

Bus Stories and Other Tales

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Beginning to Believe



Tyler whistled along to the Eagles on KFOX, hands full of grease as he cleaned out the engine on a '59 Triumph TR6. She hadn't been well treated, but with a whole lot of TLC, she was coming along nicely. Maybe too nicely to sell.

He interrupted his whistling to chuckle. He was going to go broke if he kept keeping the beauties. He had the front and back doors open, a nice breeze coming in off the ocean, keeping the place cool.

As the chorus of the song came on, he sang along with it. "Take it easy... take it easy... don't let the sound of your own wheels drive you crazy."

He made it to the end of the chorus when he heard someone clear his throat. He looked up at a guy in jeans and a t-shirt, eyes shadowed by a ball cap. Dude looked clean-cut as hell, little brown beard and moustache trimmed, no hair peeking from the hat. "Evenin'. Jim at the Kawasaki dealership said I should come here and ask for a Tyler if I had questions about a bike."

"Well, cool, I'll have to thank him for the referral." He got up and grabbed the rag out of his pocket, rubbing off some of the grease. "I'm Tyler. What can I do you for?"

"Kit." He got a nod, the voice surprisingly southern, classy. "Pleased to meet you. I'm hunting a bike that is damned stable, that doesn't fall over easily."

"You looking for a particular brand, or just the stability factor?"

"Just the stability, really." Kit shrugged and gave him a grin. "It's just something I've always wanted -- a motorcycle, that is -- and I figured I'd see what my options are."

He nodded, impressed. Most guys came in and didn't like to admit they needed help and knew nothing about bikes. "Well a low-rider might be your best bet. Stable ride, you don't have to perform a high jump to get on it. Most bikes made these days though are pretty solid -- not like the classics -- as long as you don't try and take corners too fast, you're fine."

"No high jumping is a good plan." The low laughter was soft, sort of wry. "And how about special modifications? Do you know anyone who does custom work on bikes?"

He grinned. "Well, Kit. You just happen to be talking to someone who can help you with that kind of thing. I can tear 'em down, build 'em back up, add to 'em, subtract from 'em. You want a VCR and TV installed? I'll make you sign a waiver, but I'll do it for you."

That earned him another laugh and the man pushed himself away from the wall, moving toward him with a stiff, unnatural gait. "Sounds like you might be my man, Tyler. Can I see some examples of your work?"

"Oh, I am always ready to show off my beauties. How much time have you got? 'Cause there's the five cent tour and then there's the grand tour, but I have to warn you now -- you get me started and it takes a strong incentive to stop me again."

"I got time." Kit nodded. "I like to know the people I do business with, know what I'm spending my money for."

"That's a good old-fashioned sense of business that's sadly lacking these days." Tyler figured his hands were about as clean as they'd get, so he pocketed the rag and held out his hand. "Tyler Jenkins, motorcyclephile at your service."

A callused, square hand took his, muscles rippling in that arm. "Kit Keyes. Pleased as hell to meet you."

He smiled, enjoying the feeling of the warm skin against his own. "So tell me, Mr. Keyes, where are you from?"

"Originally? Oklahoma, but I'm living a bit north of here these days." From here he could see Kit's eyes, warm and rich, all greens and browns. "And it's Kit. Mr. Keyes is my daddy."

"Cool. You can call me Tyler or Ty or T or hey you with the awesome bikes." He gave Kit a wink and finally dropped his hand, leading the man to the far end of the long garage. Kit kept up well, the sound of tennis shoes sliding on the concrete echoing.

"You've got a bit of a limp there -- I take it that's responsible for the need for a stable bike with special modifications?" He wasn't one to pussyfoot around a man.

"In a way, yes." Kit stopped and he turned to see the jeans' legs lifted, exposing two steel rods disappearing into the sneakers. "I'm pretty damned stable, but I don't want to get caught because I'm stiff."

"How far up do those go?"

"The left one has three inches below the knee. The right has an inch and a half above."

No embarrassment there, no fear. Just cold, dead truth.

"You can ride then. Without any knees, you might have run into problems. Hell of a thing though."

"Yeah. I don't recommend it, as a rule. Have you modified a bike for something like this before?"

