

Loose Id

# The Syndicate Volume III

Jules Jones & Alex Woolgrave



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## Praise for the writing of Jules Jones & Alex Woolgrave

### *The Syndicate: Volume 1*

Jules Jones and Alex Woolgrave write a hot story in *The Syndicate: Volume 1*. Amusing characters, humor, and delicious sex are all present. For a very interesting change of pace, try *The Syndicate: Volume 1*.

-- Sinclair Reid, *Romance Reviews Today*

Maybe it's the techno geek in me that made me devour every word. I prefer to think that it's because of the good characterization, witty dialog and engaging story. I'm off to haunt the Loose Id website to wait for *The Syndicate: Volume 2*.

-- Michelle Naumann, *Just Erotic Romance Reviews*

*The Syndicate: Volume 1* is an absolutely excellent futuristic story of lust becoming love, and of two people willing to drop their protective barriers to love openly and unselfishly.

-- Anya Khan, *Coffee Time Romance*

### *The Syndicate: Volume 2*

Messrs. Jones and Woolgrave have continued the witty dialog and good characterization that made the first book so enjoyable. If anything, this one has surpassed it on all fronts. My heart sank when I read the words 'To Be Continued'. I don't want to wait; I want *Volume 3* now!

-- Michelle Naumann, *Just Erotic Romance Reviews*

The scathing repartee is perfect! I never really expected to laugh my head off while being titillated, but Jules Jones and Alex Woolgrave pull it off fantastically.

-- Keely Skillman, *Coffee Time Romance*

*The Syndicate: Volumes 1 & 2* are now available from Loose Id.

# THE SYNDICATE: VOLUME 3

Jules Jones & Alex Woolgrave

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This book is rated:

 SCORCHING

For substantial explicit sexual content, graphic language, and potentially offensive content (homoerotic sex and ménage).

# **The Syndicate: Volume 3**

**Jules Jones & Alex Woolgrave**

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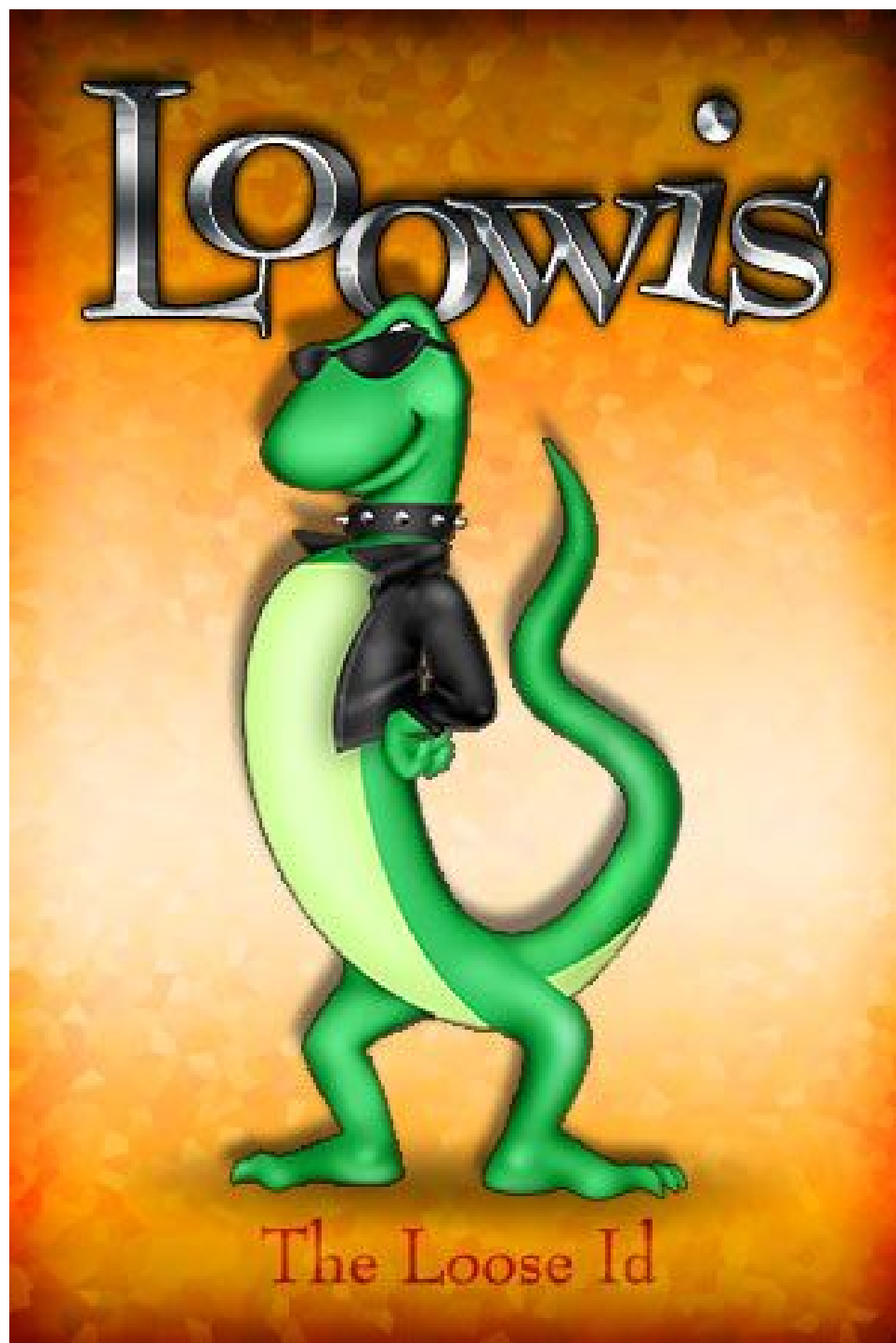
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## Something Blue

"We have an announcement to make," said Vaughan.

"You're getting married," Harry said.

"I thought you promised to turn the bugs *off* last night," said Allard, rather crossly.

Harry's jaw dropped. When he managed to close his mouth again, he opened it to say, "I was joking, Allard."

"We weren't."

"Who's going to be the bridesmaid?" said Claire.

"No. Who's going to be the *bride*?" said Karen.

"Allard, of course," said Claire.

"Just because I'm smaller and prettier than him?" Allard had never quite understood this thing about being 'pretty', but everybody else said so, so he was willing to accept public opinion even if it was completely demented.

"No. You enjoy playing virgin-seduction games either way 'round. Vaughan's a little more serious about it, and about it being in one direction."

"Doesn't *anyone* on this ship have a sense of privacy?" Allard demanded.

"No," said Mark.

“The total amount of pleasure you two will get out of your wedding day will be increased if *you’re* the one in white bridal robes,” said Karen.

*Even my mother wouldn’t be insane enough to want to see me in a white wedding dress, but my shipmates apparently are,* Allard thought. *What’s worse, they’re probably being completely pragmatic about it. Kill me now.*

“Please, Allard,” said Vaughan, “don’t say ‘no’ just because all of us want you to say ‘yes’.”

Vaughan meant that. He’d asked for it, and not as a means of public teasing.

“If everybody makes a severe effort to restrain any attempts at teasing, all right.”

“Now you’re taking all the fun out of it,” said Harry.

“Good. Oh, and *you’re* the bridesmaid. You may want to invest in a wig.”

“Now you are joking.”

“No, I’m not. You have to go to fairly archaic rituals to find wedding clothing that emphasises that one party is allegedly a virgin. So archaic that the party in question is assumed to be female. I’m not going *that* far. I’ll need help finding something that gives the right impression, while still being in keeping with a modern wedding.”

Claire said, “You’ve got a very good eye for that sort of thing, Harry.”

“You’re the other bridesmaid,” said Allard. “You can stop me falling over my gown.”

“What about me?” said Karen.

Allard glanced from Claire’s elegant dress to Karen’s decorative-but-functional black trousers and big boots. “You’re in charge of making sure Vaughan gets into whatever we pick for him to wear.”

“Does the groom get a say in this?” asked Vaughan.

“No,” said everybody else with perfect unanimity.

“It’s traditional,” said Harry. “The bride is the one who organises the event.”



“That comes from when the bride was the woman in a mixed couple.”

“You’re the one who wanted to be traditional,” Allard said. “Are you sure you don’t want me to acquire a false bust?”

Vaughan shuddered ostentatiously.

“Oh, go on,” said Mark. “It would be a lot of fun to see Dad with a bosom.”

*Dad. Oh, shit, thought Allard. I’m going to have to introduce my parents to their grandson, and I don’t think Mark’s at all what they expected. I didn’t expect Mark. No one could.*

“And *you* are to behave,” he said. “Or you’re not going.”

“I’ll be good!”

Unfortunately, that didn’t mean much. Mark’s idea of polite behaviour was a little idiosyncratic, in spite of Mark making a genuine attempt to learn. The *Mary Sue*’s crew was probably an improvement on the people who’d created Mark, but only probably.

“Incidentally,” said Claire, “have you made a decision about marrying the rest of us?”

He stared at her.

“Formally joining the syndicate?” she gently prodded.

Ah. Yes. That sense of marriage.

“We sort of got distracted,” Vaughan admitted. “But if he’s marrying me, that effectively makes him a member.”

Claire nodded. “Depends on which legal system you get married under, but yes. As long as he’s thought about it.”

“I thought about it several months ago,” said Allard. “I thought that if I did leave the ship, Vaughan was one of the assets I wanted to be sure I could take with me. Which unfortunately meant that even if I didn’t sign anything myself, I’d still have to disentangle something of value from the syndicate contract.”

"I wish you'd said something about it to me," Vaughan muttered.

"I did. Just not in those words."

Claire looked hard at him. "I'm not sure I like the way you were thinking about it, but at least you had something at stake in the syndicate."

"I've never particularly liked thinking of myself as a movable asset," said Vaughan gently. "But I suppose if I have to, you can make it bearable."

*So I'm becoming semi-attached to the politics, or at least married to it, and he's becoming semi-detached. I suppose that's equitable.*

He'd always assumed Vaughan would go with him -- at least since it had become a matter of interest to him -- but it was nice to have it confirmed.

"Will you have a veil?" said Claire, apparently happy to drag the conversation out of its more serious mode.

"If we can get one with a gag," muttered Vaughan.

"I'll chip in," said Harry. "Can we make him wear it at other times, as well?"

"I'm not wearing a gag. I'm not explaining *that* to my mother!" snapped Allard.

"It'd be no trouble," said Vaughan. "We'd be perfectly happy to tell her, and ask her what *she* used to do when she wanted you to shut up."

"Give me a book of equations, normally. And do you want me to start reconsidering the whole insane occasion?"

Vaughan squeezed his hand. "Not in the least."

"Is anybody going to let me know *where* this is going to take place, now that I know the worst about the wardrobe arrangements?" asked Allard.

"Oh, well, the galaxy's your oyster," said Harry. "Where d'you fancy: tropics, ice, jungle, desert, or maybe somewhere civilised? And by the way, where are you going to choose for a honeymoon?"

“Somewhere un-bugged,” muttered Allard.

“Oh. Oh, that’s not nice,” said Harry. “You could be friendly.”

“The whole point about a honeymoon is to do something different. *Away* from everybody. You’ve already *got* an extremely long tape-loop of the rest of our entire life, so we want a few days of quiet,” said Allard.

“You could tape me, if you like,” added Mark, apparently in a spirit of helpfulness.

There was a short silence. “Mark, you’re a *computer*,” said Harry.

“Oh, well, if you want to be meatist about it,” said Mark rather huffily.

“You write very good porn, dear,” said Claire, “but you don’t actually do anything worth listening to.”

Allard glared at her. One of these days, Mark was going to realise that he could do a lot more (or indeed anything) with an android body. Allard wasn’t going to do anything to hasten that realisation.

“I think I need to discuss appropriate locations with Vaughan,” said Allard.

“Oh. Like places you want to be bent over the furniture in,” said Harry.

“No, actually. Like planets both our sets of parents can get to without difficulty. We can bend each other over the furniture anywhere,” said Allard, thinking, *Actually, it’s not a bad idea, even if it comes from our resident pervert.*

“Is that an offer?” asked Vaughan, leering cheerfully.

“Why not? We can’t spend all our time on outrageous displays of sentiment. Let’s just shag.”

“Oh, *I* think I can manage to be sentimental *and* shag,” said Vaughan.

“Vaughan, that is not in question. Go and dispose yourself over a convenient item of furniture.”

“I don’t mind listening to the tapes,” said Claire, “but it’s a bit embarrassing when they’re doing it right in front of us.”

Harry smirked, but fortunately stopped before Claire could look at him.

“This is a two-person party,” said Allard. “I don’t mind inviting you lot to the wedding, but I draw the line at this ... Vaughan, why aren’t you in the bedroom?”

“In some cultures, the bride gets deflowered in public,” said Harry.

“No,” said Vaughan, from down the corridor.

Allard decided to follow Vaughan before Harry could come up with any more interesting wedding customs, like the one in which it wasn’t a *finger* ring the participants wore. He also decided that if Harry ever tossed him a bouquet to carry, he would inspect it *very carefully* for miniaturised cameras.

He followed Vaughan very slowly to give Vaughan time to get undressed. When he entered the bedroom, Vaughan was trying to look seductive lounging on a beanbag. It didn’t really work.

“I hope that’s a machine-washable cover,” said Allard.

“You’re so romantic.”

“You’ve given me an extensive education in unlikely places to get stains out of, Vaughan. Like keyboards.”

“That was just the *once*,” said Vaughan, injured.

“It’s still a lot more embarrassing than asking how to get coffee out of a keyboard,” said Allard.

“That was your own silly fault for specifying what it was.”

“I didn’t,” said Allard. “I said it was an organic substance.”

“And therefore they knew exactly what you meant, because if it was coffee, you’d have *said* coffee,” Vaughan said. “Now, are you going to shag me or talk about housework?”

“Silly question. Roll over.”

Vaughan rolled over. This gave Allard a nice display of silk-clad buttocks to look at, since Vaughan had stripped down to his knickers.

“All that discussion of deflowering *me*,” said Allard, as he started to undress, “and you didn’t even mention the other way ’round.”

“My maidenly flower was plucked long, long ago,” said Vaughan.

“So was mine, but you could stock a good-sized florist with your attempts by now.”

“Are we going to have flowers at the wedding?”

Allard removed his trousers. “Only if you don’t mind my not being able to keep a straight face as I remember this conversation.”

“Do you mind, Allard?” Vaughan said. “The white wedding and all that.”

“No. Much as I hate to admit it, they’re right. You’ll get far more out of imagining me as a quivering virgin than I would the other way ’round. You’ll just have to get your quivering in early, if you want to ... Vaughan, that’s *shuddering*; try to get the technique right.” Not that Allard was really averse to the sight of nice, firm, silk-clad buttocks engaged in vigorous movement.

“Critics!” exclaimed Vaughan.

“You can shudder like that when I’m up you,” explained Allard, thinking, *Which will be any second now*, as he removed the rest of his clothing.

“Promises, promises,” said Vaughan, and, “Those were my best knickers!” as Allard removed the rest of *his* clothing.

“They aren’t now,” said Allard. “If you’re good, I’ll buy you another pair. How good can you be?”

“Good enough to warrant two pairs.”

“One arse can only wear one set of underpants at a time.”

“One for you, and one for me,” explained Vaughan. “Heavy silk’s good for frottage.”

Allard decided to bear that in mind for later. What he wanted right now had a lot more to do with Vaughan’s naked arse, which, if he guessed right, Vaughan would already have prepared.

He prodded it with a finger, because once he got his cock in there, he wouldn’t want to stop if he’d guessed wrong, and found that Vaughan had been reliably slutty, or well-prepared.

The position of lounging on a beanbag might not bring instant sex to mind in the way silk sheets did, but it was just about ideal for getting right up Vaughan in one long stroke. So he did.

Vaughan was startled but appreciative, to judge by the noise. Allard was just appreciative. Deeply. The position, or the unexpected speed of entry, made this much tighter than usual, and it was just at that brain-spinning point where he wondered if he’d ever manage to get himself *back* afterwards, and then decided his cock didn’t actually care if it had to spend the rest of its life up Vaughan. After a moment, he decided he could actually move. Ah. This was interesting: something about the position Vaughan was in, with his head hanging down slightly, meant Allard was in deeper than usual. After a couple of minutes, Vaughan started to join in.

Once they’d managed to get going, Vaughan seemed to find the beanbag beads *very* interesting to move against, without quite getting to the point of coming. Good. Vaughan *trying* was very exhilarating for *him*.

“Vaughan, stop swearing. I’m trying to enjoy myself here.”

“So am I!” Vaughan snapped.

Allard decided to be helpful and tried to grope Vaughan, which gave him a much clearer idea of what Vaughan was complaining about. He could hardly reach Vaughan’s cock because the bloody beanbag kept getting in the way and *moving*. And when his hand felt the

light pressure of the beanbag, he realised that there wasn't quite enough friction for that to do the job for Vaughan, either.

However, knowing what the problem was didn't help him solve it. He'd had the experience before of finding it difficult to get up from a beanbag when it shifted every time he moved, and it was remarkably difficult to cope with when his *cock* was busy, as well. In fact, his cock was busy responding to *lots* and *lots* of friction, and rapidly reaching the point where it (momentarily) didn't care about *anything* but this. A large sign saying FUCK NOW, APOLOGISE LATER lit up in his brain, or his cock, because he was having some difficulty distinguishing them. He groaned, shoved deep, and came so hard he forgot all about Vaughan, the beanbag, the *Mary Sue*, and the impending wedding. It was marvellous.

The universe came back in easy stages.

"I think I'm going to have to think of a really *convincing* apology at this point. Probably with my mouth full because I'm not sure I'm up to doing it in words," Allard said. "Anyway, it's all the beanbag's fault."

"What a brilliant idea," said Vaughan, in his lowest and most seductive tone. Allard checked for sarcasm: not present, as far as he could tell.

"Vaughan?" he asked uneasily.

"Get off me a mo," said Vaughan.

"I'm not sure I can," confessed Allard. A combination of being very, very satisfied and the normal problem with moving about on (or *on* someone on) a beanbag, was getting in the way.

Vaughan managed to tip to one side. Allard rolled off him, onto the floor. Fortunately, it wasn't far enough to dent anything but his dignity.

"Ouch," he said, for form's sake.

Vaughan picked himself off the beanbag, then bent down, picked up Allard, and put him back on the beanbag.

Allard was now sprawled face-up across the beanbag, with his head hanging back but supported by the beanbag.

“Well,” he said, “I thought you’d want me to do something.”

“Not at all,” said Vaughan. “You obviously don’t appreciate the full beauty of this position.”

“Lying on a beanbag, getting a crick in my neck ...” muttered Allard.

“Try a *prick* in your neck,” said Vaughan, rather hopefully.

“Oh, that’s what you want, is it? Feeling dominant today?”

“Please,” suggested Vaughan, in his lowest and most irresistible voice.

Allard sighed, and did not move.

“Is that a ‘yes’?”

“If it was a ‘no’, I would indicate as much by getting up and doing something else,” said Allard.

“I thought you were too shagged-out to move,” said Vaughan.

“Hence the absence of a definite ‘no’. Take advantage of it.”

Vaughan did.

Actually, it was a rather good position. He had a good, solid mouthful of Vaughan, and breathing might be a problem in a few seconds, but he certainly didn’t feel as if he was choking. Not even when Vaughan shoved it all the way in. Doing it afterwards was rather nice, as well. He could concentrate on the taste, and the feel, and getting as close to altruism as he ever got.

Vaughan muttered something about, “God, that’s good,” and on the next thrust, “Never got that deep before,” and, fortunately, he didn’t seem to expect a reply. Allard could just about manage to breathe between thrusts, but certainly not talk. The next stage in the running commentary was just panting. Vaughan panting, followed by Allard panting, when



he could. Then Vaughan just shoved back in and said, “Oh!” very loudly. This remark seemed to have more vowels in it than usual, so Allard waited patiently to breathe, and eventually pushed at Vaughan.

Vaughan moved just at the point when Allard was considering biting as the next option.

“Oh. Sorry,” said Vaughan. “Must have blanked out for a moment there.” He rolled onto the floor.

Allard rolled onto him for a cuddle. He’d had enough of the beanbag for one morning. Unfortunately, the position they’d landed up in would have been *really* useful if they’d been in the mood for sixty-nine, which meant it wasn’t the ideal position for a cuddle. Also, if Vaughan’s bits felt anything like *his* bits, they probably wanted a quiet lie-down for a minute while the rest of the attached man had a cuddle.

So he got up, muttering slightly, and disposed himself appropriately. “Much as I love your cock,” he said, “there’s no sense in getting it interested in things I can’t deliver. And mine needs a wash before I start waving it in your face, which I will probably get ’round to tomorrow.”

“What, the wash or the waving?”

“Wash now, wave later.” Actually, he could leave the ‘wash’ bit five minutes. He *really* wanted a cuddle, and Vaughan knew him well enough to cope with that. So he snuggled up.

“Thought you were going to wash,” said Vaughan, holding him so close he couldn’t.

Allard yawned. “In a minute.”

After a few minutes’ pleasant half-doze, half-cuddle, he picked himself up and padded into the bathroom, where he started to run the shower.

The prospect of a shower got Vaughan on his feet, as well, as Allard noticed when he had to make room for him. It wasn’t a big enough shower to be able to share it without noticing, but there was enough hot water and soap for two, if they were a friendly two.

There were plenty of big towels to dry off with afterwards.

“We were going to talk about wedding locations, if you hadn’t distracted me.”

“Mm,” said Vaughan. “Anything you suggest’s fine with me.”

“Well, we’ve got to talk about this seriously.”

“Don’t see why. Pin in the star-map and see where we get to.”

Allard sighed, feeling rather put-upon. “Vaughan, that would be a splendid idea for the honeymoon. The wedding’s serious.”

“It’s for us, therefore it’s our choice,” said Vaughan.

“The *honeymoon’s* for us. The *wedding’s* for our friends and relations and crew and general hangers-on.”

“Damn,” said Vaughan. “Well, we could add up how many relatives live on the same planet as my parents, and then add up how many live on the same planet as your parents ... they do live on the same planet, don’t they?”

“Physically, at any rate,” said Allard. “For at least half the year.”

“But I thought they worked at the same university,” said Vaughan.

“So?” said Allard. “Guest lecturing, experiments, field trips. And then, of course, there were always holidays. Actually, I was in favour of that. We could go on holiday with whichever parent was doing something we found interesting.”

Vaughan looked mildly scandalised.

“Vaughan, I write to my mother at least once a week. Do you?”

“No, I don’t write to your mother. We’ve never met.”

“Vaughan!”

“About once a month.”

“*And* I phone her when it’s practical,” said Allard slightly accusingly.

“We’ve noticed the phone bills,” said Vaughan.

“I knew there was a good reason I’ve never wanted a live-in job or shared housing,” said Allard.

“We didn’t think they were unreasonable; we just wondered about who you were phoning,” said Vaughan.

“That’s the good reason,” said Allard.

“Well, we just wondered who an antisocial little git like you wanted to talk to that often.”

“As opposed to the misfits, perverts, and non-organics I get on with so well in my day-to-day life?”

“People in glass spaceships shouldn’t throw stones?”

“Quite.”

“Anyway,” Vaughan said, “I thought that was what you *liked* about us.” He patted Allard’s cock. “Or at least what this likes about us.”

“That’s not in a state to like anything for the next hour or so,” said Allard. “And can we please discuss our wedding?”

“You know, for somebody who wasn’t that enthusiastic about the idea ...” Vaughan trailed off when he saw Allard’s expression. “All right, all right! For this version of ‘your place or mine’, we’d better get out the star-atlas.”

They spent a more-or-less pleasant couple of hours drawing up lists of People We Want To Invite, People We Have To Invite, and People We Will Invite If We Think The Reception Venue Has Enough Room.

Allard tried to turn this into a complicated Venn diagram, but Vaughan said he could just write it in handwriting, like anyone else.

“We need to cross-reference desirability, mobility, and place-of-residence,” said Allard. “What we really need is a good database.”

Vaughan groaned.

“All right,” Allard said, and just looked through the lists, with reference to desirability, mobility, and place-of-residence.

Vaughan ruffled his hair. “You can do a database if we ever need to marry each other again,” he offered.

“Why would we need to?”

“Just appeasing your Inner Geek,” said Vaughan.

“More seriously,” said Allard, “we may get married on my mother’s planet, which would be reasonably convenient for her and my father, and would also permit her to make the arrangements. Is that all right with you?” he asked a bit anxiously.

“Well, if it’s going to be a church wedding, and she knows a church, that would actually help,” said Vaughan. “I’d probably march into the nearest funny-looking building and ask if it was a place of worship. That could annoy a few people.”

“Especially since there are some very imposing tax offices on my mother’s planet. Yes, we’d better leave the arrangements in her capable hands.”

“Well, you’d better tell her the glad tidings, then. I’m sure we can stretch to another interstellar phone call.”

Allard nodded. This *wouldn’t* be the sort of thing he could send a letter about.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Mum. I thought I’d better tell you, I’m going to get married.”

“That’s nice, dear. Though I must say it’s a little unexpected.”

“Yes. It surprised us, too.”

“Most people regard marriage as a life-changing decision.”

