn't have started doing it in the first place." He kissed the back of Mike's neck, nuzzling the warm skin there. "And

not only don't I mind, it turns me on big time, doing it to you."

"Oh. Oh, good." Mike relaxed some, rubbing and rocking again.

Purring again, he fastened the collar, made it snug. Mike's body tightened around his, started milking him slow and easy.

"Baby ... Oh." He fumbled for the clamps, wanting to get them on before he was totally and entirely distracted and unable to think.

"Want to turn over. Want to see you."

"Yeah, okay." With a groan, he pulled out of Mike's body. Oh, he wanted back in that tight heat, wanting to feel Mike all around him again.

Mike turned, spread for him, hands reaching for his shoulders. Settling back between Mike's thighs, he pushed back into that perfect heat, moaning out his pleasure.

"Oh. Oh, good." Mike's eyes closed, tongue sliding over those lips.

"Christ, baby, it's not good, it's the best." Bending, he followed the path Mike's tongue had taken, licking the kiss-swollen lips.

"Uh-huh..." Mike arched, moaned low, lips parting for him.

Moaning himself, Jessy turned the teasing touches into a real kiss, taking Mike's mouth, pushing his tongue in deep. Mike moaned, arching, rubbing beneath him.

He reached for the clamps again, breaking their kiss so he could put the first one on Mike's nipple.

"Oh. Oh. Jess. I. Oh."



"Yeah?" He chuckled and bent, licking around the clamp. Mike whimpered, bucking, rubbing beneath him. "So big." He chuckled, thrusting once. "Thank you, baby."

Mike looked confused for a second, then grinned and laughed.

He moaned, as that tightened Mike around his cock again, and he bent to kiss Mike, taking that mouth hard. Mike's hands landed on his shoulders, squeezing tight, riding him. He moaned into Mike's mouth, moving faster, thrusting harder.

He got a hold of the leather tie, tugging it a little to tighten the collar. Mike's eyes went wide, hot, needy, a purr pushed into his lips. Christ, that was something else, the way Mike lit up like a Christmas tree whenever he did this.

He tightened it a bit more, forcing Mike to start fighting for breaths. Mike's ass was so tight, motions of those hips speeding.

"Sexy, baby. Something else." He gasped the words out, speeding his own movements to match Mike's, the two of them working together to make it good.

Their bodies slapped together, Mike bucking furiously. He tightened the collar, hips speeding as he watched Mike gasp for breath. Mike's eyes rolled, cheeks flushed.

Harder and harder, he fucked Mike, watching his baby's face, so fucking turned on his balls ached. Mike reached up, grabbed the headboard, eyes fastened on him.

He moaned and tightened the collar a bit more. "Love you, baby."

Mike's lips moved, shaping his name, muscles shaking. He nodded and wrapped his hand around Mike's cock, tugging as he fucked his baby hard.

Heat sprayed over his fingers, wet and slick, Mike's ass clenching tight. He cried out, hips jerking convulsively as he came hard, Mike's orgasm dragging out his own.

He collapsed onto Mike, fingers fumbling with the release on the collar. Mike slumped, arms wrapping around him.

Jessy licked at Mike's face, nuzzled and licking where the collar met Mike's neck. His baby tasted good with a hint of leather.

"Love." The word was soft, whispered.

"Yeah, baby."

He nodded, fingers sliding along Mike's body to the nipple clamps. "You want these off yet?"

"Mmm ... Yeah. Burns when you take them off."

"That's a good thing, yeah?" He slid down Mike's body a bit, tongue teasing the swollen flesh around the clamps.

"Jessy..." Mike arched, purring, moaning.

He chuckled and then took one off. "Yeah, baby?"

"Oh. Oh. Oh, fuck. Burns."

He licked Mike's flesh, pulling the other clamp off. Mike's body jerked, working his cock *again*. He groaned, shaking his head. "No way, baby. I can't."

"Not doing it on purpose."

He chuckled and kissed Mike hard. "God, I love you."

"Oh, good." Mike's fingers stroked his face, his cheeks.

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

He slid out of Mike before his sexy swimmer started trying to get him hard again. He pushed up, searching the side-table drawer for the plug. Mike moaned, eyes following his hand.

He smiled at Mike, pulling out the silver plug. "You should suck on it, baby. Warm it up." He pressed the tip to Mike's mouth.

Mike's lips parted, eyes going wide and dark. Jessy moaned as he fed the plug into Mike's mouth. Shit, that was the sexiest thing he'd seen. Mike groaned, sucking, hips shifting beneath him in time.

"Christ, I've never seen anything as sexy as you, baby." It wasn't flattery either, just plain truth.

Those dark eyes closed, a low moan muffled around the plug. Whimpering, he bent to lick at Mike's nipples, the skin still dark red, flushed with blood and hot beneath his tongue. Mike arched, making some of the most amazing noises.

He started to fuck Mike's mouth with the plug, licking and sucking at those sensitive nipples all the while. Mike's cock slowly started to fill, going hot and hard against his belly. He finally pulled the plug from Mike's mouth, sliding it down along his skin. He slid it against Mike's cock, against his balls.

"Oh. Oh, fuck. Jess. You. You make me just burn."

"Yeah? I just want to make you forget about everything else in the world but this. Us."

He nudged the plug against Mike's ass. "How'm I doing?"

"G ... good. Good. Oh. Good. Need."

"I know, baby."

He pushed a little, letting Mike's body take in the plug, swallow it up until that tight ring of muscles closed around the base. He jostled it, just for good measure.