"No, I can't say I have. We'll fix you up though." He gave Kit an easy smile. "If you decide to go with me that is. Now let me show you my beauties. Also known as my babies."

He pulled the tarps off a half a dozen bikes, each one restored to dealership shine. Just like new.

"Damn, those are fine!" Kit let him take the man through each one, listening and asking pertinent questions. Just from talking with him, Tyler could tell Kit knew his way around a motor, wasn't a stupid man, had done some research.

Once he'd finally petered out, he offered Kit coffee. "Any man who can listen to me go on all afternoon about these babies deserves a cup of my best. There's a little patio out back, we could talk about what you'll need done."

"That'd be appreciated, thank you." Kit followed him out, settling carefully into a cast-iron chair with a soft sigh.

He found a couple of mugs and poured his half-day old coffee into them. "Milk, sugar, black?"

"Black with sugar, please. Thank you. How long have you been working on bikes, Tyler?"

"Pretty much since I was fourteen." He made up the coffees and brought them over along with an old bag of Peeps. "I couldn't ride them yet, but I discovered that nothing set my father's blood pressure higher than bringing some raggedy old bike home from the dump and working on her in the garage."

Kit chuckled, turning down the Peeps with a grin. "Now there's a goal I can respect. My daddy's still telling people his boy's a welder in El Paso."

He chuckled, dipping a peep into his coffee to soften it up. "And what's the truth?"

"The truth?" The man grinned. "I'm in the music business. I own a little label, record independent artists, that sort of thing."

"Independent? The big boys haven't driven you out of business? Cool."

"I worked with the big boys for a while. We have a good relationship. Some of my folks go on to get big deals with the big boys." There was a hint of regret somewhere in that voice.

"Yeah? Makes you sad to see them go?" He wasn't one to leave a mystery alone.

"Oh, no. The kids deserve their shot in the spotlight." Kit shook his head, smiled. "Somehow I doubt you'd be interested in hearing the young'uns I record. All country music, barring a touch of folk."

He chuckled. "Oh, I don't mind a bit of country -- 's long as it's not too twangy."

That earned him a nod. "I hear that a lot. The old twangy stuff's dying out. So, you reckon you could make me a bike that I could learn to ride, Tyler?"

He grinned, noting the change of subject. "I reckon I could, Kit."

"I would like that. I take it you need to come up with specs and an estimate and then I'll cut you a check." Kit leaned forward, rubbed his knees, shoulder muscles working.

He nodded. "That sounds about right. I'll do you a couple of estimates -- one with a brand new bike, another with a second hand one, something I can build up myself. The advantage of a brand new one is going to be durability, but your cost will come down a lot if I build it up from scrap. I won't try and tell you that one I build is going to be as durable and steady as a top of the line new one, but I do a fair job, even if I do say so myself."

"I'm less worried about the money than the quality. It'll have to be good before the insurance company will cover it." Kit nodded. "Sounds good. I've always wanted a bike, even before the accident."

"Good for you for sticking to your guns and not letting a thing like that derail you. There are lots of people who would." He liked Kit. The more he talked to the man, the more he got a good feeling about him.

"The option is getting back up on the horse or laying down to die, I guess. I've had a few years to get used to things. Believe me, I wasn't near as gracious -- or graceful -- at first."

He nodded. "Yeah, I had a friend who didn't take the same option as you. Damn shame, the man was beautiful and talented enough to get a rise out of dead man. The wheel goes around though, doesn't it?"

Kit nodded. "I'm sorry to hear that. I... I was damned lucky. Ten of the twelve of us on the bus died. Rick and I... we don't talk much anymore."

"Oh man, I'm sorry."

"Shit happens." Kit nodded, stretched. "Enough of the sordid and morbid. Can you recommend a place to get a beer and a burger? I'm starving."

"Sure, Kelly's just down the road. Has a great balcony out back, too. Stools in the sand, practically on the beach." He weighed his options, gut telling him he liked this man, wanted to get to know him better. His gut usually wasn't wrong. On the other hand, Kit was a customer, and one who was going to be paying him a hell of a lot of money at that. He decided to drop a little hint and let the winds blow where they would. "It's my favorite place. You tell Vera Ty sent you and she'll give you a piece of pie at half price."