“Yes, well, you don’t exactly live in Dad’s pockets, and your marriage is one of the few I’ve seen that works.”

“But we do take it seriously, even if we have work commitments. I’d like to think it’s not just a matter of impulse. Is she somebody on that ship?”

“Yes. He’s the captain, sort of.”

He watched his mother’s face, through the link, take on a particular sort of non-expression. He hadn’t often seen her surprised.

“I always thought you went out with more women,” said his mother, “but the *really* surprising thing is that you’ve got so close to somebody through work.”

He hadn’t actually *told* her he was used to working with people he didn’t respect and making damn sure there was an exit if necessary, but it had, he supposed, been a bit of a pattern.

“It is a little strange. It’s almost a group marriage -- not in the sexual sense,” he added hastily. “They’re syndicalists.”

“Well, I’m sure your father will approve.”

*At least there’s that to be proud of,* thought Allard, who was fairly certain that his father viewed his career with a mild disappointment that was nothing to do with his skills and everything to do with his lack of social engagement.

“Is it ... some sort of infatuation?” his mother asked carefully.

He thought about that. “I suppose he has some charismatic qualities, but I’m as sure as I can be that the relationship developed naturally.” It had been an odd sort of a relief to let himself grow to like people in the course of daily life. “I think if it had been just infatuation, it would have worn off by now.”

“In that case -- I’m so pleased for you, dear. And surprised, but mostly pleased. Have you put any thought into planning the wedding?”

“Vaughan’s not religious himself, but he thinks a church wedding would be nice.”

His mother gave him a sharp glance. "Is he the romantic type, then?"

He didn't feel up to discussing the whole complex of romantic/erotic emotions with his mother. He didn't think he'd feel comfortable discussing it with his mother *present*. Maybe he wouldn't have to. If she spent enough time with his crewmates (trying to be discreet or not), she wasn't stupid, and she might pick up on a few details about virgin fantasies. Strangely enough, he didn't feel any better about that idea than about having an open sexual discussion with his mother.

"Mother. I don't actually feel like having a conversation about that right now."

She looked at him over the link. "No, you don't, do you?" she agreed, more gently. "Maybe we could do with a bit of time to let it all settle."

For a mathematician, his mother could be unnervingly perceptive about emotions he didn't want to either have or admit to.

"What I *did* want to ask you was ... would you mind making the arrangements?"

His mother smiled at him. "I'd be delighted."

"And make sure that Father's there?"

"Of course. Now, when were you thinking of actually doing this?"

"It's not settled yet, but we were thinking of about a month's time, if that's feasible. We've got to make sure people will be available, as many of them as possible. I've got a preliminary list."

"Well, it's very short notice, dear, but I think it can be managed," said his mother.

They spent the next half-hour discussing arrangements. Fortunately, for once, the ship was near-ish to his parents' planet. It was both politer and easier to do this more-or-less face-to-face rather than by letter.

Finally, his mother finished the conversation by saying, "And I'm very happy for you, dear."

"Well, we'd probably do this even if you *weren't*, but we're glad you are."

“That’s as it should be, Eustace.”

He winced. “Mother, you do realise I’ve formally changed my name.”

“I never liked ‘Eustace’ much anyway, but your grandfather did. Doesn’t it get confusing to have to order name-tapes saying ‘ALLARD ALLARD’?”

“I go by ‘Allard’ for short.”

He hung up, wondering bemusedly if anything he could *ever* do would shock his mother, and decided that since she was married to his father, he started with something of a handicap.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Have you phoned your parents yet?” Allard asked Vaughan. They’d ended up in Vaughan’s room for the night, and were having a half-hour’s natter before going to bed.

Vaughan groaned. “Suddenly I get this vision of what married life has to be like.”

“It was a polite question,” Allard said. “I can be *much* ruder if I try.”

“I know. But I don’t want to ring my parents too often, because I can never remember the time difference.”

“About two hours from ship-time. You can perfectly well phone them now,” said Allard.

“Damn,” said Vaughan.

“Vaughan?” he said, “Why don’t you want to phone your parents and tell them you’re getting married?”

“I’m not in the least bit worried about telling them I’m getting married.”

“Then what *are* you worried about?”

“Well, how keen were you to tell your parents about what we have in common and what we like about each other?” Vaughan pounced on him. “You know, the ‘virgin’ thing?”

“My mother did ask if you were romantic, when she heard that you weren’t religious but wanted a church wedding anyway.” He squirmed away from Vaughan’s wandering hands. Not that he was greedy; he’d already had one excellent fuck today, but Vaughan was still doing a fine job of distracting him from whatever the question was.

“And did you tell her exactly how romantic I am?” Vaughan stuck a hand down the back of Allard’s trousers, apparently with the intent of finding out by feel what sort of underwear Allard had on. Ridiculous, since Vaughan had watched him get dressed after the morning’s frolic.

“Well, no.” He tried to grab Vaughan’s hand. Bit difficult, since it was down the back of his trousers. “Stop trying to distract me.”

“After all, I’m *very* romantic,” Vaughan said in that low, sexy voice he could put on, the slight accent more noticeable than usual. “Come from a romantic nation, I do. Think the world of being able to seduce a sweet little thing like you.”

The trouble with Vaughan’s dreadful scripts was that however dreadful they were, there was a certain sincerity in Vaughan’s delivery. They weren’t *just* scripts. And that went straight to Allard’s cock. He moaned, and tried to shove his arse back against Vaughan’s hand.

After all, he could always nag Vaughan later.

Well, they’d had the exotic-and-exciting attempt at sex-on-a-beanbag that morning, which meant that they could go for something quick, simple, and ordinary now. He started undoing Vaughan’s trousers.

“Have you ever heard of foreplay?” said Vaughan.

“Yes. This is it,” said Allard, and grabbed Vaughan’s cock.

“I was *trying* to be romantic,” said Vaughan.



“You’re allowed to keep on talking to me. I *like* hearing you talk complete drivel while I have hold of your cock,” explained Allard, rubbing the organ in question.

“You won’t be allowed to call it drivel when we’re married,” said Vaughan, presumably more in hope than expectation.

“I’ve never called your cock ‘drivel’,” said Allard innocently. He checked that it was worthy of admiration, a nice, thick handful and definitely needing further inspection, and knelt down to inspect it. “Dribble’, maybe,” he added absently.

“Make it sound as if I’ve got a venereal disease,” muttered Vaughan.

“You’re perfectly healthy,” said Allard, inspecting him from even closer. “Not dribbling. Yet,” he said.

Apparently, Vaughan had given up romance as a bad job. He grabbed Allard’s head and pulled him down.

Allard licked happily, then removed himself to say, “What I really fancy ...”

“Is me,” said Vaughan.

“What I really fancy *doing* -- shut up, Vaughan -- is turning the tables on this morning’s events so that you fuck me and then suck me. Although I suppose what we did this morning could be described as you fucking me, in the other end, rather than me sucking you.” After all, he’d been a completely passive participant in proceedings once his own cock had given up for the morning. He paused. “Absolutely no beanbags.”

“Well, it might be nice for a different position,” said Vaughan. “Would sir like to specify an item of furniture to be screwed on?”

“Oh, let’s be boring and use the bed for once,” said Allard, and started stripping.

“But we use the bed most of the time anyway,” said Vaughan.

Allard leaned over and braced himself with one hand on the bed while he struggled to get his boots off. This was calculated to frame his arse to best advantage.

“Never mind,” said Vaughan. “In fact, just stay like that.”

“Not *quite* like this,” Allard said, putting his foot back down on the ground and undoing his trousers. He pushed his trousers down far enough to give Vaughan easy access, and then bent over and braced himself on the bed again.

“Where the hell’s the --” muttered Vaughan.

“Where it usually is.”

Vaughan had obviously found it while muttering. He did not thank Allard for the advice, but started to use the lubricant.

It was undignified half-standing there with his arse in the air. Vaughan was considerate enough not to take long; just a few finger-thrusts and then in went Vaughan’s cock. With the awkward position, Allard was very aware of everything from the fullness inside him to his tangled clothes and the odd way he was balanced. Vaughan was adding to the experience with any number of enthusiastic sound-effects.

After a minute or so, Allard wondered whether he could get away with moving one of his hands where it was needed without falling right off the bed. Considering the way Vaughan was hammering him, probably not.

Vaughan’s hand slid underneath him and began to wank him vigorously. It would almost have been uncomfortable in this position, except that both of them were getting too excited to care. Then Vaughan got very excited indeed and gave him an extra-hard squeeze as Vaughan came. Which made *Allard* come, hard, before he could even *think* about saving it to be sucked.

He didn’t actually *care* about not saving it to be sucked, because it felt so damn good to feel Vaughan pouring come into him as he poured it onto the bed. Never mind ‘coffee piped through nose to keyboard’, ‘semen piped through Allard to bed’ was far more satisfactory, even if it was something he probably wouldn’t refer to online. Well, not unless Vaughan *really* annoyed him or something.

It was a good thing this was the second time today, because if it was the first time, he'd probably have collapsed. As things were, he had enough energy to hit Vaughan with an elbow as a gentle hint that Vaughan should support himself.

"All right, all right, I'll suck you in a *minute*," said Vaughan.

"No need," said Allard. "Semen piped through Vaughan to bed via Allard."

"Oh, God, the Geek Orgasm Theory," said Vaughan. "I think I need a strong cup of coffee to be able to face that."

He eased himself out, then paused. "You bastard, Allard! We had a simultaneous orgasm, and you were the only one to enjoy it!"

"It wasn't intentional," said Allard. "Consider it a compliment to your skill at sodomy."

"Well, we'll just have to try that position again," said Vaughan.

"We've done that position before," said Allard. *Fairly frequently, in fact*, he thought to himself.

"Yes, but usually it's you fucking me. Not that I'm complaining."

"I should damn well hope not," said Allard, "considering we've been working our way through every position in every sex manual we've ever found."

"Just because you're a tidy-minded geek that likes cataloguing things," said Vaughan. "I *liked* a few of those weird positions. I'd like to see them again later."

"It probably wouldn't work if we were trying to do it deliberately," said Allard. "Not that I mind trying it again; I'm just trying to tell you to file it under 'unexpected serendipity'."

Vaughan counted syllables, rather ostentatiously. Allard considered calling it 'ostentatious', but decided that Vaughan would only count the syllables again.

"I need to get up and get clean," said Allard, patiently monosyllabic.

"Let me get a flannel," said Vaughan, and did.

Allard quite enjoyed being cleaned up carefully and tenderly. There was quite a lot to be said for married life as opposed to casual fucks. He didn't really fancy ever going back to the sort of casual fucks that left one alone in the wet spot.

He finished getting undressed (with a little help from Vaughan), went for a pee and to clean his teeth, and then climbed into bed while Vaughan went to clean himself up.

When Vaughan came back, Allard cuddled up to him in bed, tenderly and sweetly, and said, "I haven't forgotten what we were talking about."

"What?" said Vaughan.

"That was a bloody good shag," said Allard, "but it still hasn't made me forget the question."

"What question?" said Vaughan, with a good imitation of insouciance.

"What you're worried about."

"Oh. Religion, I think."

"I'm not religious, Vaughan; I'm an Anglican. Next question."

"Well, I know you're not overly religious," Vaughan said. "You get a quick fifteen-minute fix once or twice a month by listening to morning service on the radio, and I've never been sure how much of that's because you like the music. I have no problem with that at all -- you haven't noticed me stopping ship meetings for communal prayers -- but my parents are a bit different. I'd just like to know how High Church this wedding is going to be."

Allard thought about that. "Are clothing and furniture going to be an issue?"

"What?" said Vaughan.

"Well, I wandered into some sort of meeting hall by mistake once," said Allard, "and there were chairs instead of pews, and a vicar in a woolly jumper."

Vaughan put a hand dramatically on his chest, which was a damn good trick considering he was lying on his back with Allard half-sprawled across him. “You have discovered my secret shame!” he intoned. “My parents are ... Methodists!”

“Doesn’t seem to have rubbed off on you. I’ve never noticed *you* refusing booze.”

“Well, because they are, I have to drink for my entire family,” said Vaughan solemnly. “It’s quite a responsibility.” More seriously, he said, “I’m sure my parents won’t be displeased about my having a religious wedding, but there are rather a lot of things they’ll have to get used to all at once.”

“No, we will not be having incense. No chasubles, thuribles, or choirboys,” said Allard.

“Not even you dressing up as a choirboy?” said Vaughan.

“Wait until the honeymoon,” said Allard.

“Can’t wait,” said Vaughan.

Allard put his hand on Vaughan’s cock. “Well, *that’s* waiting. At least until tomorrow.”

“I can still fantasise, Allard,” Vaughan said. “And I’m sure I’ll be able to think of some interesting perversions by tomorrow.”

“Good,” Allard said. “Just don’t think of them while you’re speaking to your parents.”

“Can I leave talking to them ’til tomorrow?” Vaughan asked.

“I suppose so, but *only* until tomorrow. It is important that they know.”

Allard wondered how a mixed bag of Welsh Methodists and Anglicans of varying degrees of belief were going to get on. They might all be able to agree that the vicar *counted* as a vicar, but that might be the only point of common ground.

He’d worry about it in the morning, which was one of Vaughan’s few sensible ideas.

\* \* \* \* \*

He overheard Vaughan's phone call to his parents. Not particularly intentionally, he just dropped in on Vaughan at the time he made his long-awaited connection.

"Mum, is that you? Yes, there's a bit of interference, but we are a long way away. Yes, I did have a particular reason for calling. Yes, I should ring you more often. My fiancé says so. Yes, Mum, that's what I was calling you about."

Allard stifled a snigger.

Vaughan looked at him and did his best to make a face so his mother wouldn't see it.

"That's my fiancé there. Dressed in black."

Allard sidled into view for inspection. At least he hadn't made *Vaughan* stand to attention -- or at least not while he was talking to his mother.

Vaughan's mother looked at him closely. "I assume you're part of the syndicate. How much do you bring in?" Her accent was stronger than Vaughan's.

"Mother!" said Vaughan, scandalised.

"I'm marrying into it, and none of your business." It would have been 'none of your bloody business', but he remembered in time she was religious. Mind you, his own mother was religious, and the only reason she didn't often swear was she didn't want to lessen the effect when she really had a need to turn the air blue. Of course, his mother's idea of God appeared to be somewhere along the lines of an interesting collection of equations, and that was probably a minority view.

"Good boy," Vaughan's mother said approvingly.

"I am not a boy; I am thirty-seven."

"You're a boy from my point of view."

"And you will be even when we're tottering around on our Zimmer-frames," said Vaughan. "Gran is still calling Mum 'girl'."

Allard wondered uneasily whether the Zimmer-frames would put a bit of a crimp in the BDSM angle, but decided that Vaughan was independent-minded enough he'd keep going even if he could barely see his toothless 'virgin'. He wasn't sure whether this idea made him wince or seemed oddly pleasant.

"When and where?" asked Vaughan's mother.

"The bride's mother is doing the arrangements, as is traditional," said Vaughan.

"And which one of you is the bride?"

Allard felt a terrible urge to say 'he is!' and point at Vaughan. Meanwhile, Vaughan said, "He is."

"I look better in the gown," said Allard. Vaughan, he thought, looked better in nothing at all. "Besides, I think my mother's planet will be the least inconvenient for people to travel to, and we'd rather have one lot of parents sort it out because they know how to get the church sorted out."

"Have you been going to meetings when you've had the chance?" said Vaughan's mother to Vaughan.

"Well, if I'd had the chance, I'd probably have dropped in," said Vaughan.

"Tut, tut, Godless heathen," said Vaughan's mother cheerfully.

Allard felt slightly better about telling her that it was going to be an Anglican wedding.

"Well, Vaughan did want a church wedding, and so did I. It'll be Anglican, by the way, but if you could liaise with my mother, you could help make sure that the service is acceptable on both sides." He sent her the contact details.

"Now that," said Vaughan's mother to Vaughan, "shows nice feeling." She turned back to Allard.

"There shouldn't be any problems, dear, but we'd like you to remember to have plenty of fruit juice for the teetotallers. We've still got a few of them in this family."

*Not quite that observant, then*, Allard thought. Which was better for the half of the congregation that would have its drinking activities rather curtailed by accusing stares.

“What’s the date for the wedding?” Vaughan’s mother asked.

Allard named a date about a month away. “Although we don’t know whether it’s practical yet.”

“Well, I know you’re not pregnant, because I think the two of you would have had the wit to get married and *then* hire a gestation unit,” said Vaughan’s mother.

“We thought a summer wedding sounded a good idea,” said Allard.

“On what planet?” asked Vaughan’s mother.

“On the one for the wedding,” said Allard, doing some lightning-fast calculations and, to his relief, coming up with ‘late June or thereabouts in the hemisphere where my mother lives’.

“By the way, what’s your name, dear?” asked Vaughan’s mother.

“Allard.”

She looked thoughtful, looked down at something, and said, “You two aren’t trying to be romantic and going for a year and a day, are you?”

“Busted,” said Vaughan.

Allard could feel himself going red.

“Anyway, what do I call you?” she asked.

“Allard,” said Allard, again.

“But if I’m your mother-in-law?”

“Still Allard.”

Vaughan explained, “He hates his first name.”

“Oh, not two of you!” said Vaughan’s mother.

“I don’t hate my name,” said Vaughan. “I just don’t like people taking the mick.”



"I don't hate my name," said Allard. "It's Allard."

"It used to be Eustace Allard, but now it's Allard Allard. He thinks that makes things simpler, but he now has to explain why it's two of the same name," explained Vaughan.

"Anyway, how do you know we're going for a year and a day?"

"I got a letter from you a while back," said Vaughan's mother, "saying you'd got a new computer bloke on board, bit of a prick but quite bright really, and the next letter a month later, you weren't anywhere near as nasty about him."

Allard smirked. 'Bit of a prick' would have been *very* restrained for anyone Vaughan didn't actually like. Then he started thinking that Vaughan's mother had used the word 'prick'.

Vaughan turned red.

"And I've just checked the dates on the letters," said Vaughan's mother.

Realising Vaughan's mother had put two and two together, *Allard* turned red, as well. He thought it quite possible that his own mathematician mother had done a bit of calculation, and been too polite to mention it.

"Ah," said Vaughan. "A blushing bride."

"He's going to need to learn to take more teasing than that," said Vaughan's mother.

"Normally I do," said Allard, thinking of the rest of the crew. "A mother-in-law is a bit of a special case."

"At least a year shows you've given it some thought," said Vaughan's mother. "I don't have to worry about it being some crush that you'll regret as soon as it's worn off."

His own mother *had* done the calculations, he decided. She knew exactly how long he'd been on the ship, and he'd told her that he and Vaughan had been an item long enough that he was sure it wasn't a crush.

"No, it's not," Vaughan said, glancing at him. "And you know I didn't rush into the syndicate, so it's not as if I make decisions like that without thinking."

“Sounds as if he hasn’t rushed into that syndicate of yours in a hurry, either,”  
 Vaughan’s mother said. “I’m very pleased for you, William.” She looked at Allard. “Glad to meet you, young man. I’m looking forward to meeting you in person. And seeing how much William *hasn’t* told me about you.”

Allard knew what Vaughan’s name was, he just wasn’t used to hearing it. Vaughan didn’t normally use it because he got so fed up with jokes about the composer.

Vaughan put his arm ’round Allard.

“She already knows we’re getting married without a visual aid, Vaughan,” said Allard.

“I *like* having my arm ’round you,” said Vaughan.

“Well, anyway,” said Allard a bit uncomfortably, “I’m very pleased to meet you, and I shall now let Vaughan get on with his private phone call. Now he’s bothered to phone you, I shouldn’t get in the way.”

“You’re right,” Vaughan’s mother said, “he does nag.”

Allard decided that he didn’t want to find out what else Vaughan’s mother knew about him, and fled.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Right, I’ve done my filial duty. Up for a shag?” Vaughan asked.

“It’s almost dinner time.”

“All right, up for a quickie?” Vaughan said, amending his demands to fit available time. His hand went unerringly to check whether anything *was* up.

“Is this some sort of Oedipus complex? You’ve been talking to your mother, so you want a shag? No wonder you don’t phone her very often.”

“You’ve got a filthy mind,” Vaughan said.

“I thought that was why you’re marrying me.”

“Among other things,” said Vaughan, fondling them. “And I want a shag *far* more often than I phone my Mum.”

“Good.”

“Well, you seem to be up for it now. Shall we get on with it?”

Allard thought about it. He *was* up for it. On the other hand, he wanted more than a quick grope. “Do we have time for a fuck?”

“Trousers down and up against the wall,” Vaughan said. “Now.”

Apparently they didn’t even have time to discuss who was going on top. Not that Allard much minded. He wandered over to the place along the wall that he knew from experience didn’t have anything in the way when he wanted to slide down it in a melted heap afterwards, and undid his trousers. He didn’t even have to pull them down, because Vaughan gave one quick yank and had them around his knees.

“Don’t even need to bother with the bondage gear,” Vaughan said. “You’re not going anywhere in a hurry.”

“As long as I *come* somewhere in a hurry. I’m hungry.”

“As long as your *arse* is hungry,” Vaughan said. “And I’ve just the thing to fill it with. Bend over.”

Allard leaned against the wall.

Vaughan slapped a handful of lubricant between his buttocks. At least he’d had the courtesy to warm it a little first, because jumping wasn’t a good idea when tied up with one’s own trousers. Vaughan didn’t even bother working it in, just applied his cock and shoved.

It was a good thing that they were well in practice. Vaughan didn’t quite manage to get it all in at one go, but Allard only knew that because he knew just how far in it *could* go. He gasped, half in pleasure, half in pain.

“Thought you wanted it quick,” Vaughan said in that low, sexy voice.

He forgot about the pain, and pushed back against Vaughan.

"I see you do," Vaughan said, giving him the last inch.

He finally worked out what was *so* sexy about Vaughan's voice. Well, it was always sexy, but today Vaughan had just come from speaking to his mother, and the accent was stronger than usual -- and natural, not put on. "Keep talking."

"I like it when you're this desperate for me, when you've gone from 'not interested' to 'can't get enough' in a couple of minutes, and I know it's all because of me."

*Of course it's because of you. I don't see anyone else here to cause it, do I?* thought Allard, but all he could manage to say was, "Yes!"

"Yes?" murmured Vaughan, pulling out and shoving back in again.

"Yes!" *And various other decided affirmatives.*

"So you want me to keep talking ... about how I like shoving it in you." Vaughan did so. "Especially when you're all nice and tight because we haven't bothered with foreplay."

"Yes!"

"The way it feels having your arse squeezing me. You do that so well," said Vaughan.

Allard scrabbled at the wall with his hands, trying to get purchase to shove himself further back and get more of Vaughan's cock in him even though there was nothing left to come.

"What? Stopped saying 'yes', sweetheart?"

Allard clamped down on him, trying to make it feel as big and hard inside him as possible.

"Fuck!" Vaughan said.

*That's the idea.*

"Fuck!" said Vaughan, "I'm going to come!"

“Yes!” said Allard. “Me, too!” and did. *Have to clean the wall tomorrow -- don't bloody care!* he decided. The second thought to cross his mind was ‘*Me, too!*’ -- *well, really, just like some wanker in a chatroom.* He decided he'd worry about his diction and remaining brain cells tomorrow, probably after he cleaned the wall.

At the moment, he was too busy oozing down the wall. He needed the wall for support, since he still had his trousers at half mast, tying his legs together. Actually, he'd have needed the wall for support anyway. That had been a very good quickie. *And* they'd managed another simultaneous orgasm. Two in two days. With any luck, Vaughan would have actually noticed this time.

“There was your simultaneous orgasm,” he told Vaughan. “You’ve no idea how much trouble it is to come up with those to order.”

“As long as you come up with ‘coming’, I’m not bothered,” said Vaughan. “But it was nice.”

Allard tried to wiggle his toes. He couldn’t quite manage it, for some reason. Oh. He kept forgetting that although he felt perfectly relaxed and post-orgasmic, he wasn’t in the normal position for being relaxed and post-orgasmic.

“Shall I peel you off this wall?” asked Vaughan.

“Are you in a fit state to move yourself?”

“No, but at least I’m not tangled up in my own clothes.”

Vaughan set him on his feet. “Hungry?” he asked.

“Now you mention it.”

“Time for a quick wash?” said Vaughan.

“It *would* be more hygienic to wash your hands and other bits before going to the dinner table.”

“Glad I insisted on a quickie before dinner?” Vaughan asked.

“Very nice, but it was a bit quick,” said Allard. “Are we going to do it again after dinner?”

“I was leaving it open-ended.” Vaughan leered cheerfully at Allard’s open end. “That looks as if it’s still a bit hungry. I think we’ll give it ‘afters’ after dinner.”

Allard considered hiding his arse from unseemly commentary by pulling his trousers up, and then decided that taking his trousers off to walk to the bathroom was the dignified alternative. Or at least the way not to look as if he were in a sack race.

“Nice legs,” said Vaughan.

“You can worship them *after* dinner.”

“I’ve got plans for *during* dinner,” said Vaughan. “Now, did I leave it in here last time?” He rummaged under the bed.

“Vaughan, I’m hungry, I want to eat, and I don’t want to get screwed on the table, because it will interfere with my meal.”