"Uhn..." Jessy could see Mike's muscles tense, see him jerk.

"Christ, baby, you're amazing." He settled in, curled around his baby, nuzzling the collar again as he pulled up the covers.

Mike whimpered, curling close.

"Rest awhile, baby. We'll keep playing later."

Mike shivered, nodded, rubbed against him. He kissed Mike softly and held him close, hands wandering slowly, just touching lightly.

It took a while, but Mike relaxed, leaned into him, breath slowing.

"That's it, baby," he murmured, kissing Mike's forehead. "Just rest, love."

He could feel Mike's heartbeat, steady against his skin, Mike settled and quiet. Happy. His.

Smiling, happy, he closed his own eyes and rested.

## Chapter Thirteen

He turned the music up loud, eyes on the water, the beat fast and hard. His first meet in months. Fuck. His first final. His first real swim after the Big Mess.

What if he fucked up? What if he didn't? He really wanted pizza. He was really queasy. Man, he was ready for the race to start.

Warm, solid hands landed on his shoulder, Coach's voice low and gravelly against his ear. "The wall, baby."

"Right. Yeah. I am. Sorta. The wall." Right. Big concrete thing around the pool. Got it.

Coach's hands started massaging. "Come on, Mike. You know how to do this. Focus."

"I do." Mike nodded, eyes closing, just nothing but Coach's touch and the music and the wall. He could almost feel the water.

"That's it, baby." Coach's voice was almost a part of him, a part of the water. "This race is yours, so you don't even need to think about anything but the wall. Just go for the wall."

He listened to that voice, hearing it echo inside him. Yeah. Yeah, Coach. He heard.

Coach stayed right there with him, a solid, quiet presence behind him, until they called his race. "The wall, baby." They were Coach's last words. They always were.

He handed over his CD player, his jacket. He had the fifth lane, was between two incredibly strong swimmers. Life was good. The buzzer sounded and he was off, the water pouring through him, Jessy's voice urging him to the wall.

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*by Sean Michael*

One turn, two.

By the third turn, the other swimmers were gone. All he could hear was Jessy. "The wall, baby. The wall."

When he hit the wall and came up there was a roaring in his ears, but he did what he always did, searched out Coach's face.

Oh. Oh, Jessy was shouting, yelling or screaming, he wasn't sure and he couldn't make out the words, but Jessy was happy. Maybe even ecstatic.

He shook the water out of his eyes, blinking at the scoreboard, looking for his name.

There it was right at the top, the letters WR right next to his time.

Mike blinked.

Twice.

Then he looked over at his coach, needing to know this was real.

He got the thumbs up from Coach. Two of them. Coach looked like he was about to burst. Then, like it was in slow motion, Coach Samuels was clapping Jessy on the back, giving him a hug. He got out of the pool, the UT team swarming around him, congratulating him, slapping his back.

Wow.

Coach gave them a few moments before wading in and giving him a bear hug, lifting him off his feet. "I knew you could do it."

"We won." He met Jessy's eyes, heart pounding furiously. "We broke the record."

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

"You did. I am so damned proud of you I just might bust." He was given another bear hug, and Jessy laughed.

He nodded, the reality starting to sink in. "I. Wow, Coach. Wow."

Jessy laughed and hugged him again. "Yeah. Wow."

The other swimmers all came over to congratulate him, with Brad, the favorite of the day who'd wound up with second, giving him a hug. "That rocked, man. You were flying."

"Thanks." He grinned, nodded. "It's cool what the right coach can do for you."

Brad nodded. "I've heard yours is a real hardass, but it sure got you results."

"He's got what I need."

"I swam a personal best today and you still blew me out of the water." Brad was grinning, though, obviously no hard feelings toward him. "I'll see you at the medal ceremony."

"Great race, Brad," Jessy called out as Brad turned to go.

"Thanks, Coach."

He turned to Jessy, shrugging on his jacket. "I get pizza." It wasn't a question.

Jessy just laughed. "Hell, I'm tempted to let you have a Dr. Pepper to go along with it."

"Oh, hell, yes!" He grinned, hugged Jessy again as they headed to pick up their stuff.

"I said tempted, I didn't say I was giving in to temptation." He was given a wink. "You want to stay for the mini ceremony or wait and pick up your medal at the closing ceremonies along with the rest of the ones you win?"

Personal Best: Going for the Gold  
*by Sean Michael*

"Let's wait. I hate those things."

"Okay. You realize you don't get your pizza until after all your races, right?" Jessy gave him a grin. "You still need to focus on that wall, baby."

"Yeah, I know. I still want some food and a hot shower." He grinned at Jessy. "And a massage?"

Coach nodded. "I think a massage can be arranged."

"Oh. Oh, cool." He looked over, bouncing on the balls of his feet. "I broke a world record."

"Yep. And at an official OSB meet. That's going to go in the books alongside your name. The first of many."

He met Jessy's eyes, just a little wigged. "I don't believe it. I just can't."

Coach smiled gently, hand stroking his cheek and then going to squeeze his shoulder. "Mike. You don't have to believe it. All you have to do is get in the water again tomorrow and go for the wall."

"Oh. Okay. I can do that." He grinned, nodded. "I can so do that."

Jessy's arm came around his shoulders, his coach walking in step with him. "I know you can."

They headed for the car, sort of leaning together.

Together. Yeah. Him and Jessy, his coach, his lover. His. Now *that* was a personal best.

End.



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