He bent over the sink to wash his hands, and discovered how *well* this went with Vaughan’s current plans when Vaughan, without a by-your-leave, *stuck* something in him. He yelped.

“Don’t molest me when you haven’t got anything to molest me with,” Allard said. “You could at least have used lubrication.”

“No need. We’ve rather seen to that, between us.”

Damn. Vaughan *still* had that accent, and it *still* worked, even when it shouldn’t.

The reason he’d thought it wasn’t lubricated was that it felt very large, and the reason it felt very large was that it wasn’t actually Vaughan’s finger, he realised as Vaughan stepped back, leaving him still occupied.

“That should keep you nicely on the boil over dinner,” said Vaughan, rather smugly.

Allard decided that what Vaughan was using on him was a butt-plug, and further decided that Vaughan was in a rather dominant mood.

“Have to reassure yourself you’re an adult human male after phoning your Mum?” Allard asked bitchily.

“Well, you’re just the person to reassure me, because even if I’m not that grown-up, I’m certainly grown-up in comparison to *you!*”

Allard rearranged his features into an oh-how-juvenile sneer, but the effect was rather lessened by Vaughan asking him if he’d like his botty washed.

“Even my mother never called it that,” said Allard. His mother was a very reasonable woman.

Vaughan washed his hands and then washed Allard’s bo-- arse. Allard normally rather liked being taken care of, but there was something slightly ... familial, in this context. He didn’t really want to add infantilism to virgin-fetishism; the idea made him cringe, and he didn’t really want to scour the known galaxy for enormous nappies. Nor did he want to point this out to Vaughan, so he suffered in silence for once.

Vaughan did not remove the butt-plug. Allard considered doing so, but decided the idea was rather intriguing as long as nobody mentioned ‘botties’, or indeed mothers, during the course of the evening.

\* \* \* \* \*

When he sat down, the butt-plug reminded him of its presence. He ignored it. It reminded him again, as he reached for the salt.

Harry passed him the salt. “You’re fidgety tonight,” he said.

*Does he know? Was he listening? Is he just guessing? Or is that a perfectly normal remark because I’m reaching out instead of yelling at him to pass it?* Allard looked at Harry,

who just looked like ... Harry: relaxed and innocent. Harry could look innocent when he was doing *anything*. Allard suspected he regarded it as a good career move.

Allard decided not to say 'what do you mean by that?' because it might lead an innocent Harry to realise there *was* something he wasn't drawing attention to.

He managed to get through the main course without too many problems. It was very good food, which was fortunate because it helped take his mind off other matters, and it stopped him feeling hungry at least at one end. The other end was another matter.

It was his turn to clear the table, and he managed to do so without giving any indication of anything untoward, in spite of the prod he'd got right on his prostate as he stood up. He deserved a medal for impassivity-in-the-face-of ... Not that he was going to draw anyone's attention to this.

If Vaughan said 'well done!', for example, he'd fillet him with a fruit-knife.

Dessert was a banana split. It was not Vaughan's turn to do the cooking, and Vaughan hadn't had time to run around 'spicing up' the menu before dinner, because he'd been with Allard. On the other hand, it *was* Harry's turn to cook, and this *was* the sort of thing Harry indulged in occasionally out of random wilfulness, even if he wasn't being perverted.

No, it probably wasn't a 'subtle' hint that he'd been listening to Allard and Vaughan before dinner. If it had been, the scoops of ice cream would have been at one end of the dish instead of in the middle, and there would have been an artistically arranged dribble of cream. Besides, Harry hadn't had time to arrange anything before dinner because he was *cooking* dinner. Good thing he hadn't said anything to Harry and given him the impression there'd been something going on.

When Allard finished handing out the desserts, he sat down again, and squirmed as the butt-plug moved. By this time, he was distinctly aroused. The thing inside him was large, and was making him very aware that there was something up his arse. It might not be Vaughan,



but Vaughan had put it there, and Vaughan was smirking very slightly at him from over the table.

He did his best to ignore Vaughan, but since they were both in the middle of eating bananas, this was difficult.

“Pass the cream,” said Vaughan, and dribbled cream suggestively over the end of his banana.

Allard moved his scoops of ice cream to one end of the dish.

Vaughan leered suggestively at Allard, and said, “Would you like ... cream?”

Allard wasn't *quite* sure that wasn't a verb.

“They're being disgusting again,” said Karen. “Must be something to do with being in love.”

“Must you encourage them?” said Claire to Harry.

“Sometimes a banana is only a banana!” said Harry. “I had to use them up because they were ripe and needed to be eaten.”

“Mm, ripe,” said Vaughan, licking his lips.

Allard wondered whether to say ‘need to be eaten’, but decided it would be too obvious. Instead, he leant forward to reach for the cream.

Somehow he'd forgotten about the butt-plug. It reminded him.

“The dessert isn't *that* exciting,” said Claire.

“No, but Allard is,” said Vaughan.

“Are we going to have to put up with this until they come back from honeymoon?” said Karen.

“With any luck, they'll have worked it out of their systems by then,” said Claire.

“Or Allard will have worked it *into* his system. Frequently,” said Harry.

“Will someone please tell Harry that it isn't all one way up?” muttered Allard.

“In fact, according to my reference sources, there are quite a lot of different positions,” said Mark.

“None of which we want to hear about right now, thank you,” said Claire.

Allard was glad it was Claire. Mark tended to listen to the women. He seemed to have decided that they were the best models of socially acceptable behaviour. Allard couldn't really blame him for that.

“Sorry, Auntie,” said Mark.

*Damn. That database of human familial relationships has a lot to answer for,* thought Allard. It was a new one on him, and judging by Claire's expression, it was a new one on her.

“That's all right, brat,” she said. “We shouldn't have described the syndicate as something like a group marriage,” she said to Vaughan.

“Was that book on the extended family wrong, then?” said Mark.

“In some cultures,” said Karen, “people do call their mum and dad's close friends ‘auntie’ and ‘uncle’, but not everywhere. This is more like a cross between work and close friendship than a family.”

Allard was just glad the spotlight had left *him*.

Karen told Mark that if he wasn't sure how to address people, he could always ask one of the crew. “We don't really take it amiss. We know you're trying.”

*Yes, very,* thought Allard, still glad that nobody was looking at him. He managed to finish dessert without any further adverse comment, in spite of Vaughan leering at him every so often. After all, Vaughan leering was fairly normal.

Fortunately, it wasn't Allard's turn to clear the table.

“Allard!” said Vaughan, snapped his fingers and headed for the door.

Oh, dear, Vaughan *was* feeling dominant.

“How long shall we leave it before we bring your after-dinner coffee to your room? And which room?” asked Harry.

“Just leave it outside my door and knock,” said Vaughan. “Allard will be occupied.”

“I never knew planning your wedding made you randy,” said Harry.

“*Everything* makes him randy,” said Allard. He got up and followed Vaughan, trying not to squirm. He could have mentioned that talking to his *mum* made Vaughan randy, but he didn’t especially want to.

By the time he got to the bedroom, Vaughan had already started laying out the bondage gear. Well, that wasn’t exactly a surprise.

“Do I get a say in this?” Allard asked.

“You have five seconds to say no. After that, you *don’t* get a say in it.”

That went straight to his cock.

“Strip and kneel down,” said Vaughan.

As he bent over to take his boots off, something prodded him.

Allard moaned, and nearly fell over. He sat on the floor to remove his boots. Vaughan was grinning at him. The damn thing was still distracting him, but at least he wasn’t going to lose his balance now. He stayed on the floor to take his shirt off. He thought about staying on the floor to remove his trousers, but decided that was probably going to be even more undignified than the occasional wriggle.

He stood up, just about managing not to ask Vaughan for help, and methodically set about removing his trousers, punctuated by the faint yelps he kept giving as the thing moved every time *he* moved.

“I think that was your five seconds,” said Vaughan helpfully.

Allard didn’t say anything.

“You do realise I can now have my wicked way with you and you have no say in the matter.”

Allard thought, *Shut up, Vaughan*, but wasn't irritated enough to say it. Instead, he knelt down and rested his face against Vaughan's leg, closing his eyes.

Vaughan stroked his hair.

He opened his eyes and looked up at Vaughan.

“Would you like the distraction removed, Allard?” asked Vaughan, grinning.

*Distraction? Oh ...*, Allard thought.

“If you don't have the distraction removed, there isn't going to be room to put anything *else* there.”

“Oh, I don't know about that,” said Allard, without thinking.

“I knew you were a greedy little bastard, Allard,” said Vaughan, “but isn't that a bit much?”

“Isn't that a bit the point?” asked Allard. He sighed. “It's an interesting fantasy.”

“Ask nicely, and maybe I'll let you have it later,” said Vaughan.

Allard knew Vaughan's idea of asking nicely. “Please, Vaughan?” he asked. That was the start -- he could (and indeed would) work up to begging and pleading by easy stages because it was so much more effective that way.

“Not nice enough,” said Vaughan.

Allard rubbed his face against Vaughan's leg. “Please ... sir,” he said, looking up through his lashes.

“Mm,” said Vaughan, in a ‘keep at it’ tone.

“It's not that I think your *huge* cock isn't enough for me ...”

“I should hope not!” interrupted Vaughan.

“... but I’m a greedy little bastard who doesn’t know when he’s had enough! Now you’ve shown me what sex can be like, I want more of it.”

“Definitely an off-white virgin,” said Vaughan.

“Lots and lots more,” added Allard, thinking, *I shall pick the colour, thank you very much.*

Allard kissed Vaughan’s cock through Vaughan’s trousers, and asked permission to take it out and look at it.

“The last time you said that to me, it was about system equipment, Allard, but it sounds as if you’re restraining your inner geek quite nicely.”

“Mm, bondage,” said Allard absently. “And you’re much more exciting than wiring diagrams.”

“I’m nearly thrilled,” said Vaughan.

“When I’m in this mood, you’re more exciting than cutting-edge security testing,” admitted Allard.

“I’m getting more thrilled,” said Vaughan, who had frequently seen Allard’s gibbering ecstasies about breaking into really *interesting* systems.

“How thrilled will you get?” breathed Allard, as he ‘took it out and looked at it’. It still passed the quality-control tests, and he had very high standards. Length. Angle. Colour. Firmness. Passed with flying colours.

Allard kissed it.

“You haven’t had permission to do that,” said Vaughan.

“Sorry, sir. I’m still very new at this. I just couldn’t resist it. It’s the finest I’ve ever seen. The *only* one I’ve ever seen.”

He saw it jump, at that.

“When are you going to share me around, sir? So I can learn what *inferior* ones look like?”

Vaughan snorted.

“It’s not as if I wouldn’t want to come back to you, sir. Nobody could be as good as you,” said Allard, prodding a few of Vaughan’s buttons. “You know exactly what to do to me.”

“And I know exactly what I want to do to you now,” said Vaughan. “You know you get over-excited if I don’t restrain you.”

“But, sir,” Allard protested unconvincingly, “I get over-excited if you *do* restrain me, as well.”

“But at least when you’re restrained, you can’t bring yourself off until I give you permission to do so,” said Vaughan. “You’re not properly trained yet. When you’ve had a few months’ more experience, you’ll be able, on my command, to stop yourself having an orgasm.”

Allard didn’t quite believe that. In his experience, once the body had got well started, it didn’t listen to reason. On the other hand, maybe if he’d been personally interested in BDSM on his own account, not mainly pleasing Vaughan, he might be capable of that.

He went to fetch the cuffs.

“Here,” said Vaughan, and Allard handed over the instruments of his discipline.

“It’s true,” said Vaughan. “I could probably *make* you come on command, as well.”

Allard didn’t believe that either, but it sounded strangely exciting. And a lot more achievable for somebody who wasn’t as interested in BDSM as Vaughan.

“Your cock believes me,” said Vaughan.

“It’d believe any old rubbish right now,” said Allard. “But I’d quite like to believe it. At least the bit about making me come. But you could probably do that with just about anything. Sir,” he added as an afterthought.

Vaughan smiled very slightly and bent down to stroke one of the cuffs up Allard's thigh and against his cock. "Anything?"

"Even that. Please, sir," Allard added, because the walk over to the bed had jiggled the butt-plug about inside him, and he was starting to be more interested in the pleading, and what would come after it. Hopefully him.

He knelt in front of Vaughan and held his wrists up.

Vaughan wrapped a leather strip around each wrist, buckling them firmly in place. He clipped them together. Then he handed Allard the ankle restraints.

Allard sat down, drawing his feet in front of him. The butt-plug was still distracting him.

"Oh, dear, sir," he said demurely. "I don't know how to deal with this. Every time I move, the thing you put inside me makes me excited." He looked up through his eyelashes again. "Please help me put my restraints on?"

"I suppose you're trying," said Vaughan. "I'll help you this once." He knelt down and held one hand out. "Give me a strap."

Allard leaned forward and dropped a strap into Vaughan's hand. The movement emphasised the fact that his own hands were tied together.

Vaughan applied that strap to Allard's left leg, and asked for the other one, holding out his hand again.

Allard dropped it into Vaughan's hand. Now that his hands weren't full, he stroked Vaughan's wrist and hand with his fingertips. "You're good to me," he said.

"I wouldn't do this for everyone," said Vaughan.

*I know. That's why I'll do it for you,* thought Allard.

Vaughan put the strap on, and said, "For what I want to do to you, you're going to need a bit of support. Crawl towards the bed."

Allard's hands were tied, so this effectively meant he was crawling forward on his elbows. He spared a moment to be glad for their earlier decision to invest in a really good deep-pile carpet -- given how much time he and Vaughan spent rolling or crawling around on the floor for sexual purposes, it had saved them several minor scrapes.

Since Allard was crawling around on his elbows, Vaughan probably had a *very* good view of his arse as he, and it, moved.

This made him notice the butt-plug again, but he was beginning to suspect that anything from breathing to vigorous exercise would do that by now.

"Stop," said Vaughan. "I was planning on leaning you against the bed, but that pose really does display your assets to best advantage."

"Yes, sir." Allard stopped, with his knees a little apart to make sure Vaughan had a *really* good view of his assets.

"Please, sir, may I have a pillow?" Allard's 'asking nicely' subroutine was getting more of an outing than it had for the last couple of weeks.

"Well, I suppose we don't want carpet-burns on that pretty face," said Vaughan, and went and got him one.

As Allard rested his face on the pillow, Vaughan settled behind him, stroking his arse and remarking about the tautness of his buttocks in this position.

Allard had to endure quite a bit of purple prose about his beautiful, white, quivering arse, and then just at the point when he was about to say 'oh, get on with it', Vaughan kissed his arse, or at least a buttock.

That was right: to him, it was merely something he sat on most of the time, and a source of physical pleasure when Vaughan was at work on it. It wasn't something he tended to regard in an aesthetic light, but *Vaughan* evidently did.

"I have a few more things for that arse to experience. Don't look, just anticipate," said Vaughan. "Although you're going to need a bit of support."



He could hear Vaughan rummaging through the toybox.

Several things clunked down beside him. He was just about to turn to look, when he felt Vaughan's hand on his back. "Stay still."

"Not the beanbag," said Allard. It was altogether too complicated to keep one's balance on that when engaged in vigorous activity.

"No, not the beanbag," said Vaughan, accommodatingly. He didn't trust that. What was Vaughan going to accommodate him *on*? Although that joke probably went better the other way 'round. He hated his mental processes being disturbed by sex. It happened worryingly often.

Vaughan put the furniture down beside him. It bounced.

"What the hell is *that*?" said Allard.

"It says in the catalogue: 'Expand your sex life into hyperspace with a new dimension of erotic positioning'," said Vaughan.

On being manhandled onto it, Allard discovered it appeared to be cloth-covered foam rubber. "Oh, money for old *rope*," he said, disparagingly. "I can imagine how cheap this stuff is to produce, and then they say 'it's the future of modern sex' and people buy it."

"Actually, I saw it in the catalogue, and went and bought a chunk of high density foam rubber from the engineering catalogue. It's made to your measurements."

"How personal. But I have to admit, it *is* actually comfortable." It was wedge-shaped, and he'd been deposited on it with the thick end under his hips and his head resting on the thin end. A good shape to support his chest and belly while propping his arse in the air.

"It's probably better-quality foam rubber. It's for making anti-vibration mountings for engines." He could tell Vaughan was leering at him without having to see.

"I will not even *start* on the bad joke just waiting to be made at this point."

“Pity. I was planning on testing it. If it’s any good, I’ll buy some more for the engine room. I mean, if it can stand up to me hammering you, it’ll take everything the engine can throw at it, no trouble.”

“All right. Please, master, what are you going to do to me on this new toy that I have never seen before?”

“Considering that you *haven’t* seen it before, you might sound a little more convincing. And I’m going to take you to heights of erotic bliss you have never even dreamed of experiencing, of course.”

“Oh, *master!*” sighed Allard. He couldn’t think of any purple prose at the moment, because his cock had just decided how much it liked this item of furniture. Firm, but with a little give in it. Did not encourage him to thrust, and then wallow, the way the beanbag did.

“Did I give you permission to move?” Vaughan slapped him very lightly.

“No, master. Sorry, master,” he said, thinking, *Can we get on to the ‘heights of erotic bliss’ bit?* He didn’t say that, of course. Vaughan was appalling if Allard started talking back, and would make him wait for ages. Which could be fun in its own way, but he wasn’t in the mood. He’d already been waiting for ages.

“What a functional, plain butt-plug this is,” said Vaughan with disfavour, tweaking it. “Not suitable for making *my* proud beauty discover what he’s been missing all this time. We really need something much more decorative ... like this!”

He picked it up and held it in front of Allard’s eyes.

Allard admired it. It was a heavy-looking, heart-shaped, carefully crafted work of art, the sort of thing Harry would love (and unerringly value rather highly). A narrow stem rose from the top of the heart, then flared out into a flange.

“A rosebud for my rosebud’s rosebud,” said Vaughan, tilting it so that he could see the decoration on the end of the flange clearly.

“Well, *really!*” said Allard, noticing for the first time that the flange base had a rosebud sculpture right where it would be displayed between his buttocks when in use. *I suppose it could be worse -- he could have presented it to me on our honeymoon.*

“You bought that just for *me*, master? It looks expensive.” *Actually, if it hadn't been presented in such a bloody twee manner ...*

“Nothing's too good for you, my sweet. I'll spare no expense in training you to be the best harem slave I've ever had.”

*Out of a grand total of ... one*, Allard thought. *Vaughan's scripts don't get any better, but for some reason he never bores me.*

“Oh, master, you're too good to me!”

“I know, but I just can't resist.” Vaughan kissed the top of his head, and went into a long eulogy about Allard's white, white skin, long, long eyelashes, and perfectly shaped, perfectly *perfect* arse.

Allard's internal monologue countered everything with, *Damn, I meant to get some natural planetary sun in this year, but I never have the time*, and *Sometimes I think the eyelashes are going to fall into my work*, and *It won't be perfectly shaped if I don't remember to get a bit more exercise*, and *I don't mean crawling under desks looking for cables*. Despite his internal monologue thinking Vaughan's compliments were perfectly stupid things to say, he enjoyed them rather a lot.

“But I'm only an unworthy harem slave among many,” he said, “and you're my master.”

“But, my treasure, you're such a decorative canvas to display my *other* treasures on.”

Vaughan reached and picked up something else, and then held his hand out where Allard could see it.

Bejewelled nipple-clamps.

If Allard weren't so aroused, the clamps would have looked really tacky. Not that they were an ugly design, as bejewelled nipple-clamps went; it was merely that Allard had a little

difficulty with the concept of nipple-clamps. Particularly decorated ones. His rational brain popped up to ask him was it really so much more bizarre than, say, earrings (which was what these looked like), but he told it he'd had considerably longer to get used to the concept of earrings, because people wore them in public. They did not hand them to their sex-slaves and say 'what a delightful idea'. Which was how Vaughan had introduced him to the concept about two sessions back.

"Master, I'm *shy*," he said. "All these new experiences seem so ... so ..."

Vaughan stroked his back. "Can you face them, for me?"

"Oh, *yes*, master." These weren't the sort intended to inflict actual pain. They were just loops with dangly jewels attached, which one just slipped over the nipple and tightened until they were secure-but-comfortable.

"Sit up, then."

Allard wriggled back along the wedge and found a position where he could kneel up again.

Vaughan played with Allard's nipples, stroking and licking them. Allard would have grabbed hold of him, but since his hands were tied, he was resigned to the awful fate of just kneeling there and taking it.

Now his nipples were in a state to support the decorations, Vaughan attached them, saying, "There. Doesn't that look pretty?"

Allard discovered that the weight of the jewelled tassels did interesting things to his nipples. He swayed his body a bit, experimentally. That was even more interesting. Now, these were effectively small pendulums, so it should be possible to calculate the length of tassel needed to get the right frequency for the best effect. Although one would want to allow for forced pendulum motion imposed by the wearer ...

"Yes, that's right," said Vaughan. "Dance for me."

Allard was tempted to point out that he was conducting an experiment, but decided that it would spoil the scene, and even conducting the experiment hadn't stopped *him* enjoying the scene.

Vaughan had evidently been shopping. He seemed to have come back with a whole load of stuff that was nearer costume jewellery than fetish gear. Was there such a thing as 'non-costume' jewellery?

"Do you have any more jewellery for me, master?"

He regretted asking that, because the next item was a rather gaudy cock-cage. Silver leather straps decorated with coloured rhinestones. Well, he *hoped* they were rhinestones, because if they were real gemstones, that would be a fairly expensive little item. If the rest of the syndicate found out their future pensions were wrapped 'round Allard's *cock* ... it didn't bear thinking about. Well, synthetics they'd probably get away with. You could buy those by the kilogram, if you knew where the wholesale shops were. It was the naturals that were expensive.

Vaughan tenderly wrapped the straps 'round Allard's cock. "*All* my property. Something valuable to decorate something valuable."

The buckles were silver-plated -- at *least* silver-plated. Solid silver probably had the mechanical strength to make usable buckles that small, and he wouldn't put it past Vaughan. It wasn't as if silver would cost much in that quantity.

Once it was on, it looked far better. Well, it was an item of clothing and wasn't really designed to be seen un-worn.

"Thank you, master. It's beautiful."

"And so are you."

Vaughan picked up a jewelled collar, carefully fitted it to Allard's neck, and said, "Go and look at yourself in the mirror. You look like some beautiful cat -- proud, lovely, and not *quite* tame."

Allard wasn't convinced until he looked in the full-length mirror. From a distance, as a whole, the way *Vaughan* was seeing him, he *did* look gorgeous.

"Thank you, master. It really *is* beautiful." He was a lot more sincere now. At a proper distance, with the jewels in proportion, they were actually fairly tasteful, or as tasteful as items so blatantly sexual could be.

Vaughan walked up behind him, put his arms 'round him, and said, "You look like something straight out of a fantasy. Naked, hands bound, bedecked with jewels."

Yes. He did.

Very occasionally, he could see what Vaughan saw in BDSM. It might be narcissistic, but he looked damn good.

"Master, fuck me," he whispered, meaning it.

"Not just yet. You've still got to try the new butt-plug for size."

Allard hurried to the item of sexual furniture and arranged himself.

"Since you're in a co-operative mood, I don't think I need to use the leg-spreader."

Allard was a bit shocked to realise that he was a little disappointed at that. Maybe Vaughan was contagious.

"Out with the old, in with the new." Vaughan pulled out the butt-plug.

In the middle of wondering whether Vaughan was going to get into the 'something borrowed, something blue' bit, he realised he missed it rather badly. He whimpered.

"Just a minute, pet," said Vaughan. He applied it slowly and carefully. Allard realised that it was quite large, and that because Vaughan was applying it slowly and carefully, he got the full benefit of the way it spread from a narrow point to its full width before narrowing into the neck. He was moaning and wriggling by the time Vaughan had got it all in.

"You're going to have trouble seeing yourself in the mirror like that," said Vaughan, "but there is *one* way 'round it." More rummaging in the cupboard.

Vaughan held something in front of Allard. “It’s an instant-print camera. One print, self-developing, no film. No record.”

This time, Vaughan had asked first, knew exactly what Allard didn’t like about the idea of photography, and had found a way to work around it. He still wasn’t comfortable with the idea, but he could cope.

“Yes, master.”

Vaughan went ’round to take a photo of him, and brought the camera back. He set the camera on the floor and pressed a button. It extruded a sheet of blank paper. “It’ll take about a minute to develop.”

In fact, an image was starting to form even as he looked at it. The part of Allard’s mind not occupied with being occupied went “Ooh, shiny!”

“Remind me not to bring ancient gadgets into the scene,” said Vaughan. “After all that work, you’re in geek mode.”

“So twiddle the MODE button,” said Allard, wondering which of his nipples was the MODE button.

Then he was distracted by developments in film development. An image was appearing. For the first time, Allard had a Vaughan’s-eye-view of his arse. Now he could see what Vaughan saw in him. What Vaughan saw in him was an expensive bit of art masquerading as a butt-plug.

It was rather attractive. The art and the arse. In fact, if it hadn’t been his own arse, he’d have fancied it.

“Like that?” Vaughan asked.

“Yes, master.”

“Get up and walk around; see how it feels,” said Vaughan.

After several unsuccessful attempts, only partly exaggerated, Allard managed to get to his feet.

It was large, heavy, and securely embedded. He could feel it move inside him at every step. His cock twitched inside its restraints.

“Good, is it?” Vaughan asked.

“It’s wonderful.” He wanted to reach for it, move it a little bit, but he couldn’t. Not with his hands tied.

He walked up to Vaughan, put his tied hands on Vaughan’s chest, and said, “Please, master. Move it for me.”

Vaughan put his arms ’round him, held him close, so that their cocks were rubbing together. Some small stray area of sanity in Allard’s mind hoped the gemstones didn’t have any sharp edges, and then thought, *Bugger that, that’s Vaughan’s lookout*. Speaking for himself, he didn’t necessarily care.

He could feel cloth against his bare skin, and Vaughan’s one bit of bare skin against his one item of clothing. Like kinky reversed images of each other.

Vaughan slid one hand up Allard’s back, pulling his head forward for a kiss, and one hand *down* his back, jiggling the butt-plug just as he thrust his tongue into Allard’s mouth. Allard nearly came then and there.

He let Vaughan control him, enjoying being submissive, enjoying the difference in height and build exaggerated by his nakedness against Vaughan’s clothes. He was panting by the time Vaughan let go of his mouth.

“Is that plug big enough, or would you like something bigger?” asked Vaughan.

“Yes, please, master.”

“Get back on the floor.”

He arranged himself on the wedge-shaped piece of furniture again.

Vaughan had a hand on each buttock, spreading him out. “That little rosebud looks very pretty, but I’ve actually got something to make the jewellery a matching set.”



Allard wondered if he could take an even bigger butt-plug, and decided that it was worth trying.

The rosebud plug felt just as good coming out as it had going in. Before he had time to miss it, Vaughan applied something else to his arse. Oh, God, it *was* big! But Vaughan was inserting it carefully, giving him a chance to adjust, and then it was firmly seated in him.

“Want a picture?” Vaughan asked.

Allard got quite a thrill out of that idea. Apparently, knowing that there was not going to be a digital copy of the picture to escape made all the difference.

“Please!” he said.

Vaughan fiddled with Allard’s underneath, pulling his cock down where it was pressed up against the side of the wedge, and would be visible between his legs.

In the photo, when it appeared, Allard was surprised to see the glint of his intimate jewellery in the camera flash, beautiful deep blue gem sparkling in his arse, multiple different colours sparkling around his cock. He seemed to have *forgotten* he was got up like that, just concentrating on having a good time. He was surprised to find how much it turned him on, seeing himself decked out as Vaughan’s sex toy.

“See how that one feels when you walk around,” Vaughan said.

Absolutely bloody wonderful, as it happened. Just not enough to satisfy. He’d had something up his arse since before dinner, and he was aching for release by now.

“It feels good, master, but it’s you I need.”

Apparently he’d got desperate enough to sound convincing enough. Vaughan openly gloated for a few seconds. “But I’ve got another one here for you to try.” He picked something off the floor and showed it to Allard. “See this loop here? Now imagine what it will feel like when that’s up you, and I clip this,” Vaughan demonstrated, “onto the ring.”

‘This’ was another jewelled tassel, much longer than the ones that were moving against his chest with every step he took. A cluster of incredibly fine silver chains, studded with tiny

glittering gems. Chains long enough to brush against his balls if he were bent over the foam wedge, or to tickle his thighs as he walked.

Vaughan brushed it over his cock, and Allard gasped at the feel of delicate metal flicking across his skin between the leather straps confining his cock.

“Or I could use a short chain between this,” Vaughan held up the butt-plug, “and this,” touching the tiny ring set into the final leather strap around Allard’s cock. “That will make sure your cock doesn’t do anything without my permission.”

Any other time, Allard would have winced at the suggestion that his cock be tied down when it wanted to be standing up. Now, he found the idea appallingly appealing.

“And, of course, I could do both at the same time,” Vaughan said. “That will hold your cock nicely in position for the photograph of the decorations.”

Allard moaned; he simply couldn’t help himself. He could picture it in his mind’s eye -- himself in a humiliating position, chained and jewelled and tormented and utterly exposed, and he wanted to see the picture of the real thing.

“But I don’t think you can wait, can you?” Vaughan purred.

“No, master. Please, master, I want your cock.”

“Still want something else besides it?”

“Don’t care, as long as you give me your cock.” He dropped to his knees in front of Vaughan, bowed his head. No touching Vaughan’s cock, not without permission. “Please, master.”

“All right. Since you’ve been a good little slave. On the back rest.”

Allard shuffled over to the foam wedge without bothering to get up.

“On your back. I want to look at your jewellery.”

Allard contemplated the wedge. It would probably work whether he had his head at the high end or the low end. He opted for having his head at the high end; Vaughan would say if he wanted anything different.

“Just a bit higher,” Vaughan muttered, pushing at Allard. “That’s better.” Having settled Allard to his satisfaction, Vaughan pulled his trousers down just far enough to free his cock properly without hampering his own movements. Then he pulled Allard’s legs wide apart, kneeling between them.

Vaughan removed the toy, and Allard yelped slightly. Not with pain, just with the odd sensation of how open he seemed to be after wearing one or another arse-decoration since before dinner.

Then Vaughan shoved into him, and he discovered another advantage of the foam wedge. It was propping him up in a position where Vaughan could get into him comfortably but deeply.

*I*, Allard thought, *am an extremely lucky slave*. He had a nice, and satisfying, master, and he had any amount of interesting things he’d never *quite* have had the nerve to get for himself.

He tried to reach for the dangly things attached to his nipples, and discovered that although his tied-together hands could reach them, they couldn’t do so comfortably. However, the attempt drew Vaughan’s attention to Allard’s tied hands, which seemed to get Vaughan quite excited.

“Please, master, will you play with my nipples?” said Allard.

“Demanding little thing, aren’t you?” said Vaughan. “Right, wrap your legs ’round my waist so I don’t have to support you.”

“But I thought you *like* supporting me, master. I’m a frail little creature and I wouldn’t do very well on my own, now would I?”

Vaughan snorted.

Allard fluttered his eyelashes, and decided there was probably such a thing as ‘too girly for the bedroom’.

He wrapped his legs 'round Vaughan, and decided that this was a good opportunity to pull himself right down onto Vaughan's cock. He liked this position; missionary but with freedom to move. Or at least, he would be free to move if his hands weren't tied.

Vaughan flipped a tassel with one finger.

Allard's cock would have tried to climb Vaughan if *it* had had any freedom of movement.

The sensation was quite interesting, anyway: a tug on his nipple combined with the soft tassel brushing over his skin.

He moaned happily.

"And just in case that isn't enough for you ..." Vaughan rummaged for something, then moved Allard a little off his cock.

Allard expressed his displeasure with some force. As much force as he could manage trussed up like an erotic Christmas tree, anyway.

Vaughan removed another inch of himself.

Allard expressed himself again.

"Naughty, naughty!" said Vaughan, sliding out entirely.

"No!" wailed Allard.

Vaughan shoved something into him. It wasn't particularly large, so it couldn't be Vaughan.

"If you think *that's* an acceptable substitute ..." said Allard nastily.

Vaughan shoved something else in. Now, *that* was Vaughan. He'd recognise him anywhere.

Particularly there.

Except it wasn't *just* Vaughan, because Vaughan hadn't taken the other thing *out* first.

"Remember that naughty little fantasy you were describing earlier?"

Allard squeaked faintly.

“Well, since you’ve been such a good, obedient little slave, I thought I’d give you a treat.”

Allard got extremely excited. Vaughan probably lost his self-control at that point, because he suddenly stopped making coherent joined-up statements, and started hammering into Allard, accompanied by grunting noises.

Allard liked that. The last thing he needed when he felt this excited was Vaughan trying to be amusing with his ‘script’.

Every time Vaughan thrust, he could feel the dildo making its presence felt. The more nervous part of his mind thought, *Could this actually do me an injury?* It was rapidly outvoted by those parts of his mind and body busy saying, *Shut up, we’re enjoying this.*

Actually, he was enjoying himself so much there was about to be a problem.

“Master,” he said uneasily, “I’m afraid I can’t control myself, and I don’t want to get excited all over something this expensive.”

“Don’t worry,” said Vaughan, still hard at work, “I can afford it. And I want you to come ...” Vaughan thrust really hard. “Now.”

Allard, much to his surprise, did.

All right, maybe that *was* possible. He’d just done it, anyway. If it wasn’t some amazing fluke, this was a really good way to achieve simultaneous orgasms. *They’d* just done that, to judge by Vaughan’s behaviour.

They held still for a minute or two. Allard was quite glad he was the one lying back on the wedge.

Then Vaughan very carefully extracted himself, followed by the dildo. Allard was glad Vaughan was being careful. He wouldn’t want Vaughan to hurt anything important he might need later. Or the dildo, of course.

He sprawled back in contentment.

“You look even more like a cat with that expression,” Vaughan said. “You’ve already had the cream, so how about a little after-nookie coffee?”

Allard thought back. Oh, yes -- aeons ago, in the dawn of pre-nookie time, Harry would have delivered the coffee. “Yes, please, master, but won’t it be cold?”

“I haven’t been disciplining you that long this evening. By the time they brewed it, and Harry delivered it, and listened at the door, and ran away squealing to turn his bugs off ...”

“*Poor Harry,*” said Allard, almost sincerely.

“... the coffee should still be reasonably warm.”

Vaughan wiped himself off. He did not wipe Allard off.

While Vaughan went to get the coffee, Allard contemplated the fact that he was going to be cold and squelchy very soon. Not a lot he could do about it, since he was still tied. He waited until Vaughan came back with a tray of coffee. “Master, are you going to untie me?”

“I quite fancy the idea of sitting here drinking coffee in front of you.”

“But I’m cold and sticky.”

Vaughan looked him up and down. “You don’t look very uncomfortable to me. Well, I suppose I’ll be good to you. You were, after all, very good yourself.”

“Thank you, master.”

Vaughan set the tray down, then picked up a cloth and gave Allard a wipe-over. He’d still want a shower, but at least he wouldn’t squelch now. He held his hands up.

“You know, I’m very tempted to leave you like that,” Vaughan said.

“Only if you want more shagging.” Allard pouted. That should get him what he wanted. “I want a cuddle.”

“Now that I’ve shown you a few new tricks, and worn you out in the process?” Vaughan asked. “Well, I suppose a delicate little thing like you needs a break after a while.”

He knelt and undid the clip holding Allard's wrists together, but didn't undo anything else. "Come and have a nice, refreshing coffee."

Allard wasn't sure if they were still in the scene or not. He didn't really mind either way -- the jewellery was rather nice in its own right, although the piece on his cock was going to fall off shortly. Vaughan had plonked himself down next to the bed, where he could lean back against it. That seemed a very good idea, so Allard joined him.

Vaughan put an arm around his shoulders, and handed him a cup of coffee. "There you go, petal."

"Thank you." He sipped at it. Just the right temperature. They couldn't have been playing for very long, after all. Now he thought back, they hadn't; it was just that foreplay had been going on since before dinner.

They sat in comfortable silence until they'd finished the coffee. Then Vaughan set down his mug, and said, "Don't think that fits terribly well now," stroking a finger along Allard's cock.

His cock had had enough time to recover from post-coital sensitivity, so that felt nice. His cock thought so, too, but didn't seem terribly interested in another go. He set down his own cup and tackled the tiny little buckles. At least his hands seemed to have recovered, as well; the buckles were tiny but manageable. "I still can't decide whether it's incredibly tacky or a masterpiece of the jeweller's art. What are the stones, by the way?"

"Synthetic sapphires, lead crystal, and cubic zirconia, depending on colour and how sparkly they are. But good-quality ones."

Pretty much what he'd thought. Fine craftsmanship and materials, but at "toy" level rather than "investment" level. "Must have cost you a bob or two."

"I could have bought a couple of dozen basic plastic for the price, yes," Vaughan said.

"Not a gross?"

“That would have been gross,” Vaughan cheerfully agreed. “Not even you are that greedy. But it wasn’t that expensive. The money’s in the workmanship, and that’s worth paying for.”

Allard set it aside carefully, and reached for the nipple decorations.

“Let me,” Vaughan said, brushing a hand over Allard’s nipple.

*Not quite worn out for the evening, then, Allard thought. Although my nipples have had less exercise than my cock.*

And then Vaughan slipped the little loop open, and Allard gasped at the tingling sensation. It hadn’t been tight enough to be uncomfortable, but he could still feel a difference as the weight and constriction were taken away.

Then the other one. Less of a shock this time, but still a thrill.

“Hands,” Vaughan said, and Allard held up his hands to be divested of the wrist-cuffs. Then he pulled up his feet and tackled one ankle-cuff while Vaughan did the other.

“Had enough for one evening?” Vaughan asked.

“Mmm.” If Vaughan hadn’t done him before dinner as well as after, he’d have been wanting more, but he was well satisfied. Not even all that interested in demanding fisting as his reward for catering to Vaughan’s fantasies. Maybe because it had been one of those occasional nights when Vaughan’s enthusiasm had touched him, let him experience BDSM the way Vaughan did.

Vaughan bent over him, kissed him lightly. “Thank you, love.”

Allard rubbed his hand over Vaughan’s chest as Vaughan undid his collar. “You put up with my little ways, like getting too enthusiastic too quickly when I’m on top. I can put up with you not letting me come until you’re done when you’re *really* on top.”

After a shower and slow, comfortable drying-up with big towels, Allard went and collected the new toys. “Time for these to go in the cleaner. They deserve the best of care.” *Like me*, he thought.



“Like you,” said Vaughan on cue.

Allard smirked.

“The plug should be all right in the main section, but the jewellery should go in the ‘delicates’ tray,” said Vaughan.

That was pretty much what Allard had assumed, although he was glad to have it confirmed that the more delicate workmanship wouldn’t get either stuck or lost in the cleaning process.

While the toys were in the wash, he went and inspected his new piece of ‘erotic furniture’. It didn’t really need cleaning, but he supposed that since he’d been fucked on it, the cover should get washed.

“There are a couple of spare covers,” said Vaughan helpfully, “just in case that won’t be dry tomorrow morning, if you feel a sudden need.”

“I *think* I can manage to wait until tomorrow evening.”

“Nice heavy satin,” Vaughan said. “Or thick-pile velvet, if you’d prefer that.”

“Who asked you?” Allard said to his cock.

“I asked it, of course. Makes more sense than the other end, sometimes.”

“Not at the moment. *It* may think like a seventeen-year-old, but I’m thirty-seven, and I can’t come twice a day every day.”

“You’ve been making a bloody good shot at it so far this week,” said Vaughan, admiringly.

“You inspire me. But I thought I’d warn you that if you *keep it up* ...” He paused for Vaughan to leer. “... much more in the same week, it’s going to wave the white flag unless you want to resort to pharmaceutical assistance.”

“No,” said Vaughan. “There are plenty of interesting things we can do when we can’t get it up. Like cuddle,” he said, demonstrating.

Allard let Vaughan express his satisfactory ability to cuddle for a few minutes, and then said, "Let's get dressed and join the others."

Vaughan got dressed in his ordinary clothes.

Allard, still luxuriating in post-afterglow euphoria, reached for the big, warm dressing gown he favoured for extended cuddling.

"Allard?" said Vaughan. "It feels as though we've been taking several hours at this, but it's still only just after dinner. Do you really want to endure crew commentary on what we've been doing for the next three hours?"

"They'll comment regardless." Allard took the dressing gown off anyway, and started getting dressed. "Besides, it's not as if they haven't seen me in my dressing gown before, or even not in my dressing gown."

"If you don't want to provide a display during night alerts, don't sleep in the nude."

"Anyway, Harry and Claire are going to help me look for my bridal outfit. They'll help me try it on, and then they'll help me fit it. Think I won't get any comments then?"

Vaughan murmured, "Well, you could give them something to talk about. That gemstone butt-plug would make a lovely 'something blue', I think."

Allard visualised Harry, or worse, Claire, fitting him with the butt-plug. He shuddered.

"It's not very polite to have sex on the altar, which would be the likely result," he said.

"Mm. *What* a lovely thought that is going to be. Eventually," said Vaughan.

"I do have *some* respect for other people's religion, even if I'm not the religious type myself," said Allard.

"I wasn't saying this is how I intend to celebrate my wedding," said Vaughan, sounding slightly injured. "Wasn't even saying it's what I want to do now. I mean, it's a lovely thought to have in the privacy of our own minds, that you'd want it so much you'd ... well ..."

Allard was slightly mollified. "That I would so far forget myself as to forget what the nearest flat surface was before flinging myself on it."

“Exactly. I don’t think I’d like it very much if you actually did it. But I’m going to enjoy thinking about it for the next week.”

“Well, I suppose I can’t stop you *thinking*.”

“Well, actually, you *can*, but you’re not in a fit state to do so.”

“If I were a younger man,” muttered Allard.

Vaughan kissed him. “Quite.”

Allard put on his other boot, which was the finishing touch to his ensemble, and led the way to join the others.

He draped himself over the sofa, and Vaughan, in a comfortable, relaxed, recently shagged manner.

It would be too much to hope that nobody would remark on that, and it *was* too much to hope.

“It must have been good,” said Claire. “Harry didn’t listen very long, and he looked embarrassed when he came back.”

“Even the absence of pornographic spying gives them information,” murmured Vaughan.

“It was fairly obvious from your behaviour what you intended to do,” said Allard. “The general outline if not the exact details.”

“Do you lot *want* the exact details?” asked Vaughan.

“No!” said Harry.

“Yes, please,” said the women.

“I’m being diplomatically silent because it’s Dad’s sex life. And Stepdad’s,” said Mark.

“Vaughan!” said Allard.

“I’m not going to give them the details. I just wanted to know who wanted to know,” said Vaughan.

Allard decided to be grateful that MCU93 *was* diplomatically silent instead of *pointing out* that it was diplomatically silent. Especially as MCU93 was the only one who might have *seen* what was going on in the cabin as opposed to merely hearing it. Fortunately, the ship's AI had a very strong sense of privacy, and did not abuse the fact that it had sensors in most parts of the ship.

Making the best of a bad job, Allard cuddled Vaughan rather grudgingly. Then he did so less grudgingly.

"Do you have to *slop* over each other like that all evening?" asked Claire. "I mean, the sex is fine, but this is like sharing the ship with one of those huge, cushiony Valentine's cards. With glitter and curly writing."

"We can do poses," said Vaughan, helpfully.

"Oh, I think it's rather sweet," said Karen.

"It's better than what they were doing in the bedroom," Harry muttered.

"*Do* go on," said Claire.

Allard considered giving Harry the butt-plug and informing him he had to fit the 'something blue'. The trouble was, Claire would probably snatch it off Harry with great glee, and try to apply it.

"Shan't!" said Harry. His ears were turning red.

Allard wondered if he should point out that shyness was a bit of a liability in a voyeur, but he'd already remarked on that many times.

"Do you have to radiate smugness quite that hard?" asked Claire.

Allard started to bristle, and realised she was speaking to Vaughan.

"Yes," said Vaughan simply. "I'm happy."

Allard slid his arms casually around Vaughan as if nobody were watching. "Well, so am I. We probably *will* have worked it out of our systems by the time we come back from

honeymoon, but until then, I intend to be offensively romantic until all of you are sick of the sight of us.”

“About another five minutes,” muttered Harry.

In fact, they were soporifically romantic all evening, and nobody threw up. It was rather pleasant.

After a while, Allard said quietly, “I never thought I could enjoy myself so much *without* a computer and *with* other people.”

“You obviously hadn’t met the right people,” said Vaughan.

Allard decided that was serious, and true.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two or three days later, Claire dragged Allard and Harry down-planet to do some shopping.

“I don’t want to spend the day lugging vast parcels about,” said Allard, sneezing in the mini-allergy most new planets seemed to give him for the first five minutes until his nose got accustomed to the ecosystem.

“You didn’t ask me,” said Harry.

“*You* will manage to foist them off on somebody else the way you always do,” said Allard. “You’ve got Teflon-coated fingers as far as manual labour is concerned. Therefore, the main problem is that I’m not looking forward to carrying all the apparel and appurtenances.”

“No problem,” said Claire. “You don’t have to actually *buy* all the stuff yet, but we need to start choosing things so that we can get organised.”

Allard started calculating the possibility of saying he’d take the first thing that fitted, but decided neither of them would let him get away with it. Both of them seemed to take far

too much pleasure in treating him as a dress-up doll. Sex toy for Vaughan, dress-up doll for the others; until his wedding, the days were going to be few that he wasn't being dressed up or undressed for *somebody*.

Even MCU93 had shyly offered some suggestions, after rummaging through its file of clothes worn by other creatures it had been owned by. Some of which might have looked nice if he'd had a tail, an extra head, or the appropriate number of limbs. But he appreciated the gesture. There had actually been some ideas that might be usefully adapted.

They strolled through a posh shopping centre, and Harry picked the shop they would go into. Harry knew the value of *everything*; it was his job, after all. Allard trusted him to have some idea of what was wanted and not to be stupid about it. He followed Harry into the shop.

Even he could tell that the clothing was expensive and good quality. He wandered around, looking at the display. There were some extremely nice suits, which weren't quite what they'd had in mind.

A kilt could be fun, he thought. Not for the wedding, but it had a few benefits as far as accessibility and leg-showing were concerned. He insisted on trying it on, and both Harry and Claire suddenly stopped arguing about not getting a kilt for the wedding as soon as they saw it on.

Harry demonstrated what Vaughan would probably do with it. Claire made sure the fit was *just* right. How could two people have six hands? It was a good thing, Allard thought wearily, that he liked these people and they were his friends, because this would be indecent assault from anyone else (and if he ever found out the mystery hands *weren't* a tactile illusion, there would be trouble for somebody). He glanced. No, just Harry and Claire. Although he wouldn't put it past Harry to have a spare pair hidden up his sleeves for just such an occasion.

"When you've *quite* finished inspecting the merchandise on Vaughan's behalf ..."

“... we’ll let you know,” finished Claire.

“More seriously, what do you think of it for the honeymoon?”

“Seriously,” Claire said, groping him, “he won’t be able to keep his hands off you, any more than we can.”

That did seem to be a serious appraisal as well as an excuse to grope him. He raised an eyebrow at Harry in the mirror.

Harry patted him on the bum. “It’s very nice cloth, it’s very well made, and it’s ideal for romping around in; although if you want to play Bonnie Prince Charlie, make sure Vaughan’s got one, as well.”

“It’s not really virginal,” Claire said, “although it’ll do for the wedding if we can’t find anything more suitable. But you certainly want one for the honeymoon.”

Allard nodded.

They made him put on the rest of the outfit, lacy shirt and all. He took one look at it in the mirror and decided it was definitely something Vaughan would like.

Harry and Claire seemed to think so, as well.

“I suppose you two perverts think I shouldn’t get any underwear to go with this?” Allard asked.

“It’s not traditional,” said Harry.

“It’s not fun,” said Claire.

“Oh, I dunno,” said Harry. “Vaughan seems to get a lot of fun out of *taking* Allard’s underwear off.”

“He’ll get a lot of fun out of slamming Allard up against the nearest tree and slamming himself up Allard,” suggested Claire.

*Ouch, I thought carpet-burns were bad, thought Allard. Even with the kilt in the way, there’s the possibility of getting this or that barked by bark.*

Allard came out of the changing room, and found several people looking at him with great interest. He looked back, with disfavour, and they melted into the background.

“See,” said Harry. “Told you it’s perfectly normal to be a voyeur.” He raised his voice. “All of *them* think so!”

Allard decided to find that amusing. Especially as the one person he could still see had the grace to look extremely embarrassed. Besides, if he was going to be offended at Harry, it would take all his energy for the foreseeable future, and he needed some of it for Vaughan.

“Before we get on with the serious business of bride’s clothes,” said Harry, “what are you going to do about the party?”

What *party*? Allard thought. Nobody had been fool enough to invite him to one for the last ten years.

“Is it going to be a stag night?” asked Harry. “You know, you get thoroughly pissed and embarrass yourself and wake up without your trousers on a park bench, painted a funny colour?”

“The bench painted a funny colour?” asked Claire.

“No. His arse.”

“I am not going to have a stag night,” said Allard, firmly. He noticed a glance going from Claire to Harry. It seemed to say ‘you idiot, you’ve put him off now’.

“Good,” said Claire.

He looked at her. He mistrusted that tone of voice.

“A hen party is a *much* better idea. All the girls, including the bride, get very drunk and make a lot of rude jokes, and then there’s a male stripper for entertainment.”

He disliked every part of that idea except the male stripper.

“Why have you two been researching historical marriage rituals?”

“To wind you up?” Harry suggested.



“Because it’s fun?” Claire said.

“Just because I’m willing to go along with the ‘virgin’ thing does not mean I’m willing to go along with the rest of the package. I thought I made that clear.”

People were staring at him again. “Using the word ‘virgin’ in public does *not* give anybody a licence to ogle me, is that clear?”

“Just think,” Harry said, “you could start a new fashion.”

“That’s what worries me.”

“Anyway, we’ve still got to find you your outfit,” said Claire.

“Right,” said Allard. “Both of you have five minutes to come up with your best guess, and Harry has final refusal.”

“You’re not taking part?” asked Claire.

“Clothes aren’t one of my hobbies, just a necessary evil most of the time. And I like black.”

“You’re right,” said Harry. “We don’t want you in a black wedding dress with a black veil. That’s just creepy.”

Well before the five minutes were up, Harry called them over. Claire got there first, punched the air, and shouted, “Yes!”

Allard hoped it wasn’t too bad.

“Do I get to try it on?” he asked.

“If you like. This is the one, though,” said Claire. “Don’t pout.”

“I was just thinking that this is *my* body and *my* wedding.”

Although, looking at it, he could see why there was so much enthusiasm. It was a Chinese scholar’s robe, a long silk robe over trousers, almost ankle length, but with slits up the sides for freedom of movement. The slits went all the way up to over the hips. It was

perfectly decent, but hinted at access. And he could wear more layers underneath if he wanted, plenty for Vaughan to unwrap.

He walked around the mannequin, admiring the robe. It was heavy white silk, tastefully embroidered on the back with a dragon. "I'd better try one on to get the right size."

A shop assistant scurried over, tape measure in hand. Two minutes of measuring later, Harry and Claire were ushering him into the changing room.

First the trousers. Then a light undershirt, also silk, but plain and readily washed. And tearable, he suspected. He checked the price. Not cheap, but not extortionate; he could afford a few spares to last through the honeymoon.

"Hold up your arms," Claire instructed.

He did so, and they lifted the robe up and slipped it down over his arms and head. They took quite a lot of pleasure out of pulling it down over his body and smoothing it into place, but not more than he could put up with. Then Claire stood in front of him to do up the frogs that fastened the opening along the shoulder, and fiddled with the high collar until she was satisfied that it was straight.

She moved away so that he could see himself in the mirror.

He stared. They were right -- Vaughan was going to love this.

"You look bloody gorgeous," Harry said, perfectly seriously.

"He'll look even better with makeup," Claire said.

"I don't do makeup." All that time putting it on, then taking it off, and worrying whether it had come off of its own accord. Far too much trouble, and he'd never understood why people bothered.

"You'll do makeup for your wedding," Claire said. She did not sound as if she'd be willing to listen to the word 'no'. "Just think of it as part of the outfit."

"Use Claire's," Harry said. "It can be 'something borrowed'. And the trousers are blue, so that takes care of that bit."

Much better than Vaughan's idea of something blue -- although he wouldn't mind taking that along on honeymoon.

"Happy with that?" Claire asked him.

He nodded. "Would it matter if I wasn't?"

"No. Well, if you really hated it ..."

Harry said, "But it's the right one. And you don't hate it, do you?"

"No. We'll take this one." At least it hadn't involved too much messing around. They could have been at it all day and still not found something right.

"We'd better take it off, now," Claire said. She crumpled a small fold of the sleeve.

"Although I think it should manage to last through the day when you're wearing it for real."

"At least until Vaughan rips it off his quivering body," Harry said. "Allard, don't let him rip the robe; it's nice and it would be a terrible waste of a work of art."

Harry had an interesting set of priorities. Not that Allard could complain, since he was also prone to putting interesting work ahead, if only slightly, of interesting sex. More groping as they undressed him, but it seemed a bit more purposeful this time. "I take it you two have decided that this is the one, but you want to make sure Vaughan will have fun taking it off?"

"Yes. Although bear in mind he'll have to do it on his own," Claire said. "It'll take a bit longer and there will probably be more accidental groping." She demonstrated deliberate groping. "How's that?"

He looked at her. It seemed to be a serious question. "Feels quite nice from this side of the fabric." Too nice -- it was going to be embarrassing walking out of here.

"Good. Not bad from this side, either." She finished lifting the robe off him. "It looks lovely, but it has to be comfortable for you to wear all day, and it would be nice if it was *fun* to wear, as well." She handed the robe to Harry, who put it on a hanger while she tackled the shirt.

“Claire, if you don’t stop that right now, I’m likely to be too embarrassed to walk out of this changing room for a while.”

“Sorry,” she said, and stopped rubbing his nipples through the shirt. “I’m not doing it *just* for fun.”

“I know. That’s why I’ve put up with it.”

“You’ll need a few spare shirts, for when Vaughan rips them off your quivering body.”

“Funnily enough, I was just thinking that. I can budget for a bit of recreational disposable clothing, just this once.” He thought, *I must definitely make sure Vaughan understands the difference between ‘disposable’ clothing and ‘normal’ clothing.* Actually, he’d done a bit of ripping off Vaughan’s clothes on his own account.

“What about nightwear?” said Claire.

“I don’t wear any,” said Allard.

“I know,” said Harry, grinning.

It occurred to Allard that some of those alarms that had had him running about the ship starkers in the middle of the night just *might* have been deliberate. He decided not to say anything, because if Harry hadn’t done it, he would then get ideas about doing it.

“It’s your honeymoon,” Claire said. “You’re allowed to be frivolous.”

“Is lace obligatory?” asked Allard.

“Nah. Just satin pyjamas,” said Harry.

Allard didn’t want to wear satin pyjamas all night, but it might be fun to wear them *at the beginning* of the evening. Maybe Vaughan could get some, as well, and they could alternate. Vaughan in silk Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and him the rest of the time. That would be more silk for him, but he thought Vaughan would get plenty of enjoyment out of that. Or perhaps they could *both* wear silk pyjamas on Sundays; it would be very nice for frottage.

He decided not to mention that Vaughan had already bought him an outfit to wear in bed -- or, more accurately, out of bed. Not that it was what he would exactly call *clothing* as much as *decoration*.

They left the cubicle, stared at the audience, and handed the outfit to the assistant, who eventually realised that she was expected to treat them as customers rather than entertainment. They went in search of the nightwear section.

Harry selected the satin pyjamas, and stroked them to make sure they were comfortably soft. "I'm not sure, Allard. Put them on and stroke your thighs, so I know they'll be soft and comfortable enough when they're on."

"I suppose it would have been too much to hope for that you could get through this expedition without making that sort of remark."

"Right," said Harry.

Allard supposed he might as well try them for size. "I don't need any assistance in getting changed into these." The assistant, the other customers, and Claire looked mildly chagrined. Harry didn't.

"Harry, have you managed to drop a bug in that changing room?"

"Damn, knew there was something!"

"I'll take that as a no."

He assumed, from the expression on the assistant's face, that the changing room would be very thoroughly checked after they had left, just to make sure Harry *hadn't* dropped a bug.

He went into the changing room, tried on the pyjamas -- right size first time, which meant the only thing he had to do was display them to his audience just to show them it fitted. The audience was larger than he'd expected, but as large as he should have expected given what had been going on already. He'd also expected a five-second conversation along the lines of 'yes-it-fits', but that was too much to hope for. Of course.

Harry emitted a low whistle. "I used to like the idea you slept in the nude. Silly me!"

"Pyjamas are *much* sexier," agreed Claire. "It's the way the clothing hints at what's underneath it."

"So you need to have a feel to make sure the fit's as good as it looks," said Harry, suiting action to words.

*That's not the fit you're checking out,* thought Allard. On the other hand, if he made a fuss about being groped in public, Harry would follow him into the cubicle and be *much* more obscene about groping him in private. Or rather, groping his privates. Which were evincing a disturbing interest in the whole idea.

*Yes, he thought wearily. They fit perfectly. As everyone can see.*

Fortunately, Harry let go of him before matters could get any worse. "Yes. Those have got a good feel to them. Vaughan will appreciate those."

Harry took hold of a piece of the fabric, doubled it over, and stroked it against itself. "Yes. I think we should get Vaughan a pair, as well."

"But if they both wear them, they'll just get them untidy," said Claire.

"Yes," said Harry thoughtfully. "Sometimes mess is worth the effort." He checked the washing label in the pyjama bottoms *that Allard was still wearing*. "Should be fine," he said.

*I suppose I should be grateful he didn't let the elastic snap back,* thought Allard wearily.

"Do you want to get any more honeymoon outfits?" asked Claire. The shop assistant perked up, presumably at the thought of even more money being spent. Either that, or at the thought of watching Allard trying even more on.

*I used to be a plain, scruffy geek with spare cables trailing out of my pockets,* thought Allard. *When did all this happen?* He had to admit some of it was his fault; he hadn't been crass enough to fancy anyone at work *ever* before he'd met Vaughan, although that was partly because he'd got into the habit of working with people he didn't like. People he *did*

like had been such a small minority that he'd focused on conversation rather than trying to pull. Until he joined the *Mary Sue* and the people-he-liked quotient had gone through the roof. Not only that, but they'd all been shaggable *and* interesting. Bizarre, but interesting.

He spared a moment for brief regret that he hadn't got 'round to trying any of the others before he'd settled down with Vaughan. Monastic to married, straight off.

He suspected Harry and Claire felt the same way -- they were certainly making the most of his last chance at untrammelled freedom, from which he assumed that *they* assumed that he wasn't interested in anything on the side. Was he *that* transparent?

"Yes, dear," murmured Claire.

He decided not to pursue that. He was worried enough that she was reading his mind without confirming it.

"I think I'll just have some more of those ..." -- he didn't really want to mention 'bodice-rippers' in a public shop -- "... shirts."

"The ones that are so nicely tearable, but cheap enough that you don't mind tearing them?" asked Claire.

"The disposable ones, yes."

"Make sure you get some matching knickers," said Harry.

"You do get a quantity discount on the shirts," said the shop assistant. "In batches of ten."

"In that case, ten, please," said Allard, thinking, *Please, God, don't let me start blushing now.*

"After all," said Harry, "he can't spend the *entire* honeymoon ripping them off your quivering body. Turnabout is fair play."

Allard *was* blushing now.

"Don't worry, dear," said a motherly-looking woman, taking him by the arm and drawing him aside. "That's what bridesmaids are like."

“That’s what worries me,” muttered Allard.

“Look, I know it’s difficult, but the more upset you get, the more they’ll tease. Just try to ignore it. Go and get the underwear now, and then they can’t keep winding you up about it.”

*Actually, they could, but it will be easier to ignore once I’ve already bought it,* he thought.

“Thanks,” he said. He ducked into the changing room, put his ordinary clothes back on, and asked his ‘helpers’ if they could go and see if there was anything else good he’d missed.

They quite amiably agreed to do that, and he hurried (with some relief) to the knicker counter in solitary splendour. Not *quite* solitary. The assistant had followed him.

He fixed her with a glare. “Don’t even start,” he said.

“I would recommend those, those, and those,” she said hastily, without adding any amusing commentary.

He picked up those, those, and those, in the appropriate sizes, and decided he’d been given good advice.

“And if that man was serious about matching knickers, you want some of these, as well.”

He looked at her. No roguish twinkling. No laughter. “All right.”

“These are one-use, and they’re nice but cheap material, lightweight, and they tear easily. These are much heavier, they’ll stand up to multiple use, and the buttons just pop off and are easy to sew on again.”

He took quite a few of each, in both of the relevant sizes. There was no telling when they would next have to visit a clothes shop, and it made sense to minimise *explaining* his particular requirements.

“Would you like to pay for this now, and with luck I’ll be able to wrap it now before your friends come back?”



“Thank you.” He followed her.

They did get them wrapped before his friends came back. Or at least the kinky ones. Actually, his friends were quite kinky, too, now he thought about it.

Harry said, “Oh, you’ve already got your knickers.” He sounded rather disappointed.

“Good,” said Claire. “You want nice new underwear.” She picked up one of the examples still on the counter. “Even if they are your usual nice-but-boring.”

*It’s a good thing I’m used to the complete lack of respect for other people’s privacy,* thought Allard. *Or that might have embarrassed me.*

“But are you sure they’re the right size?” said Claire.

“Quite sure, thank you.”

“We could help with the ...” Harry said.

“Still quite sure,” Allard said firmly.

The shop assistant gave him a discreet how-do-you-put-up-with-them glance.

He did his best to give her a God-only-knows glance back.

“Would you like any particular colours for the shirts, or a mixed pack?” asked the assistant.

“How many different shades of black have you got?” asked Claire.

“Obsidian, ebony, pale black, mid-black, dark black, black-black ...” suggested the assistant.

“I was joking,” Claire muttered.

“Two of each,” said Allard. He’d probably quite like obsidian and black-black, with an occasional excursion into off-black.

The shop assistant was deftly flipping through her stock. “I would suggest these,” she said deferentially, and came up with five shirts in dark-but-not-black shades of deep blue or burgundy, and five in various shades of cream and white.

“Actually, that’s not a bad selection,” Harry said.

Allard felt an impulse to ask for at least *one* black, but he decided he could wear black any day of the week, and usually did. If one had to have light colours, or indeed colours, these weren’t bad. And the white was a nice touch for the ‘virgin’ theme.

“If you do like them, sir,” said the assistant, “you can always phone ahead to another branch and have your next order waiting to be collected.”

That decided him to take the selection. If he did like them as much as he thought he would, he could get the black later, without even having to get embarrassed.

“That’s a very good idea,” he said. “I’ll pay now for the stuff we’ve already decided on. Harry? Claire? Can you make sure we’ve got everything?”

Claire went to look at the changing room, and Harry just went on a tour of the shop.

The shop assistant handed him a discreet but nicely designed business card. “You might want to have a look at our catalogue when you’re unaccompanied.”

“Thank you,” he said, with real gratitude.

“We see a lot of wedding parties in here.”

“Are they all like this?” Allard asked her.

“Oh, no. Some of them are *much* worse. Those two are actually quite well behaved. At least they didn’t try to remove your normal clothes until you were in the changing room. Every so often we get a naked bride chased through the shop.”

“Harry did have a look at the label in my pyjamas, and he *is* a voyeur, but I see what you mean.”

She looked slightly worried. Oh ...

“I don’t *think* Harry would bug the premises of someone he hasn’t been introduced to, but it might be worth checking, just in case,” he admitted. “Mostly because he might have dropped one to look at me, and then forgotten about it.”

The others came back.

The shop assistant rang everything through the till, ran a basic credit-check, and loaded his two pack-animals, Harry and Claire, with bags and boxes.

To Allard's relief, the excitable customers had now decided the show was over.

Turning to look at the shop assistant, as he was the last one on the point of leaving, he heard her murmur, "Have a good honeymoon."

He bristled slightly, then realised she honestly meant it.

"I'll do my best," he said, glancing at his friends and hoping they'd *let* him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Back on the ship, Vaughan kept asking, "Well, what did you get, then?" until he'd made a thorough nuisance of himself.

Harry said, "You're not allowed to know."

Claire said, "The groom only gets to see the bride's Feminine Mystery on the wedding day."

"But this is *Allard!*" protested Vaughan.

"You're the one who wanted Ye Olde Fashionede Traditional Wedding," Allard pointed out smugly.

"All right, Feminine Mystery it is, then," said Vaughan. "All I can say is, it had better be worth it."

Allard smirked.

Harry and Claire joined him in the smirk, and said, "It will be."

"I suppose we could give him the things we bought for him," said Harry.

“No,” said Claire. “All the things we bought for him were matching the things we bought for Allard.”

“You bought me a bridal gown?” asked Vaughan uneasily.

“No,” they said in unison.

Vaughan was evidently dying to ask, but equally evidently not going to give them the satisfaction -- which gave them quite a lot of satisfaction anyway.

“How do you keep an idiot in suspense?” murmured Allard *sotto voce* to his two Evil Geniuses.

“We tell him later!” they chorused.

“Tell me *what* later?” asked Vaughan.

Everyone sniggered.

\* \* \* \* \*

Of course, Vaughan tried to get Allard to tell him. The usual way. Torturing him with pleasure. Oh, it was unbearable. How was *anyone* supposed to put up with being aroused until he *couldn't* wait and then *having to* wait? It was more than flesh-and-blood could stand. Not that standing was a problem. Apart from standing up.

He told himself to stop wittering. It was a problem he tended to get when he was very excited and trying to distract himself.

And, after all, he had walked into Vaughan's trap of his own free will.

“I hate pre-wedding nerves, and pre-wedding experiences,” he'd told Vaughan, slightly accusingly, as soon as they were alone together (after he and his bridesmaids had locked away his wedding clothes in a Vaughan-proof environment). “You're going to have a lot to make up to me.” And he sat down in a distinctly un-welcoming way.

“Good.”

“Good?”

“I like a challenge,” said Vaughan. “The idea of giving you the best sex you’ve ever had.” He undid Allard’s footwear and removed socks and shoes, slowly.

“Given the quality of the sex we’ve *already* had,” said Allard, “you have a lot to live up to.”

“Yes,” said Vaughan, and started to caress Allard’s feet.

“Vaughan, you know those aren’t in my top-ten list for erogenous zones,” said Allard.

“I seem to remember you liked it when I did this,” said Vaughan, kissing Allard’s left foot tenderly. “And besides, they need to get kissed better after the immense amount of suffering you’ve been subjected to.”

“Go ahead,” said Allard mildly. “Just don’t expect me to --” and embarrassed himself by moaning loudly as Vaughan really put his tongue to work.

“Don’t expect you to make that sort of noise?” asked Vaughan, as soon as he’d retrieved enough of his tongue.

“That’s right.”

“So, in fact, your poor feet, reeling from a day trailing ’round the shops with Claire and Harry, would quite like to be kissed better?”

“That’s right.” *Actually, it’s one of Vaughan’s less-idiotic ideas, along with the sex toys, the sex furniture, the sex, and the erotic clothing. Face it, Allard, the man’s just a sex god. Not that I’m going to tell him.*

Vaughan stopped talking and settled down to applying his tongue to a more useful task.

Allard just sat there rearranging his top twenty erogenous zones. Feet were about at twelve by now, and rising. As was his cock. There was never much competition for the top one.

“Would sir like the rest of his clothes off?” asked Vaughan.

“I’ve spent enough time today being undressed, dressed, groped, and treated as a public spectacle,” said Allard.

“Wish I’d been there.”

“I was being treated as some bizarre combination of a dress-up doll and a sex doll.”

“*Really* wish I’d been there,” said Vaughan. “Not what I’d call bizarre, either,” he added, kneeling next to Allard to undo the buttons on his shirt.

Allard agreed. Knowing Vaughan, he wouldn’t have thought it was that bizarre, and he probably *did* wish he’d been able to watch. Vaughan loved to watch, when he knew he’d be taking the prize back with him. Well, they’d only really done that once, but reducing it to the level of suggestiveness rather than infidelity would probably please Vaughan quite a lot.

“Public spectacle? So didn’t they have changing rooms in this shop?”

“Yes, but not soundproof ones. There was a running commentary, and sometimes somebody assisting me with my clothes.”

“Like who?” asked Vaughan, interested.

“Harry gives the impression of being quite a small man until one is trying to remove three of his hands from inside one’s trousers without knocking over the booth one is standing in.”

Vaughan found that very funny.

“At any rate, you can rest assured that the clothing has been tested extensively to make sure that you will enjoy playing with it.”

“Yes, I like playing with your clothes,” said Vaughan, playing with some more of them.

“What did you get, then?”

“We told you, Vaughan. You are not finding out until the wedding -- daaaay.” The last word of that was a bit of a gasp, because Vaughan was thoughtfully fondling Allard’s cock now he had Allard’s fly open.

"You don't usually start off that quick," said Vaughan.

"I've just told you, I've spent the afternoon being groped by my bridesmaids."

"Good. I'm in favour of people doing the preliminary work for me, as long as I get the good bit." Vaughan continued stroking the good bit, and around it. Allard was wearing thin, tight trousers (mainly in order that Vaughan would do exactly what he was doing now), and they didn't stop Vaughan touching him in any way.

"I was so *embarrassed!*" wailed Allard, sending himself up only very slightly. "I was worried I wouldn't be in a fit state to walk out of there."

"Mm," said Vaughan. "Well, you're definitely not in a fit state to walk now, so I shall just have to fulfil your every desire -- what *is* your every desire right now?"

"Keep going," said Allard.

Vaughan stroked Allard's legs. The inner thighs were definitely up there on the sexual-responsiveness scale. There was a rather nice spot where the back of his knee met his thigh, as well. Not normally high on his list of Important Parts of the Body, but Vaughan was rather good at making him interested.

For a big man, Vaughan had a feather-light touch when he wanted to, and could be firm and warm when he wanted to do *that*, as well.

"What else did they do?" Vaughan asked.

"Well ... Claire preferred to pat and rumple the clothes and think about what *you* would be doing to them."

Vaughan practiced that, making sure that Allard's shirt was thoroughly disturbed. Every time Vaughan's thumb slipped warmly over Allard's nipples, Allard moaned loudly.

"Those are hard, aren't they?" said Vaughan. "I bet your bridesmaids were fiddling with them."

Vaughan liked making him wait, and making him eager. But Allard had been on the bottom slightly more than usual lately, and it was time for him to make sure that Vaughan Knew His Place.

Every nerve in Allard's body was absolutely screaming for sex by the time he decided it was time to fuck Vaughan.

He tried to move him. And again. And again. *Oh -- that's right -- it's very bloody difficult to roll someone who's not co-operating. At least if they're bigger than me.*

In that case, what he needed to do was tell Vaughan. "Vaughan, get your trousers down and roll over."

Vaughan looked 'round at him and said, "No."

"I want up your arse, and I am not in the mood to wait." He wondered what the hell Vaughan was playing at.

"Not until you tell me *what it was* they were teasing you through," said Vaughan firmly.

"No," said Allard. "I'm not telling you." He tried once more to shove Vaughan into the correct position.

Vaughan shoved back.

Allard was flat on his back on the bed, with Vaughan pinning him down, but not pinning him down anywhere it would do him some good.

"Tell me."

"No." He tried thrusting -- he wanted sodomy, but he'd settle for frottage.

"Tell me."

"No!"

Vaughan delicately licked the tip of Allard's nose, and said, "That could have been your cock, if you'd told me."



“Scheming -- devious -- bastard!”

“I thought that was why you were marrying me,” said Vaughan innocently. “Now, what are you marrying me *in*?”

“Church.” He was beginning to see why his bridesmaids were so adamant about not telling Vaughan. If he got *this* wound-up about the secret, he was *really* going to enjoy the revelation.

Damn. He had to save Vaughan from himself. He hated it when that happened.

“Tell me,” Vaughan said.

*Not fair. Dropping into the Welsh accent.*

“No,” he said obstinately.

“*Tell* me.”

Apparently he wasn’t going to get a shag until Vaughan found out what he was going to wear on his wedding day, and he *definitely* wasn’t waiting until his wedding day for a shag. Therefore, he had to lie.

Unfortunately, he didn’t like lying. It was one of the few antisocial activities he wasn’t actually good at. On the other hand, they had looked in more than one shop window before going into the shop where they’d actually bought his outfits, and they’d looked at the suits in that shop.

“Would you be terribly disappointed if I told you it was just a good dress suit? A very expensive dress suit made out of silk the way you like, with plenty of buttons for you to undo.” There. He hadn’t actually *lied* -- he’d just asked what Vaughan would think of that.

Vaughan looked as if he was trying not to look disappointed, just a little bit. “Why all the secrecy?”

“It’s traditional. And it really *is* the full works. Tailcoat, top hat and all.”

“I don’t think I’d know how to undo spats,” said Vaughan.

“That’s the idea. Think of how much fun you’ll have working it out. Can I have a shag now?”

“I suppose if they’ve been getting you in and out of those all day, they really *have* had a lot of opportunity to grope you.” Vaughan groped him.

Vaughan wasn’t pinning him down quite as effectively, doing that, so Allard’s shove didn’t get any resistance this time.

“Get your trousers down.”

“All right, all right ...”

Vaughan got his trousers down, rolled over, and Allard rolled on top of him. “I’ve been looking forward to this all day. I hope you’re lubed up and ready to go.”

“Thought you might be, and yes, I am.”

Yes, Vaughan was.

God, that felt good. He said so, and added, “Maybe I should spend the day getting groped by my bridesmaids more often.”

“As long as I can watch next time.” Vaughan shifted under him. “Careful with me,” he added. “I’m still just about dressed and tangled in my trousers.”

Which, of course, pushed every button Allard *had* about combining clothing and sex. Not that Vaughan’s clothes were particularly seductive at present, but Allard had been subjected to excessive amounts of textile-related foreplay all day.

He shoved in, not careful at all. Vaughan was tight, ready, and making noises that quivered interestingly between near-pain and actual pleasure.

*Take that*, he thought, *for having the bad manners to put me in a position where I had to lie to you.*

Vaughan took that, without discomfort, and Allard discovered that they weren’t in *that* much of an untenable position. He wondered if Vaughan would ever let go of his cock, but then decided he didn’t actually care. He grunted and snarled and swore his way to orgasm --

not being careful and considerate was wonderful -- and spared a moment to be glad he hadn't been wearing his wedding clothes. They deserved not to be ruined, or at very least to be ruined on a red-letter-day.

He rolled off.

Vaughan said, "Feel better?"

He stretched, and thought about it. "Yes."

"Care to finish me off?"

"You don't want to wait for your wedding night?"

"Frankly, no."

"You're lucky I'm in a good mood."

Vaughan grabbed his hand and dragged it where it would do him the most good. Allard was quite happy to oblige; even when he was sated himself, he enjoyed the feel of Vaughan's warm, thick, large cock filling his hand.

Vaughan didn't seem to mind it, either.

He mentioned how much fun it was to wank Vaughan, but all Vaughan said in reply was, "Yes!" Allard didn't *think* it was actually a reply to his comment.

Then they cuddled for a few minutes.

"Isn't it time we got undressed?" asked Vaughan. "I mean, I don't mind when we're screwing, but you notice lying on stuff a bit more if you're cuddling."

"As long as I don't have to get dressed again today." Most of Allard's day seemed to have been taken up with dressing and undressing. He yawned.

"So you want to be decadent and dine in your dressing gown." He could tell that Vaughan was smiling without looking.

"It's not as if I've got anything they haven't seen, by now." They'd been looking all day, but by now he felt amused rather than annoyed. "Or felt, in Harry and Claire's case."

They peeled themselves off the bed, got washed, and put on their dressing gowns.

\* \* \* \* \*

Harry and Claire took one look at them.

Claire said, "We hope you're grateful, Vaughan."

Harry said, "We got him ready and raring to go."

"I *am* grateful," said Vaughan. "But not too much of it on our actual wedding day, thank you."

"Oh, I think we've rehearsed well enough," said Claire.

"We do recognise he has to get through the entire service without jumping on you and pulling off your clothes," said Harry.

"Did you tell him?" said Claire, looking at Allard.

"I'm afraid I ended up telling him all about that beautiful suit we looked at. He's really looking forward to learning how to undo spats."

"Allard!" said Claire.

"Not his fault," said Vaughan. "I used my masculine wiles on him."

"Shagged you senseless," said Harry brightly.

"*Refused* to shag me senseless until I told him," said Allard.

"Well, don't tell him what we got you to wear on your wedding night."

Vaughan turned to look at him.

While Vaughan was looking at him, Claire winked at him.

*Well, that should make sure I get a shag tomorrow, as well. Eventually.* He was going to be the most well-fucked virgin in human history. He liked the sound of that.

\* \* \* \* \*

When Vaughan visited the next night, Allard was already hard at work on the problem.

“Can’t you *wait?*” said Vaughan.

“Well, I thought if I waited for you, you’d start pestering me about what I’m going to wear on my wedding night, so it would be sensible to have dealt with this, and then you’d have nothing to pester.” He paused. “You’re early.”

“I should think a definition of ‘early’ would be ‘starting before your lover’s in the room’. It’s beyond premature ejaculation.” Vaughan sat down next to him and started to help him with the problem. “However, since you’ve started, I’ll finish.”

Vaughan put one hand around Allard’s hand and held it still.

“That’s not going to finish anything,” said Allard.

Vaughan used his thumb to caress Allard’s wrist.

“You’re not going to start pestering, are you?”

“Wouldn’t dream of it. I’m getting in practice for what I want to do to you on our wedding night ... oh, by the way, what will you be wearing?”

“You, probably.”

“It’s a pity I kept going on at you,” said Vaughan. “I wish I still had the surprise to look forward to, really. So don’t tell me what you’ve got for me. It’ll be a lovely surprise, whatever it is.”

“Do you *like* tartan, by the way?”

Vaughan shot him one of those ‘you’re winding me up!’ glances.

Allard smirked.

"You *are* winding me up," said Vaughan.

"Yes," said Allard. "But I have got something tartan packed for the honeymoon."

"As long as it's not a negligee," said Vaughan.

"Think kilt."

"Good thought. I like the idea of slamming you up against a wall without having to bother about undressing you."

"So do I. My bridesmaids did suggest underwear would not be required for that outfit. There's a matching one in your size."

"Oh, *good*," said Vaughan lecherously.

"Now would you get on with it?"

"You've got a head start. It would only be fair to give me a chance to catch up ... in fact, to *help* me catch up."

Obligingly, Allard got up and removed Vaughan's clothes. Slowly.

Vaughan seemed to quite enjoy the process. However, he did get a little impatient towards the end, and started to help. Allard supposed this *might* be something to do with the fact he'd stopped unbuttoning and unfolding and stroking the clothes, and simply had one hand stroking Vaughan's cock.

"I can handle you," said Allard.

"I know. That's why I want to speed up."

"So you're adequately caught up now?"

"Yes!" said Vaughan, through his teeth.

"Who's on top?" asked Allard.

"We seem to be having enough fun with this," said Vaughan, gazing into Allard's eyes.

"I can't be arsed for arse; it's too much bloody effort sometimes."

Vaughan, thought Allard, wasn't the old-fashioned traditional male. But it wasn't as if they didn't get enough sodomy, and *he* didn't want to let go of Vaughan and find the lubricant, and start thinking about how to do it properly. He just wanted to go where his hands took him. In fact, now Vaughan had taken hold of *his* cock, he didn't want *Vaughan* to let go, either.

Allard put his arm around Vaughan for a cuddle, rather torn between the prospect of cuddling and the prospect of putting his hand on Vaughan's balls to encourage Vaughan to do that to him. He could definitely do with a spare hand.

Vaughan was busy working Allard's cock. He put an arm 'round Allard, apparently to hold him steady so he wouldn't fall over being enthusiastic.

"I think we ought to go and lie on the bed before we fall over," said Vaughan.

Allard, who was enjoying himself too much to be sensible, pretended not to hear him. He didn't actually care if he fell over, as long as Vaughan didn't stop doing that.

Vaughan stopped doing that.

"I think we ought to lie on the bed before we fall over," repeated Vaughan calmly. He patted Allard's cock to emphasise the point.

Allard sighed, and led the way to the bed. Fortunately, it was only a couple of paces. He flung himself on the bed and held his arms out to Vaughan. He was lying down ... well most of him was.

"And if you're going to try to make that fall down, you're out of luck, at least until you do something to it."

"I shall regard it," said Vaughan in a low rumble, "as my personal challenge."

Allard tingled. Vaughan was going all deep and Welsh at him again, and that was very nearly as erotic as the closed fist rubbing gently across his wet cock. Warm knuckles made a casual exploration of all his sensitive bits -- and foreplay was a bloody *insult* by now, straight after what his interrupted body had been determined to regard as the main event.

He bucked his hips, trying to jam the ache of his cock right into the middle of Vaughan's fist without bothering to prise open the fingers. Vaughan chuckled as if he had a very good idea what Allard was trying to do. "Wouldn't be much of a challenge if I just gave in, Allard, now would it?"

The bloody man chose *now* to be charming. He wasn't *interested* in 'charming'; he was interested in 'fucked'.

Allard considered biting the clenched fingers off, but decided it would probably be a bit of an overreaction, especially if he wanted Vaughan's fingers later for anything. A much better option would be to distract Vaughan.

Now, a good way to distract Vaughan was to be all coy and virginal, but that probably wouldn't wash at this point. So going for a good hard grip on Vaughan, and never mind interesting details like stroking knuckles along, would probably work. Besides, it had the advantage of being something that he'd had lots of practice in and didn't need to think about.

He grabbed Vaughan's cock and squeezed. Mmm. Lovely, hard handful, he never tired of admiring the way it filled his hand just nicely. Soft skin, not that he could really appreciate that properly when he had it in a good, tight grip; but if he'd been intent on teasing Vaughan rather than getting him off, he'd like to stroke a fingertip along it, appreciate the satiny softness. For now, he'd settle for feeling the way it moved over the hard flesh beneath as he stroked just *so* ...

Vaughan must have been distracted, because he stopped stroking his knuckles along Allard's cock. Allard gave another quick jerk, and watched with satisfaction as Vaughan's fist unclenched. Before Vaughan could notice this, he grabbed Vaughan's hand and wrapped it around his cock. And another jerk of Vaughan's cock, just to keep distracting him. And to encourage him to mirror the action.

Vaughan did.



*Much* better than wanking himself. Vaughan's big, strong hand around his cock, squeezing almost too hard, working in time with Allard's work on Vaughan's cock. Almost a pity he'd started early; it would be nice to try for a simultaneous orgasm, but that wasn't likely now.

Vaughan stopped. Just at the point where Allard did not like this at all. So he let go of Vaughan's cock by way of reproach. Vaughan would probably only enjoy it if he tried to strangle it.

Vaughan grabbed his hand and put it back in place. "Now, now, Allard, if I keep doing you, you'll come in a few seconds ..."

"I know."

"... and it strikes me that this is a good time to try for a simultaneous orgasm. Be a lot more *mutual* than the last couple of times, see."

Allard did see, especially as the bastard was putting on the accent again.

"After all, the last couple of times I was up you, and one time I didn't even know we'd done it until afterwards," Vaughan said, helpfully jerking Allard's hand for emphasis.

Well, at least he'd stopped nagging about the wedding clothes. Allard sighed, settled against Vaughan, and went to work on helping Vaughan catch up with him. He considered adding fellatio to the mix, but decided that sitting here, with Vaughan's arm around him and his hand around Vaughan, was very pleasant in itself, and he didn't want to move. Besides, if Vaughan was insisting on 'mutual', the only way to have 'mutual' fellatio was a lot more sodding effort than he felt capable of right now, and he'd rather ...

Oh, *that* was nice. He was so aroused by this time, his cock was imagining it was *him* being touched (that or he was Vaughan), and he was wondering whether he could manage to come this way; that would show Vaughan, didn't need Vaughan, he was going to splash it all over the bed without being --

Vaughan's fingers closed mercilessly around his cock. Presumably Vaughan felt that he was now adequately caught up. Allard was quite pleased about this, especially given the way Vaughan was encouraging him to go even faster, and harder, and ... "Two strokes should do it," Vaughan gasped.

*I don't believe it; he's giving me stage directions!* Allard thought angrily. *And the bastard's bloody right!* One stroke, two strokes, and he was coming all over Vaughan's hand and *his* hand and both of their cocks were pulsing and ...

After a while, he finished coming. Simultaneous orgasm was a wonderful opportunity for imaginary synaesthesia; he'd been having difficulty telling himself and Vaughan (or at least their cocks) apart, and it had rather added to the experience than otherwise.

"I'm glad you distracted me," said Vaughan, rather muzzily. "Be a pity if I'd persuaded you to tell me what you're wearing on our wedding night."

"Then why do you keep nagging me?" Allard asked, equally muzzily.

"Want to know. Besides," Vaughan patted him on the thigh, "it's such fun trying to persuade you."

"Keep on trying. Just not *too* hard."

"If it's not hard, I'm not doing it well enough," Vaughan leered.

Vaughan kept trying, unsuccessfully, all the way to Allard's home planet.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Your family called just before you arrived," Allard's mother told Vaughan. "They should be here in an hour or two, if there aren't any hold-ups."

"Be nice to see them properly," Vaughan said.

Allard's mother smiled at Vaughan, then turned to him and hugged him. "It's lovely to see you again in livespace," she said. "There's absolutely nothing you miss on-screen, at least now interplanetary transmissions can cope with the real-time audio-visual at far higher bandwidth than the human eye or ear can perceive, but it's nice all the same."

"Yes. Although I used to nearly ruin my eyesight when I was about ten, whenever you were off the planet, trying to see your body language on screen," said Allard.

"Then he grew up and discovered more *interesting* ways to ruin his eyesight," put in Vaughan.

"Do you think you could leer more *obviously*, Vaughan?" said Allard, annoyed. "I'd hate you to fail to make an impression the first time you meet your soon-to-be mother-in-law."

"Sarcasm like that's a deadly weapon," said Vaughan proudly to Allard's mother. "Can you wonder I love him so much!"

"I'm glad somebody else does," said Allard's mother. "We can put up with his interesting little ways -- the same way he puts up with ours, I daresay -- but I've been wondering how long it would take him to find the right sort of extrovert for some time."

"Actually, he's gone and found himself a whole shipload of people who get on with him," Vaughan said. "Probably explains why he's mellowed a lot in the past year or so."

"I'm still genetically socially inept," said Allard. "Rather like ..." Oh, hell. Now he had to introduce his parents to their grandson.

"Like?" his mother prompted.

"You see, the fact is ... there's no easy way to tell you this ... actually there's somebody else in my life."

"You can't be being unfaithful to Vaughan," said his mother sharply, in that familiar 'this does not compute' tone of voice.

"No. It's more like an adopted child."

“That’s pretty much a binary state.”

Allard sighed. “That’s a very appropriate comment, but I actually have got something *like* an adoptive child. I mean, socially it’s a child, intellectually it’s an adult, and it seems to have adopted me as its responsible adult.”

“Does it have some good reason for this?”

Allard squirmed.

“Allard,” said his mother firmly. At least she was calling him Allard and not Eustace.

“Well, he -- well, we *call* him ‘he’, but he isn’t really. Or a she -- started off calling me Dad as a joke ...”

“Did you actually build him?” asked his mother.

“No. Not really. But the people that did used some of my schematics. I suppose, by analogy, I could have contributed a chromosome or so.”

“I assume he’s an AI or an android of some sort?”

“An AI. Looks like a box. But far more human in personality than most AIs because he was an experimental unit that was programmed to learn from the humans around him. To grow up.”

“And he was surrounded by a lot of irritable scientists who thought he was getting in the way of their work?”

How had his mother guessed?

“I found him when they’d decided to throw him out. Decided he looked interesting.”

“And since Allard doesn’t notice people being rude unless they manage to be even ruder than him,” Harry said, “he wasn’t bothered by what an obnoxious little bastard Mark was when we first got him.”

Allard was pleased to see that his mother did not jump at this unexpected addition to the conversation. Maybe she’d already got used to Harry’s little ways. Or maybe, after

marriage to his father *and* a teaching career dealing with eighteen-year-olds, Harry didn't even rate a twitch of the 'weird' meter.

"Mother, this is Harry."

"Oh. He's taller than I expected from his pictures."

"He's probably not expecting you to ask him to do any heavy lifting. Either he has something in his shoes, or he has three inches of height stuffed in his shirt pocket when he doesn't need it," said Vaughan.

"It's just posture, really," said Harry.

"Yes. Allard did mention that. Not to expect you to do any shifting of the furniture."

Harry looked hurt at Allard, then grinned and stuck his thumbs up in the general direction of Allard's mother, as if to say 'well, if you don't make me do any heavy work, we'll get on fine'.

"Well, you can at least do some light lifting and bring in Mark," said Allard.

"You call him light," muttered Harry.

"Well, portable," said Allard. "Or you could always help Claire and Karen get things out of the taxi."

"They're big, strong girls, you know. I still don't know why we couldn't just teleport over."

"There are local ordinances about not teleporting large, heavy objects without a licence."

"How much do the local taxi drivers have to bribe the Council for all that?" muttered Harry, as he went to get Mark from the taxi.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mark was introduced, a little awkwardly, but Allard's mother seemed to be fascinated.

"Hallo, Mark," she said politely, looking him straight in the optical units.

"Hallo ... may I call you Grandmother?" Mark asked rather hesitantly.

"Yes, dear."

"And may I say it's a pleasure to meet someone so racially unprejudiced," said Mark.

"Nobody else looks me in the eye."

"Most people don't know where the eyes *are*," said Harry, "and we don't quite like to tell strangers 'it's that bluish thing at the front'."

"Most AIs that are intended for face-to-face interaction are designed to have a face like the species that made them," said Allard's mother, "so one that doesn't is a bit unusual. Don't blame them; they may not even realise you have a visual input."

"I don't go around saying 'what silly blobby things to see with'," said Mark, "instead of a nice, sensible thing in straight lines, with reliable optics inside."

"No, dear," said Allard's mother, patting him, "you're *much* more sensible than humans."

"I am *trying* to learn how to interact like humans," said Mark.

"And he's doing a remarkably good job of it, considering the specimens he's usually got in front of him," said Claire, coming in.

"Do you mean to say I've got to do this *all again* whenever I meet a *different* lot of humans?" snapped Mark indignantly.

"Yes, dear," said Allard's mother. "It does get easier with practice, and of course the differing social habits, some of which are quite subtle, are a fascinating subject for study."

"Yes," said Mark. "I've made a particular study of some human social habits, and I could tell you --"

“Right, Mother,” said Allard hastily. “I’ll just put Mark over here where no one’s likely to trip over him, and I’ll introduce you to the rest of the crew.”

“Is this one of those ‘tact’ things?” asked Mark, interestedly. “I’ve read about that.”

“Yes,” said Vaughan.

“Sorry, Stepdad.”

“Well, at least if you understand the concept, you’ll pick the rest up in time,” said Allard’s mother. “Good afternoon, dear. Have you got any computations you’re working on, or would you like us to send you something to do?”

“Thank you,” said Mark, sounding surprised and (as far as Allard could tell) rather touched. “Have you got any electronic books I could read?”

Allard was interested to see that Mark had not asked for access to the house network. He doubted that it was because he’d already insinuated electronic feelers -- his mother might be a mathematician rather than an IT specialist, but she was fairly hot on computer security. He probably *was* learning manners.

“Oh, of course. You have a standard data port, I presume, so I can give you a direct feed. You can have access to the internal net after I’ve discussed security with Allard.”

“Thank you, Grandma.”

No nagging, just simple acceptance of the rules. Apparently Mark wanted to stay on the right side of his grandmother.

Allard felt rather guilty. He’d always given his quasi-son interesting problems to solve, but it had never occurred to him that if he was making Mark ‘sit in the corner and be quiet’, it would be kind, and sensible, to offer him something to do. Well, like most parents, he and Vaughan were learning as they went along.

Of course, on the ship, Mark had access to most of the internal data storage and the external communications. It wasn’t as though he were short of things to do to amuse himself.

But it was nice that here, away from his usual data conduits, at least Mark would have a few good books to read. It was good to know his mother got on with the ... boy. Allard had been dreading giving his parents The Talk. Now he only had to worry about ...

“Hallo, Dad,” he said.

“Hallo, my boy. Welcome home. What are you doing?”

*Well, I assume he knows I'm getting married. He probably wants to know what I'm doing right now.* “I'm telling Mother about my adoptive son.”

“Where did you leave him?” asked Allard's father, who had some experience of Allard absent-mindedly leaving things half-cared-for as he went off to mend something. His eyes narrowed: “How old is he, Allard?”

“Oh, I'm not sure. He's working on half of a very tricky algorithm at the moment ... Eighteen ...”

“Oh, good.”

“... months.”

“Allard, what haven't you been telling me?”

“He's non-organic. He describes himself as 'human by adoption'. But he is a person. Nobody could be as obnoxious as he was when we got him and *not* be a person.”

“So where is he?”

“On the table through there.”

“I'll go and pay my respects.” Allard's father walked straight past Vaughan and wandered into the room where Mark was, leaving the door open behind him. He apparently identified Mark without difficulty as the largest box on the table, and bent down. “Hullo, old boy. What's your name?”

“Mark. What's yours?”



“I’m Allard’s father, which I suppose makes me your grandfather. Very pleased to meet you.” He stuck a hand forward, and looked mildly embarrassed.

“Don’t worry, Granddad. He’s going to work on the hands eventually. They’re just so useful.”

“Does he *know* he’s going to make you prosthetic hands?”

“Not yet.”

Allard’s father patted the boy on his casing in default of shaking hands.

Allard, having overheard this conversation, was pleased that the different generations of the Allard family were getting on so well. He was not so pleased about the hands; he’d been trying very hard not to give Mark the idea of an android body.

“Granddad?” said Mark.

“Yes?”

“Tell Dad it’s just the hands. I don’t want all those extra bits; they just get in the way.”

Allard immediately thought of those bits nearest and dearest to him. He hoped Mark would not grow up to want to try out the bits useful to porn writers. He also hoped he’d be able to get away without having to explain how his son was intellectually an adult, socially a small boy, and had somehow got into writing porn for a living. Whatever ‘living’ was to an AI.

Mark seemed to be a bit less worried about his wages buying him syndicate membership by now; he seemed to have realised he’d been accepted as part of the ‘family’. In fact, he spent some of his salary on entertainment media, just like the rest of the crew.

On the whole, Allard thought it had all gone as well as could be expected. Although it might be nice if his father had shown some interest in his prospective son-in-law. “Dad, would you like to meet your about-to-be son-in-law as well as your grandson?”

“Happy to.” His father wandered out of the room and, to Allard’s surprised relief, shook hands with the correct stranger. If he’d shaken hands with Harry by mistake, Harry would *never* have let that drop.

“Pleased to meet you.” Allard’s father shook hands with the rest of the group.

“I’m only marrying *one* of them, you know,” said Allard, wondering whether his mother had made the mistake of repeating what he’d said about “nearly a group marriage.”

“But you live with them all, if I understand correctly.”

Allard looked at his mother, and she just smiled slightly and shook her head. Just Father being Father, then.

\* \* \* \* \*

The luggage brought in, they finally had a chance for formal introductions all ’round.

“So you’re Karen,” said Allard’s mother, thoughtfully. “The one with the big weapons.”

“*Mo*-ther!” God, he’d put that in the letter as a private little joke, because it had been bizarrely hot, watching Karen lube up those huge guns as though they were cocks, and he’d been sniggering stupidly and drinking a glass of wine after Vaughan had shagged him rotten -- and was he never going to get away with *anything*?

“Yep, that’s me,” said Karen cheerfully. “I’m also the original your-sister-wears-Army-boots.”

“It’s the Army bra-and-pants set that’s so disturbing,” added Harry mournfully. “I mean, green and khaki camouflage-pattern lace.”

“Harry has a very vivid imagination, in case you hadn’t noticed,” said Karen.

“Stop embarrassing my mother,” said Allard.

"I'm not embarrassed at all," said Allard's mother. "I'm just happy. Your rebarbative manner used to mitigate against social playfulness in your childhood."

"No, it didn't," said Allard. "If people made stupid jokes, I'd *say* they were stupid, that's all."

"There's a phatic or social-bonding element to inane humour," said his mother, "as I told you at the time. It's a fascinating subject of study."

"I can see you're going to get on very well with your grandson," said Claire. "If you'd turned up a few months ago, we'd have suggested you keep him, but we've rather got used to the little ..."

"You could look after him while Allard and Vaughan are on their honeymoon," suggested Karen sensibly. "But we *would* want him back. Eventually. Life wouldn't be the same without him."

"MCU93 would pine," said Harry.

"If you *can* put up with him for the length of a honeymoon," said Vaughan, "it would be a good opportunity for you to get to know one another."

"He wouldn't see it as being dumped with the grandparents?" said Allard's mother, carefully.

Allard thought about that. "Actually, I think he'd be glad of the opportunity. Since he's done a bit of growing up, family is very important to him, especially as he started as a quasi-orphan."

"Didn't he have people around him?" asked Allard's father.

"Yes, but early on it didn't occur to them that what they had was a person. He was just experimental technology." Allard thought about it a bit more, trying to find a way to describe it. "They wouldn't have deliberately hurt him, but they didn't realise he'd feel rather like someone who was abandoned as a child and can still remember it."

“They were treating him like an ordinary AI,” said Allard’s father, “sentient but without emotions; but he was more like a kitten or a puppy brought up with humans to think it’s a human.”

“Pretty much,” said Vaughan. “Maybe part of the brattishness was nerves. Not that it made it less annoying.”

“He doesn’t seem all that brattish,” said Allard’s mother.

Claire grinned. “He was treated like any other small child. He was told that if he didn’t behave, he wouldn’t be able to go to the wedding.”

“That wouldn’t have stopped me misbehaving,” said Allard. “I can’t say I ever had a consuming desire to visit a wedding.”

Vaughan looked slightly hurt.

“It’s different when it’s mine,” said Allard, and held Vaughan’s hand.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Well, I think that was a success,” said Vaughan, groping Allard.

“We’re in my *parents*’ house!” wailed Allard.

“We’re in a *private bedroom* in your parents’ house,” Vaughan pointed out. “A private bedroom with a double bed that your mother assigned us to without even asking if it was what we wanted. Aren’t you taking this old-fashioned wedding a little too far?”

“But they’re my *parents*!”

“How do you imagine you came to be, Allard?”

“Well, I don’t want to think about *them* having sex, and I hope they don’t want to think about *me* having sex! Parents don’t *do* that!”

Vaughan wordlessly opened the bedside drawer, to find a selection of lubricants.

Allard knew his woeful expression was showing on his face, because Vaughan didn't even try sweet reason on him at that point, just hugged him. *Then* Vaughan reminded him about Harry.

"I didn't have to *grow up* with Harry!" *Thank God*. He picked up the lubricant. "I'm sure they were just being well-prepared for guests," he said, in the tone of one trying to convince himself.

"And I'm a guest," Vaughan said, picking him up and dumping him on the bed.

"Well, I suppose you could always ravish me," said Allard, sulkily. "Quietly," he added firmly. He knew the walls were soundproofed, but he knew how noisy the two of them could get when it was a question of ravishment.

"You *are* in need of persuasion tonight, aren't you?" said Vaughan gleefully.

*Oh, fuck*, Allard thought. *I've just hit one of his buttons, and I could wish I didn't enjoy it so much.*

"Yes," said Allard. "And I'm not enjoying this at all, so you needn't expect any co-operation."

"Good," said Vaughan, and began to unbutton Allard's shirt.

Allard tried to pull Vaughan's hand away, but Vaughan pointed out (in a low, sexy, Welsh whisper) that if his parents heard them struggling, they might come in to defend their son's beleaguered honour.

"Fine!" snarled Allard. "I'll struggle quietly, if you ravish quietly!" He shifted uneasily on the bed -- if Vaughan got *convincing* about ravishing, it could get a bit noisy. On the other hand, Vaughan had managed it on top of a haystack once, without exciting undue comment except from Harry, and if he could keep quiet under those circumstances, he could keep quiet under these.

Vaughan tweaked a nipple.

Allard glared at him.

Vaughan seemed to take that as encouragement. He bent down and sucked Allard's nipple through his shirt.

Allard gasped quietly.

Vaughan pretended to bite him.

Allard shivered.

"Well," said Vaughan, "you're being kept a well-protected little virgin until your wedding night, but there's nothing to say we can't have a bit of fun."

"My husband," whispered Allard, "will be after you with the horse-whip."

Vaughan looked down at his own hands. "Well, I *could*, I suppose. If you're feeling particularly kinky." He squinted over his shoulder at his own backside. "And if I can reach."

Allard spluttered.

"I know I'm not allowed to touch your arse until we're married ..." Vaughan slid a big warm hand under his arse. "... but I don't think it'll hurt to have a little sample of the other delights you may offer."

"You keep using that word," Allard muttered.

"What word?"

"Little."

"Big enough for me, my sweet," Vaughan leered. "We'll just check, shall we?" He undid Allard's trousers, and groped him through the unexciting grey underpants. "Yes, quite big enough for me. And I'm sure the other side ..." He reached to squeeze a buttock. "... is small and tight enough for me. Although if I do take advantage of you before your wedding night, you won't pass the inspection."

"Inspection?" asked Allard, licking his lips and wondering why Vaughan's dreadful script always worked for him. "Anyway, men don't *have* hymens."

“If a small, *tight* thing has been visited by a huge, *fat* thing, frequently, I should think it’ll look well-used.”

Allard got a sudden kinky mental vision of Vaughan hiking up his bridal skirt and train to show him off, and saying, “You wouldn’t think that could go in there, would you?”

“And after all,” said Vaughan, “if you’re not a virgin, I want a refund on that part of the price. That seems like a good idea: fun and money. Roll over!”

“Shan’t!” said Allard.

“Well, I *could* force you, but it’s more interesting to make you want to.”

Allard gave him his best sarcastic look. “That would work very well if I weren’t in my parents’ house.”

“Think of the thrill for me, having you under your parents’ roof, under their protection ... Under their duvet,” added Vaughan fairly.

“Well, we’re on top of the duvet at the moment,” said Allard.

“Soon fix that. Out of your clothes.” Vaughan grabbed Allard’s wrists and pinned him down while unbuttoning his shirt.

“How many hands have you got, Vaughan?” Allard whispered.

“Not nearly enough,” said Vaughan. “Now be quiet and let me ...” He paused, looking endearingly slightly cross-eyed, with his tongue-tip protruding slightly in concentration, as he tried to pull Allard’s shirt off while not letting go of his wrists.

“That won’t work, Vaughan,” said Allard, shrugging irritably out of some of the shirt while the rest of it ended up awkwardly tangled around his wrists.

“Oh, I don’t know,” Vaughan murmured. “I’ve always fancied impromptu bondage. And you.”

Allard pretended to try to escape, but kept it to wriggling rather than bucking.

“Yes, that’s right. *Nice* little virgin,” said Vaughan.

"I am neither nice, nor little." He wasn't actually a virgin, but he didn't want to spoil Vaughan's fun.

"And that's how I like it, pet," said Vaughan. "I like to have something nice and big to suck on for when I get tired of your arse, however long that would take."

"Two goes, normally," said Allard, deciding not to mention that he was usually not in a fit state for fellatio after two vigorous bouts of *anything* with Vaughan.

Vaughan ignored that, while muttering something about "sometimes I could get tired about the commentary half the time."

Allard decided, now he thought about it, that Vaughan had been on top an awful lot lately, usually in pursuance of his notional virgin. In fact, ever since this 'ravishing a virgin on his wedding night' nonsense had started. That meant Vaughan would probably be on top for the next few days, just so he could work the fantasy out of his system. Oh, well, it was a sacrifice Allard could put up with, for now. If he ever wanted something to hold over Vaughan, he'd be able to mention 'and you made me stay on the bottom for *weeks* before we were married'.

He gave Vaughan a look, to hurry him up.

"Virgins aren't supposed to *know* looks like that," muttered Vaughan. "They're supposed to stay pretty, and quiver a lot."

Allard repeated the look, with a bit more eyelash.

Vaughan growled something, and jumped on him.

"There's one way," Vaughan said, "to stop a virgin looking at me like that ..." He kissed all the way down Allard's neck. "... and that's to do this."

"Actually," said Allard, "the look was intended to suggest 'get your bloody clothes off!' - but that won't fit in the scene, so I had to communicate it non-verbally."

"Oh, I suppose you could be so desperate for a man that you're gagging for it but don't know how to say so," mumbled Vaughan, into Allard's neck.



Allard squirmed. He rather liked that idea. "Please," he whispered. "I want to see your body."

He thought he'd done a good job of that, but Vaughan spluttered with laughter. "Can't even wait for our wedding night," he smirked. "Is this the porno equivalent of a Ladies Excuse Me?"

Allard looked at him.

"I mean, 'innocent virgin ravishes manly bridegroom'."

"What a good idea," murmured Allard, making a more serious, and more successful, effort to remove his shirt from around his wrists. Apparently Vaughan hadn't noticed what he was doing, or at least worked out why, because before Vaughan could react, he'd rolled Vaughan onto his back, then rolled himself on top of Vaughan and started undressing him.

"Who's in charge of this fantasy?" Vaughan demanded.

"Me." To emphasise this, he grabbed hold of Vaughan's now-exposed cock and gave a good tug. "You see, you have such a bad reputation as a ravisher of innocent maidens, the village hired me to pretend to be one, and *teach you a lesson*." Besides, it was a good excuse for getting his turn on top without dropping out of the fantasy.

Vaughan looked suspiciously happy about this turn of events. "Quite what do you mean about bad reputation? That I'm good at it, or not good at it?"

"I'm leaving that as an exercise for the reader," explained Allard, still tugging away at Vaughan.

"Now you have me at your mercy, what are you going to do with me?"

"Vaughan, that script's even worse when you're on the other end of it. I'm going to screw you senseless, not that that leaves far to go."

"Talk, talk ..."

He stopped tugging on Vaughan and tugged on Vaughan's trousers, stripping him naked at least below the waist. Vaughan had loose clothes, easy to handle. He approved of that.

He watched. So did Vaughan.

"Not quite so willing to talk back to me, Vaughan, when I'm tearing your clothes off?"

There. At least *he* wouldn't be the only one suffering hearing that sort of dialogue. Although he did feel an interesting twitch at that, between lust and embarrassment, that suggested he rather *liked* turning the tables on Vaughan.

Not that he hadn't been on top fairly frequently, but they hadn't often happened to switch in the middle of the Big Virgin Fantasy before. It was mostly Vaughan's kink, and Vaughan had mostly been on top for it.

Allard reached for the lube. "However," he said, "since you've always been good enough to seduce rather than force, you do get the little refinements."

Vaughan squirmed into position, rolling over to present his arse. That was probably a *little* too eager for this particular fantasy, but Allard wasn't going to argue. Besides, it was a nice arse.

He decorated it with some of the contents of the tube, noticing that his parents ran to a slightly posher variety than he usually bothered with for himself, and noticing that he wanted to stop noticing that while he still had his erection.

Vaughan sighed happily.

Allard decided to be grateful for his parents' generosity. He applied the stuff to himself, slid in -- and forgot all about where he was, and whose lubricant he was taking advantage of. In fact, he forgot about everything else except the precise sliding and thrusting and pushing he *had* to get on with right now.

Vaughan said something encouraging.

Allard couldn't stop for long enough to make sense of that. Anything short of 'stop now' was encouraging, and he didn't think Vaughan had said 'stop now'.

Vaughan pulled and shoved at him as if trying to get more in.

He didn't *care* if Vaughan had said 'stop now'.

After the past week or so of *not* fucking Vaughan, this seemed to be even hotter and tighter than it normally was, and he fucked ferociously, feeling the squeeze as if his cock was trapped and sweating and ... nearly hurt but ... couldn't stop, he could hear Vaughan panting in front of him, and see nothing at all because his eyes were tight shut in concentration ... paused a moment and came, moaning and swearing in the darkness. In Vaughan.

Damn. That had been good enough he'd forgotten all about his parents. He hoped the noise hadn't reminded them about him.

He reached for Vaughan, surprised when Vaughan rolled away and said, "I'd rather wait."

That wasn't at *all* like Vaughan.

"We're getting married soon. I don't think I could wait a week or so without exploding, but I rather fancy building up a good head of steam the day before my wedding night."

"It's not the day before," said Allard. "We have about four or five days to wait." He was too tired to calculate exactly how many days in local planetary time it would be.

"Sssh, don't tell my cock that!"

"So you want to wait so that you've got something to look forward to." Allard nodded. That made sense, or at least as much sense as Vaughan normally made.

Some minor part of his brain seemed to *like* the idea of Vaughan all hard and desperate, helplessly trying to sleep beside innocently arousing Allard.

He mentioned this.

"Bastard," Vaughan muttered.

“You called?”

Allard settled down to sleep, smugly. He was still half-dressed, but too satisfied to move.

He *really* liked the idea of Vaughan all hot and desperate and waiting.

Three minutes later, he was awoken by Vaughan swearing, shoving his cock between Allard’s still-betrousered thighs, and coming in a matter of seconds.

“Good job I’m not wearing these tomorrow,” said Allard, after a polite pause to acknowledge Vaughan’s orgasm.

“Bastard,” Vaughan muttered again, and then, “Shaggable bastard, though.” There was a pause, then, “Suppose we’d better get undressed now.”

Allard made a mental note to put his own trousers in the wash tomorrow, just in case his mother had an unlikely fit of maternal instinct and tidied his room.

He sighed and woke enough to get undressed (rolling up his trousers around the stain in case he forgot about the laundry) and crept under the duvet with Vaughan.

“I suppose now I’ve lost my Virginal Mystery ...”

“Shut up. I’ve been deflowering you for months, and I’m not going to stop now,” said Vaughan.

“You are going to marry me in the morning, then?”

“Thought the ceremony was in the afternoon,” said Vaughan.

*That’s my Vaughan.* That was a nice thought to take him to sleep.

\* \* \* \* \*

The four days went by very quickly indeed. Allard couldn't quite understand why; they'd chased up relatives and found all the clothing they needed to buy, and time was meant to *drag* before an enjoyable event.

Suddenly he found himself waking up one morning and thinking, *I'm getting married in six hours!*

"Vaughan, we're going to get married!"

"I know," said Vaughan sleepily.

"Vaughan, we're going to get married *today!*"

Vaughan rolled out of bed. "Oh, shit, where is my hat, where is your dress, where are the rings, where are our parents ...?"

"Vaughan, wake up. We haven't overslept, we have lots of time, and I'm not wearing a dress even if I haven't shown you what I'm wearing. I just thought it's sensible to start thinking ahead."

Vaughan rolled back into bed. "Wake me when it's over."

Allard elbowed him.

"Wake me when I can shag you," Vaughan muttered.

"If we were being really traditional, we would have been in separate rooms."

"Hooray for modern life," said Vaughan, with his eyes still closed.

"Do you want to be castrated now, or the next two times you piss me off today?" Allard remarked. "Or all three."

"I've only got two balls. Even if you do one ball at a time, you'll run out."

"Three words. Surgery, reattachment, knife."

"Is that any way to talk to your husband-to-be on your wedding day?"

"I'm obviously not going to get any sense out of you until one or both of us have ingested caffeine."

“Good idea,” said Vaughan, without being chivalrous enough to get up and make it.

Allard got out of bed, muttering, remembered whose house he was in, and put on a decent, respectable dressing gown.

“Vaughan!” he said sharply.

“Mm?”

“You know that dressing gown you have, with the embroidered bright-pink cock and balls? The one Harry thought was funny?”

“Mm.”

“You remembered to bring the other one?”

Vaughan got up, and began blundering about in the wardrobe.

Allard left him to it, feeling unreasonably cheered-up that Vaughan was panicking too, and went to the kitchen, only to find it occupied.

Harry was dunking a croissant in a big cup of coffee, while Claire was tucking into a plate of toast and jam, and waved a friendly hello with a rather wobbly slice.

Karen was going over her list of things to do, ticking it in red ink.

“Oh, good,” said Claire, “you’re not dressed.”

“It’s eight a.m., local,” said Allard, who knew for a fact that Claire tended not to wander in to face the rest of the crew before about nine.

“Yes, and we want you clean but not dressed, because if you’d dressed, we’d have to take it all off you and start again, because we know our rights ...”

Harry nodded vigorously.

“You’re just in this to wrap me and unwrap me,” complained Allard.

“Fair’s fair,” said Harry. “It’s going to be Vaughan from now on, so we want to --”

He shut up abruptly as Allard’s father wandered into the kitchen.

“Morning,” he said. “How’s it going?”

*My friends are discussing who's going to fondle me first, I think.*

Being unequal to starting the conversation on that footing with his father, he said, "Fine," and poured himself what was left of the coffee. There was enough for half a mug each, so he poured half a mug each (*There's no doubt I love him*, Allard decided resignedly; *I'm giving him equal shares on the first coffee of the day*), and headed for the door.

"Nope, that's not allowed," said Harry.

"Anyone that gets between me and coffee *will* regret it."

"You're allowed coffee; you're just not allowed Vaughan," said Claire.

Allard looked at Karen, who shrugged. "They've been looking up old customs again," she said. "Technically, you weren't supposed to see him last night, either."

Allard, who had spent two hours last night looking things up before crawling in next to Vaughan's sleeping body, decided that if he'd known it was *that* much of a transgression, he'd have gone to bed early to enjoy it.

"Besides, we've got to get started on getting you dressed, made up, and your hair done," said Claire. "We only want him to see the final product, which is probably where this loopy custom got started in the first place."

"You are going to force me into cosmetics?"

"We discussed this."

They *hadn't* discussed it. Claire had *mentioned* it as something that was going to happen. She looked very obstinate, though, and he didn't want to spend the whole of his wedding-day morning arguing, followed by losing the argument and her doing whatever-it-was anyway.

Allard sat down, rather sulkily, handed the second mug to Karen, and started to eat some of Claire's large plateful of toast and jam. "Somebody can take some food to Vaughan, as well," he suggested.

Karen put the mug on a tray, and surrounded it with food.

Allard sighed. Vaughan would have a nice breakfast without having to fiddle with perfume and face cream. He wished he'd held out for Vaughan being The Bride.

"Besides," Claire said, "I'll need to have time afterwards to do Vaughan's makeup. Karen's not very good at it."

For some reason, this cheered Allard up immensely.

\* \* \* \* \*

Allard fled his kind, thoughtful bridesmaids into the shower, and had the longest shower than he'd had since Vaughan helped him shower (only much chaster), because he wasn't looking forward to being groped and adored by anyone but Vaughan.

He'd turned down the kind, thoughtful offer to help him scrub, even though it gave him a very clear idea of the different parts of his body that might be thought of as his best bits ("inner thighs!" "chest!" "the back of his neck!"). He was fairly sure they weren't serious. He was also fairly sure that if he tested that by agreeing, they'd be perfectly happy to wash him all over.

Washed and dried, he submitted to being dressed.

By then, everything was laid out on the bed in the spare room that was being used as the bridal dressing room.

"Do you have to put my underwear on?" he asked.

"We think you can manage that, but if you *want* us to ...?" asked Harry.

"No, that's quite all right," said Allard, picking up one of the 'tearable' knickers that wasn't quite so flimsy as the cheap set; satin and easy-break buttons were easy to remove without making him feel as if he wasn't wearing much.



“Will those be comfortable all day?” asked Harry. “We thought it’d be a nice surprise for Vaughan, but if they won’t be comfortable, you can pick one of the other ones.”

“Perfectly all right,” said Allard, holding the underwear in front of him like a buttony flag of chastity, and deciding that none of the buttons or seams would be digging into him when he sat down.

“We’re not going to tear you out of them,” said Claire. “That’s Vaughan’s job.”

“But we *are* going to check the fit -- aren’t we, Claire?” whined Harry.

“Put them on,” Claire ordered.

He put them on, knowing that when they were (forcibly) removed, he would be a married man. It made a difference. A little shiver ran down his spine. He wondered if Vaughan would like to keep the shreds as a souvenir.

Rather to Allard’s surprise, Harry checked the fit without groping him. His hands were quick and deft, adjusting him and asking if he was comfortable.

Allard didn’t quite know what to do with his hands, or his voice, but he said he was all right, again.

“Socks next, then the trousers. Wait a minute first, though,” said Claire, turning him ’round and looking at him from different angles.

“I think he’ll be extremely pleased, Harry,” said Claire.

“Course he will. He’d have to be blind not to be,” said Harry.

*Well, I suppose it’s all right that they’re not groping me. I don’t begrudge them some enjoyment of the situation. Not really.*

He managed to get into the socks and trousers without assistance.

Harry smoothed the trousers into place, again without groping, which was quite disconcerting.

Then the undershirt. Harry patted and stroked that, and Allard shut his eyes for a moment, and thought, *It's a tribute to the fabric. Harry likes good quality. You know that.*

Finally, Harry and Claire picked up the scholar's robe very carefully between them.

"Hold up your arms," said Claire.

"What am I, five?"

"You could put it on by yourself," said Harry, "but you'd only rumple it."

"Bridal clothing tends to be ornate and difficult to get into," said Claire. "It's the practical reason for having bridesmaids to help."

"I knew there had to be *some* reason for all this torture," muttered Allard. "Just as long as you don't help me get it *off*."

"Are you asking?" said Harry, leering cheerfully.

Funnily enough, that made Allard feel better. He wasn't *used* to Harry being a gentleman -- it made him feel nervous, even if he appreciated the gesture.

"Speak to Vaughan about it."

"Oh. Er, well, I don't really *need* to help you undress, I suppose."

Claire grinned, and said, "I'm sure this is the one night when Vaughan would *not* appreciate the offer of a threesome."

Allard glanced at Harry. Had he mentioned the ... incident with the computer virus? *No. He's trying not to look worried. Good.*

He leaned forward so they could ease the robe over his arms and head. Then he stood up straight again, and they carefully settled the robe into place. It took quite a lot of fiddling. The robe was full-length, and had got a bit rucked and twisted as they were trying to get it on. Finally, they were satisfied they had it right.

It was heavy, but surprisingly comfortable once it was on. He hadn't really thought about that aspect when he was in the shop. He'd just taken one look at himself in the mirror

and known it was what he wanted, even if he'd have to spend his entire bridal day without bending.

He tried bending over. The layers of satin whispered against each other, and the inner layers slid against his skin. He'd be able to move perfectly easily, but the robe would make the day feel like a definite Occasion. He wasn't particularly accustomed to thinking of the sensations clothes produced outside a bedroom context. Which, of course, made this *feel* a bit like a bedroom context, especially since it was all for Vaughan.

"Shoes," said Harry, picking them up and kneeling in front of Allard. "Lift your foot."

Claire stood next to him so that he could put one hand on her shoulder to balance.

He lifted his foot, and Harry carefully slid the shoe on and fastened it. There was something slightly kinky about this arrangement.

"You're not a foot-fetishist, are you, Harry?" Allard asked uneasily.

"No, but I'm considering it."

"Don't tease," said Claire. "He's only putting your shoes on so you don't have to mess up your clothes putting them on," she reassured Allard.

"Shall we consider the full effect?" asked Harry.

"No, I want to finish his hair and makeup first. But he needs to walk around and make sure the shoes are comfortable."

He'd actually been wearing the shoes in for a few minutes each day when Vaughan wasn't around, but he hadn't worn them with the rest of the outfit. They were nice but plain shoes. He tested them solemnly, walking up and down a few times and noticing it was reasonably easy not to catch the hem of the robe or anything stupid like that.

"Am I ready yet?" he asked, hoping that she'd forget about the rest of it now he was dressed.

"I've still got to do your hair and makeup. Sit."

He sat. "Training geeks the Steele way," he muttered.

“Steele by name, steel by nature,” Harry said, cheerfully.

“You do his hair,” Claire instructed. “You’re better at it than I am.”

“It doesn’t need much work anyway,” said Harry. “That hairdresser did a really good job.”

Allard had spent yesterday afternoon being Trimmed. Claire and Harry had given the hairdresser very explicit instructions. *Embarrassingly* explicit instructions. He’d been shocked when he looked in the mirror and discovered how efficient the pageboy haircut was at making him look half his age, innocent and vulnerable.

He wasn’t entirely sure he liked it.

He was fairly sure *Vaughan* would.

Harry set to with a hairbrush and a can of hair-spray. Allard considered objecting to the hair-spray, but since Harry was in fact being fairly light-handed with it, decided to shut up.

“I’ll leave his wreath ’til last,” Harry said. “It’s better off staying in a protective atmosphere until the last moment.”

“The flowers have been delivered, then?” Allard asked.

“Arrived when you were in the shower,” Claire said. “Now, hold still. And don’t worry about a thing -- that’s what we’re here for.”

He held still, then he scrunched his face up in various ways when he was told to, then he held still again. It seemed to take a very long time. In fact, it fully reinforced his prejudices against people *doing* this sort of stupid thing.

Finally, it was done. “There,” said Claire, helping him fasten the frogs that held the robe closed. “Go and look in the mirror.”

He looked in the mirror, and gasped. He’d expected to look like a painted porcelain doll. Instead, he looked like himself. Only somehow more so. Whatever Claire had done had

simply emphasised what was already there. He might not have realised that it *was* makeup, if he'd seen it on someone else.

The robe clung to him without being tight, outlining his body. Every time he moved, there were flashes of blue through the slits running from his ankles to his hips. He turned 'round, and admired the dragon design on the back. Even the slightest movement looked significant, sensual but dignified, and made the dragon move and flash like a living thing. The fabric of the robe itself was a heavy damask with patterns woven into it, and the appearance of it altered subtly as the light moved. He turned to face the mirror again, still not quite believing it.

Harry walked up behind him, put his hands on Allard's shoulders, and looked at him in the mirror. "You look gorgeous."

It wasn't anything remotely approaching a pass. It was Harry in professional mode, appraising an item. Allard was reassured that he wasn't imagining what he was seeing in the mirror.

"Happy?" Claire asked quietly.

He nodded, still unable to speak.

"It's far too much work to go to for every day, but it's worth it for special occasions," Harry said.

"It is." He looked at himself some more. He was still gorgeous. Yes, he was a painted doll, a display piece for people to look at, but they certainly had something to look at. "Thank you. Both of you."

Claire smiled at him. "Isn't that why you asked us to be your bridesmaids?" Then she patted him on the bum, and said, "If you're happy with it, I'd better run along and see how Karen and Vaughan are getting along."

"Yeah," said Harry, "we can trust Karen to get Vaughan into his clothes, but she's an engineer, as well; she isn't any more interested in makeup than those two are."

“Too true.” Claire picked up her makeup kit and headed for the door. “I’ll be back to get changed once I’ve done their makeup. Harry, you get changed now, and then you can sort out Vaughan’s hair.”

Allard wasn't sure there was much that could be done with Vaughan's riot of curls other than make sure that it was neat, and that had been done already. But given the miracle that Harry and Claire had worked on him ...

He sat quietly and waited while Harry got into his bridesmaid outfit. Harry and Claire had gone for the traditional ‘similar to the bride’, and were in trousers and shorter, plainer robes that went well with his outfit without competing with it. It suited Harry surprisingly well. He found himself thinking about the fact that he couldn't really do anything about it.

“What's wrong?” asked Harry.

“Last-minute nerves.”

“Sudden realisation that after this, you need Vaughan's permission to screw anyone else?”

No, Harry wasn't telepathic. It probably wasn't that difficult to tell what he'd been thinking, especially given that he'd been admiring the fit of Harry's robe.

Harry came over to where he was sitting, and patted his hand. “Not that you would have before, would you? It's just ... it being legal and all makes a difference.”

“It's not even the sex,” Allard admitted. “It's ... I'm responsible, now. To him, for him.”

“Partners,” Harry said. “Well, you're going to have to do *something* about the syndicate paperwork, you know, because it gets messy otherwise, but you also took on the partnership with the rest of us when you took on Vaughan, didn't you?”

He looked up at Harry. Not the sort of person who, if described to him, he would have thought he wanted to share his life with. Lazy, cheerfully lecherous ... and a damned good friend. Harry was an important part of his life now, if not in the same way as Vaughan. All of

them were. "Yes. I think ... I think I was just afraid to believe I'd found people I *wanted* to spend eight hours a day with."

Harry grinned. "Especially when you have to spend twenty-four hours a day with us."

Allard smiled in reminiscence. "When I first met you, I thought you were a right bunch of weirdoes. But at least you were interesting weirdoes."

"And now you *know* we're a right bunch of weirdoes," Harry said cheerfully. "And you fit in so well."

Oh, yes. He felt comfortable with them. They were intelligent and amusing and easy to work with. Nobody tried to make him conform, as long as they weren't in front of a client. And even then, it was only at the level of 'don't frighten the mundanes'. He could even be grateful to his last employer -- if they hadn't annoyed him so badly, he might never have seen the *Mary Sue's* ad for a new IT expert.

\* \* \* \* \*

Claire brought a tray of coffee and cake with her when she returned. Allard was surprised to realise how much he wanted a drink and a snack, and was shocked to realise that it was almost lunchtime.

"Your mother's got a light lunch ready," Claire said, "but I thought you'd need something now."

"Time flies when you're having fun."

"Doesn't it just," she agreed. She looked Harry up and down. "Not bad. And at least *you* can do your own makeup."

"Karen?"

“Had made a reasonable attempt at hers, but I still had to make some minor adjustments. Now go and sort out Vaughan's hair.”

Allard watched as Claire got into her outfit. Fast, efficient, no fumbling, just like Harry.

She quirked an eyebrow at him.

“Just thinking that I picked the right bridesmaids,” he explained. “You and Harry are good at this sort of thing.”

“Harry's weird talent is very adaptable to circumstances,” she said. “If it involves presenting it for auction, he knows how to make the best of it. I hate to think what he'd have been like born into a society with slavery.”

His imagination presented him with a picture of himself on the auction block, decked out in finery designed to show off his assets, with Harry describing his virtues. He shuddered. “I don't want to think about that on my wedding day, thank you.”

Claire grinned wickedly. “But maybe while you're on honeymoon.”

“You know us far too well. Just don't mention it in front of my parents.”

Claire gave her hair one last brush into place. “Your parents are coping remarkably well with Harry. So are Vaughan's.”

“He's on his best behaviour.” *Don't frighten the mundanes.* “What's next?”

“You and Vaughan eat separately, then we get the flowers sorted, and then it's time to get you to church.”

Time for church, and making the biggest commitment he'd ever made.

\* \* \* \* \*

As he entered the church, Vaughan turned to look at him. Vaughan's jaw dropped.



Well, if *he* looked as stunning as Vaughan did, it was no wonder.

He, at least, had the advantage of having seen Vaughan's outfit, even if he'd never seen Vaughan in the full rig. Vaughan and Karen had gone for the Robin Hood look, in trousers, boots, and tunics that laced up the front. Karen just looked good. Vaughan, tall and solid, with a wreath of flowers crowning his mane of curls, looked like some wild woods god.

*And he's mine.* Allard felt his knees go weak, just for a second or two.

"No shagging in church," Harry whispered.

That got his feet solidly back on the ground. This was a respectable Anglican church, with no shagging on the altar. Even if he found himself taking quick visual measurements of the altar, for fantasy purposes.

They processed down the aisle, Vaughan staring at him all the way. Allard kept thinking he'd smudged his face crawling under something again; that was normally a *much* more plausible explanation for staring than 'I look gorgeous today!'

From the way Vaughan's eyes were gleaming, there was no smudge.

Finally, all five of them were standing at the front of the church, facing the vicar. Good old Reverend Parker had come out of retirement for this, to Allard's intense pleasure. The old man beamed at them before opening his book. "Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of God and in the face of this congregation, to join together these two people in holy matrimony ..."

Allard let the old, comforting words wash over him. Reverend Parker had a real feel for the poetry of the service, making it a joy to listen to.

Vaughan's voice nearly broke, as he said, "I do."

Allard rather liked that. It showed that he was taking the proceedings with the requisite seriousness.

Of course, when Allard's voice did the same, that was just embarrassing.

And then it was done, and they were walking to the vestry to sign the register. Vaughan actually waited until the door was shut behind them before grabbing him.

“No smudging the makeup!” Harry said sternly.

“I don’t think ‘witness’ implies you have to watch us snog,” said Allard.

“Well, it says so in *my* copy of the paperwork,” said Harry.

Allard looked at Harry’s copy of the hymn sheet. At the bottom, it said “Make sure they snog without smudging their makeup” in Claire’s handwriting.

“I thought Claire said this makeup was bombproof,” said Vaughan.

“Yes, but it’s probably not Vaughan-proof.”

“It’s your day, gentlemen,” the vicar said. “You do what you like.”

Allard saw the gleam in Vaughan’s eye, and mouthed, “But not *that* much of what you like!”

Harry was so nervous, he had to sign the register twice, because it wasn’t legible the first time. Claire and Karen managed to carry out their duties as witness without problems.

Then it was time to go out and face all their friends and relatives.

Vaughan snogged him.

“That’s my Dad -- well, *those* are my Dads!” said a familiar piping voice proudly.

Allard looked.

“You look very smart today, Mark,” he said. There was only one person in the church who was box-shaped and wearing a grey top hat tilted rakishly on one corner.

“I asked for a bow-tie, too, but they weren’t sure where to put it.”

There was actually a bow-tie on the ... person next to Mark. It was the audiovisual link representing MCU93, because MCU93 was not that mobile and would probably overshadow the ceremony.

“Time to go,” said Vaughan quietly, offering his arm.

Allard walked down the aisle with Vaughan, uncomfortably aware that he was grinning all over his face. It didn't bother him *too* much, because so was Vaughan. Allard was a firm believer in the 'If I Have To Look An Idiot So Should Someone Else' theory of social behaviour.

\* \* \* \* \*

The reception went very well. The food was excellent, and the wine was even better, but nobody got obnoxiously drunk on it. It turned out that one advantage of picking Harry for bridesmaid was that he was not available to give the best man's speech. Karen was *much* less embarrassing. For one thing, she didn't *know* most of the incriminating details Harry knew, and although Harry would never actually set out to embarrass them, Allard had a very good idea about the sorts of anecdotes Harry could find amusing when he was drunk.

Dinner over, speeches over, he and Vaughan moved out for the first dance of the evening. It was a slow, romantic waltz. He wasn't quite sure afterwards how they'd managed not to trip over any plant pots or the like, because they'd spent the entire dance gazing into each other's eyes.

This turned out to be a good thing, because they were expected to mingle afterwards, and not with each other. He seemed to spend a remarkable amount of time having his hand pumped by assorted friends and relatives. He occasionally managed to drop by their table to check on Mark and MCU93, since they couldn't easily circulate and had to wait for people to come to them. Mark was chattering away excitedly to anyone who would talk to him, and even MCU93 had come out of its shell. It seemed to be having a very interesting discussion with Vaughan's aunt about high energy physics.

The evening passed far more quickly than it had any business to be doing. He was both glad and sorry when it was time for them to go.

\* \* \* \* \*

They had been very sensible and booked a room in a local hotel for their first night.

Allard was very glad of this when he checked in. He was already very tired, and wouldn't have wanted to do any travelling. Also, the family and friends were not in the immediate vicinity, and being married was a little overwhelming already, without having to worry about whose nearest-and-dearest were nearest, or whether there was an interested two-year-old AI listening in to his first Wedding Night.

Claire had picked Mark up firmly, and said, "I'll make sure that he's somewhere else."

Karen had grabbed Harry by the ear and said, "And I'll make sure *he's* somewhere else."

Harry had muttered, "You *know* I wouldn't listen in."

"We know you wouldn't listen in," Allard had replied, "but it's nice not to worry about you *overhearing* completely by accident."

"Yes, but it doesn't count if it's not on purpose," Harry replied to that.

Allard and Vaughan were put into the taxi and waved off, feeling great gratitude and even greater relief that the public part of the event had been dealt with.

Allard sighed, and nestled against Vaughan.

"Not much longer," Vaughan said. "The hotel's only a couple of miles away, and then we can relax at last."

"Mm," said Allard.

"Will you be glad to get out of those clothes?" asked Vaughan.

"Will you be glad to get me out of them?"

“Well, yes,” said Vaughan, “but I was wondering how comfortable they were.”

“Very, actually. I will be happy to wear them again, if you like. And you will be *very* careful in removing them, won’t you?”

“I’ve *had* the lecture from Harry on not destroying fine art, thank you.”

“Oh, that reminds me,” said Allard, fumbling in his pocket. “This diagram is to you, from Harry.”

“I don’t need instructions.”

“Not for what you do when you’ve finished removing the robe, no. Harry thinks you’ll be able to manage that part on your own.”

“Sometimes I worry about our crewmates.”

“Yes, but you’d worry more if he gave you instructions on how to perform sexual congress with me, wouldn’t you?”

“Probably. But I wouldn’t be surprised if he tried.”

*Come to think of it, he did once.* Allard decided not to remind Vaughan of that.

The hotel lobby was really rather nice. Allard hoped that the room lived up to the advertising.

It did.

The bed was a four-poster, with a bottle of champagne in the traditional bucket of ice next to it, and the traditional box of chocolates on the pillow.

“A bed large enough to host an orgy,” said Vaughan thoughtfully. “We’ll have to struggle to manage an orgy between the two of us.”

“But you’re going to try.”

Vaughan looked at him. “You’re all the orgy I want.” He brushed a finger down Allard’s cheek. “Have I mentioned how bloody beautiful you are?”

“Frequently. But we’re married now. It’s different.”

Vaughan sat down, rather abruptly, on the bed. “Yes, it is. I wasn’t really expecting that, considering.”

Vaughan looked different somehow. Yes: clothes, makeup, and hair. But he was still ... there was something magical about it tonight. He *did* look like a woods god.

“Is it like this for everyone?”

“Mm?”

“Special.”

“I don’t know. I’ve never been married before.”

Vaughan stood up, came over to him, and started undoing the frog fastenings on his shoulder. No roughness, no eagerness; almost worshipful. “You really are beautiful tonight.”

So it wasn’t just him. “We seem to be under some sort of glamour.”

Vaughan smiled. “Well, Claire’s a dab hand with the makeup, and the clothes are very pretty, but it is more than that.”

Vaughan managed to find all the fastenings on the robe, and very, very carefully lifted it off.

Allard stayed still, almost afraid to breathe in case he disturbed the ... whatever-it-was.

However, since Vaughan managed to knock Allard’s wreath askew very slightly, and then set it tenderly back in place, the ‘just-married’ feeling appeared to be more robust than Allard had been giving it credit for.

Then Vaughan slowly unbuttoned Allard’s undershirt.

“It is tearable,” Allard said.

“I’ll tear it later,” said Vaughan. For some reason, that was the perfect answer for Allard just then.

“No script?” he asked, making sure.

“We don’t need one tonight,” said Vaughan.

“All the trouble we went to finding tearable clothes,” said Allard, “and now I’m married, I find I don’t want them torn right this moment. That ought to be embarrassing.”

“We’ve got two weeks of honeymoon. But only one night’s the first night.”

Vaughan slowly eased the unbuttoned garment away from Allard, and then knelt to pull Allard’s trousers off.

“Shoes first,” Allard said.

Apparently, the mood could cope with (gentle) nagging, because Vaughan smiled up at him and agreed, “Shoes first,” as he bent down to remove first one shoe and then the other. He took the socks off while he was at it, and then pulled down Allard’s trousers so Allard could step out of them, leaving him in nothing but satin knickers.

Vaughan, still kneeling, leaned forward and lightly kissed him through the heavy satin. “Those are beautiful bridal wear,” he said before tackling the buttons as carefully and gently as he had the ones on Allard’s undershirt.

Allard decided not to point out that the buttons were meant for ripping off. He thought Vaughan probably knew that, and didn’t care.

Finally, he was standing naked in front of Vaughan, clothed only in makeup and wreath. And glamour, to judge by Vaughan’s shining expression.

Vaughan stood up, as if waiting.

*Oh, that’s right. I’m not the only one who gets unwrapped.*

Allard wished he had elegant artistic hands instead of tidy, square tech’s hands. He’d like to feel that it was a pretty sight for Vaughan.

He watched Vaughan look at his hands as he reached for the laces in Vaughan’s tunic. He had to work the laces loose, one crossover at a time.

Vaughan was looking at his hands solemnly, as if they were the most beautiful hands in the world.

That went some way to help him not losing patience and looking for a pair of scissors, which he would probably have done if this hadn't been a strange, slow, ritual occasion.

Then the lacing was finally loose enough for Allard to get Vaughan's tunic off, with a little assistance from Vaughan.

Vaughan's wreath was, for a wonder, still on, although only one hairgrip kept it clinging wonkily to Vaughan's curls.

"I bet that looks silly," said Vaughan, as Allard set it straight. It took him a bit longer to do that than it had taken Vaughan to do it on him, because Vaughan was taller.

"Surprisingly enough, no," said Allard.

Vaughan's tawny boots were laced, as well, up to just below the knee. They did a wonderful job of displaying Vaughan's shapely calves.

Later in the honeymoon, when they'd finally descended into the pit of depravity Allard had rather expected to spend his wedding night in, Vaughan was going to wear nothing *but* those boots.

Now, Allard knelt on the floor in front of Vaughan, paying careful and loving attention to unlacing those boots perfectly. Not master and slave, but partners helping each other to do those things that were awkward to reach on their own.

Allard held each boot steady as Vaughan wriggled out of first one, then the other.

He hadn't realised that even the trousers were laced.

"Is there some Methodistical significance to avoiding buttons and zips?" he asked, as he worked.

"No, I just got the outfit from a Renaissance Faire shop. One zip can spoil the whole effect, apparently. They spend hours learning how to go for a piss when drunk."

Allard didn't really quite believe that, especially as he'd almost completely undone Vaughan's trousers in a couple of minutes, but he did like the effect. "I suppose it's worth the effort, just on occasion."



“Are you going to divorce me for wearing too many laces if it’s more than once a week?”

“I’ll think about it. More than 1.9 times is pushing it.” Allard furrowed his brow, and stopped looking at Vaughan for a moment.

“You’re trying to work out what .9 of a week is, aren’t you?” Vaughan accused.

“It’s too late at night, and I’ve had too long a day and too much to eat and drink for that,” said Allard rather guiltily, because he *had* been thinking that, on the random free-associating layer of his mind, and Vaughan knew him far too well.

“I *hope* you’re up to consummating our marriage.”

“If I can manage the laces, I can manage that,” said Allard, hoping that wasn’t too rash a promise, as he drew Vaughan’s trousers down.

Vaughan’s underwear was fully modern and elasticated. It wasn’t as obviously bridal as Allard’s, but at least it didn’t have yellow polka-dots on it. In fact, it was very nice, in an understated way. What was under it was (to Allard’s certain knowledge) even nicer.

He checked, just to make sure.

“Yes, still all present and correct,” Vaughan said.

Allard removed all of the underwear, and then stood up.

Both of them were wearing wreath, makeup, and nothing else, apart from a certain shyness.

Allard was pleased to see Vaughan looked as uncertain as he felt.

“This is ridiculous,” Vaughan muttered to himself. “We’ve been doing everything we could *think* of together for a year and a day, and here we are ...”

Allard kissed him very lightly. “Yes. Here we are.”

Vaughan picked Allard up and carried him to the bed, putting him down very, very carefully instead of slinging him enthusiastically in the direction of the nearest soft surface.

Vaughan fumbled in the drawer of the bedside cabinet.

"If it's not there, I shall be *extremely* cross," said Allard. "We specified the honeymoon suite."

"It's more an embarrassment of riches," Vaughan said, picking up a handful of assorted exotica. "Bride's choice."

"Flavour, no. Sparkly bits, no. Actually, anything will do."

"Well, we've tried this one," said Vaughan, "and it feels nice and smooth."

Allard wriggled. "Where do you want me?"

"Oh ..." said Vaughan. "I was *about* to ask, who's on top, and then I remembered the whole point is, it's me."

Allard smiled.

"You really are beautiful," Vaughan said. Not for the first time that day, but Allard didn't mind. It helped that Vaughan wasn't the type to say 'you're beautiful' when he ran out of things to say -- he tended to mean it. Even when it was part of a script, which it certainly wasn't at the moment.

Vaughan prepared him as carefully as he'd undone his clothes. Allard closed his eyes, the better to appreciate the sensation. Fingertips, then cock-tip, gliding smoothly against him and dancing away. Toward, then away. In.

Vaughan went in slow and smooth. Absolutely vanilla, but absolutely wonderful. Allard had got rather used to quick-and-needy versus all-the-extras, and this was different. No toys, just his closest friend -- his husband now -- and a day that was somehow special despite what his rational mind would have to say about it.

That glamour, or whatever it was, seemed to have settled warmly on the surface of his skin, as if he could feel it from the inside, not just in the way Vaughan had looked at him.

"Look at me."

He looked at Vaughan. “Yes,” he said, stroking a damp curl from Vaughan’s disorderly mane, and thinking the beauty wasn’t the effect of Vaughan’s having his hair done, which never lasted.

The beauty was the effect of being Vaughan, which did.

Both of them kept looking, and kept moving, smooth and gentle.

Allard moaned, almost-complaining, as Vaughan broke the stillness to move in for a kiss.

“I want to come kissing you,” said Vaughan, with an emphatic throb of his cock.

Allard permitted it, demanded it, and drank in the kiss as if it was the last thing he would ever do. Vaughan’s tongue stabbed gently, wet and lush, while Vaughan’s cock stabbed harder, firm and lush, and the pleasure of that was the only thing that could have made him stop looking.

Vaughan’s tongue went still, mouth wet and loose, while Vaughan’s cock jerked inside him. Allard shuddered, and sucked Vaughan’s tongue as hard as he could, coming silently.

They disentangled. They breathed.

Vaughan’s wreath was well-and-truly askew by now, and rather crumpled. Allard thought it was the most beautiful thing he’d ever seen.

“I should imagine,” Allard said after a while, “that we couldn’t have managed to do that if we’d actually tried.”

“Probably not,” Vaughan agreed. “I’m very glad it happened of its own accord.” He stroked one finger gently across Allard’s lips, then frowned slightly. “The makeup looks wonderful, but I suppose we ought to wash it off before we go to sleep.”

Allard considered being too damned lazy to do anything but go straight to sleep in Vaughan’s arms, but practicality beckoned. “I suppose you’re right. I want a pee, and if I’ve got to get out of bed for that, I might as well have a shower.”

“*We* might as well have a shower,” Vaughan said. “Together.”

They did. Freshly clean, the last traces of their big day washed away, they got back into the big four-poster bed. He cuddled up to Vaughan, and looked at him, checking. No, it wasn't just the makeup and the crown of flowers. "You still look wonderful."

"Apparently it doesn't wash off with the makeup. Do you think it will last for the entire honeymoon?"

Allard considered it. "I think perhaps that's the point of the honeymoon." He considered further. "By the way, we've been so busy today that I don't think I remembered to mention that I love you."

Vaughan laughed softly. "You mean Claire and Harry didn't put it on your list of things to do? Karen put it on mine. But I'm not getting out of bed to find the list and tick it off."

Allard pouted. "You haven't said it yet."

"I love you very much, and I'll be very happy to tell you that again tomorrow."  
Vaughan kissed him gently on the forehead. "Good night, love."

He settled down to sleep with his best friend and lover and husband. It was a big bed, but not *that* big, so how very convenient that they were all the same person.

 THE END 

## Jules Jones & Alex Woolgrave

Jules Jones is a material scientist by day, writer by night, whose publishing credentials include such gems as European Union research reports. Thrilling though these might be to at least three readers, Jules believes that variety is the spice of life. Writing erotica provides an adequate amount of variety. However, Jules has found that it's better not to mix the two styles of writing, though -- it's very embarrassing when your manager points out that the file you were working on during the lunch hour has found its way into the project folder...

The Occasionally Spotted Woolgrave is Jules Jones' partner-in-crime and can frequently be heard shrieking across the Atlantic: "Oi, Jones, which way up are the boys at this point?", "Trousers, what trousers?" or "That's not a POV shift -- it's an experimental literary device!"

Woolgrave cannot visualise. At *all*...

Fortunately, Jules Jones believes in expressing one's Inner Editor, and is good about spotting completely impossible positions or characters undressing more or less than once.

In fact, Jones comes up with the plot and half of the dialogue, and Woolgrave adds regrettable knob jokes and the *other* half of the dialogue.

It seems to work. We think.

You can find Jules Jones and Alex Woolgrave on the Web at [www.julesjones.com](http://www.julesjones.com) and <http://predatrix.slashcity.org/syndicate/awoolgrave.htm>.

\* \* \* \* \*

Read on for a tantalizing glimpse of

*The Ninth Wave*

by Adrian J. Matthews

Available Now from Loose Id



## The Ninth Wave

They left the comfort of the ATV and readied the drones, working with easy and professional camaraderie. Green lights winked across the display panels, showing all was well with the sophisticated robots.

“I’m glad they’re working okay!” Craig said, closing the hatches over the panels. He patted the machine. “These cost us plenty. I wouldn’t want to be the one to report a bad apple to the Council.”

“They wouldn’t shoot you if you did. Even they know there’s no such thing as perfection. You worry too much. Come on, let’s get the ramp down.” She glanced over her shoulder at the clouds rolling slowly over the horizon. “I want to be inside before that weather hits.”

The prefabricated launch ramp took mere minutes to assemble. Its latticework rail extended and slipped into the gelid water, the servomotors whining faintly under the load. Cassie took advantage of her waterproof suit and walked into the sea a little way. She checked the ramp, ensuring no underwater rocks would impede the drones’ progress. The pressure of the water pressed the suit against her legs in a strangely sensuous way. She suppressed a giggle and waded deeper, until the water rose up to her waist.

“Don’t go too far in, babe,” Craig said.

“I won’t,” she replied, savoring the living feel of the pressure against her crotch as the slow current surged around her. Resting her hand on the rail for balance against the slight undertow, she looked out over the sea.

“Funny how the swell has kept the water clear,” she said thoughtfully. “In these temperatures, I’d have thought it would still freeze over.”

“It’s the kind of thing these babies are here to look at, remember?” he replied. “It might lead to something the colony can use.”

“Yeah.” She walked up onto dry land, glancing back at the dark water. “I hope so.”

The sun was already beginning to dip toward the horizon, the short Orphean day of 18 hours another oddity for an Earth-born to get used to. The first drone hummed softly on the cradle.

“Fire one.” Craig touched the button and the robot slipped down the ramp into the water with barely a ripple.

Cassie had already set the second drone up on the crane by the time the cradle retracted. Within two minutes, the second drone had left the scene. Cassie and Craig stared at the water, then up at the gathering storm looming black and ominous over the rocky hills of the peninsula.

“Wanna cash that rain-check?” she asked, nudging him in the ribs with her elbow.

“I thought you’d never ask!” He grinned.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Darkness came quickly, borne on the rising wind and the first slashing drops of rain.*

Snug inside the ATV, Cassie peeled the thin fabric of the body sheath off Craig’s body like a gossamer cocoon. His exposed skin was hot and pliant beneath her hands as she caressed his firm, muscular torso, tracing a path with her fingertips around each rosy pink, hair-rimmed nipple. She ran her hands across his chest, and he trembled as he held her, his cock rising hard against her belly.

Craig’s breath was loud in her ear as he held her close, his fingers searching for her body sheath closures, his usually deft touch clumsy in his eagerness. She held him tightly in her arms, feeling their hearts beating hard, united in rising lust. The top of her suit came loose, peeled away from her arms and breasts. Under his urging, she lay back on the bunk,



her butt on the edge, arms flung wide as Craig tugged at the legs of her suit. He finally pulled the sheath from her feet and flung it aside.

Cold air ran electric fingers over her hot flesh. Craig's eyes burned with fervid desire as he parted her thighs and stepped closer. Reaching out, he ran a finger over her cheeks to her lips, her throat, and down to her breasts. She moaned softly as his hands cupped each orb. He squeezed them hard, pinching her nipples as he bowed his head and laid gentle kisses on her belly.

*Dark, sleet-laden clouds roiled over the hills to the west, the darkness seeping from the turbulent sky to merge with the basaltic hills until earth and heavens seemed one. Deep within the mass, lightning flickered, the huge energies remaining hidden behind lobes of tumultuous vapor...*

Craig ran his lips and tongue over her belly, laying a moist trail down, down to her pussy as his hands slid up and down her flanks with long, slow strokes. She felt his hot breath playing over her labia and sighed with contentment, her eyes hooded, unseeing.

*The storm front grew four great wings of dark cloud. Moving with preternatural speed, they reached around an area of sky directly above the ATV until they met and merged with a shocking blast of lightning, enclosing the ATV in an amphitheater of relative calm. As the clouds merged, they thickened, until the small area of calm became swallowed by night...*



\* \* \* \* \*

*What people are saying about the writing of Adrian J. Matthews*

## The Ninth Wave

Creative characters and evocative language make *The Ninth Wave* a "must read."

-- Denise Dietz, author of *Fifty Cents for your Soul* (Loose Id)

Exciting blend of science fantasy, erotica and paranormal phenomena.

-- Daria Karpova, author of *Loose Diamonds* (Loose Id)

An amazing tale set on a distant planet of ice and lightning storms. *The Ninth Wave* has everything: incredible characters, legends and myths, new worlds...and a tender love story. I loved the writing, and the story grabbed me from the very first line. The love scene in the storm absolutely blew me away -- it was so hot it sizzled! I'm looking forward to more stories by this very gifted writer!

-- Samantha Winston, author of *Ice Man* (Loose Id)

Deftly blending "Neo-Hinduism" with futuristic fun, A. J. Mathews' debut offering at Loose Id is tightly paced and suspenseful. The characters are well drawn and believable, the plot unique and entertaining. I found *The Ninth Wave* thoroughly enjoyable.

-- Cyndi Friberg, author of *Dream Warriors: Gareth* (Loose Id)