"Sand, huh?" Kit gave him a quiet look. "How about this? You make sure I don't go ass-first into the dirt and I'll buy a round of beers."

He grinned, pleased with the winds. "You've got yourself a deal, Kit. You give me a couple of minutes to close up shop and I'll join 'ya."

"Cool." Kit stood, moving stiff, but steady, and headed toward the front, giving Tyler a nice long look at a strong back and tight little ass.

He had a feeling he was going to need to see a lot of Kit to get this bike just right. At least he hoped so.

Chapter Two

He followed Tyler down the road a bit, fighting a groan as he swung his legs out of the truck. He'd had the legs on for damned near twelve hours; he was pushing his personal record as it was, much less after adding supper and the drive home.

Still, Tyler was interesting and not bad to look on. Kit chuckled at himself as he stood, steadying himself on the truck door. Rednecks did not look upon tattooed, longhaired, surfer-type motorcyclist with desire. It was in the handbook, under Cowboy Fags 101 -- Thou shalt lust from afar after bull riders and ranch hands in denim.

By the time Tyler walked over to him, Kit damned near had himself cackling, his tiredness fading with the laughter. Thank God for teaching him that on those long nights on the road. Laughing kept him awake.

Tyler had a warm smile for him, walking loose and easy. Now there was a man comfortable in his skin.

"You do all right for yourself," Tyler said, nodding at his truck.

"She's a solid little thing and my chair fits in the back, just in case." He patted the hardtop. "Smells damned good."

Tyler grinned. "Yep, there's nothing like the smell of onions and heavy grease."

Ty lifted his glasses up onto his head as they went in.

They were met by a large woman wielding a coffee pot, her hair about three feet high if it was an inch. "Ty, baby, how you doing?"

"Cool, V. You got room out on the sand for two?"

"For you? I sure do. Go on and find yourselves a spot. Your friend wanting a menu?"

"Yes, ma'am, I am." He nodded politely, pulling off his sunglasses and popping them in his pocket. "Thank you."

God, how many kick-ass places like this had he eaten in on the road?

"Oh, polite. I like this one, Ty-baby."

Ty rolled his eyes and grabbed his arm, leading him out. There were about ten tables out the back with chairs, looking over the beach.

He managed the sand pretty well, settling into a chair with an audible sigh of relief. "It's a mighty fine view."

"Yeah. I grew up on this view." Tyler looked out at the beach and then back at him with a grin.

Vera came out with a couple of glasses of water and a menu for him. "Now you want something you don't see and I'll have them make it for you," she told him.

"Now wait a minute... You look very familiar." Vera pulled out a chair and sat down. "Don't tell me -- let me see if I can remember."

Kit's cheeks flared and he ducked his head. Didn't happen very often anymore. Once every few months maybe, somebody would give him that 'didn't you used to be somebody' look.

"V..."

"Now hush, Ty or I'll threaten to take out your baby pictures."

That made him chuckle, low laughter filling the air. "That's quite a threat."

"Works every time, too." Vera gave him a wink.

Tyler sighed. "Kit, this is my Mom. Mom, this is Kit."

"Oh! Kit Keyes! The country singer, right? I never forget a face!"

"Yes, ma'am." He held out a hand and shook it. "Mighty nice to meet you."

"You were a real up and comer when that accident wiped out most of your band, weren't you?" Vera patted his hand. "The universe sure has a strange sense of humor, doesn't she?"

"It does at that." He offered her a smile, a nod. "So tell me, what's the best thing to eat here?"

"Ty grew up on the burgers, so that might be a mark against them," she told him with a wink.

"V..."

She chuckled and pet Tyler's knee. "I'm going Ty-baby. I've got tables waiting on me. This one is real nice, you might want to hold onto him." She turned back to him. "You try the chili and see if we don't get it right. Cornbread's an old secret recipe, too."

"Sounds like a plan." He nodded, cheeks burning to beat the band.

"Sorry 'bout that," Ty said after Vera'd gone. "She's usually a little busier and not quite so... well -- you were polite to her, she likes that."

"She seems like a sweet lady." Kit chuckled, fingers fiddling with the silverware. "And very fond of her son."

And wouldn't he just give his eyeteeth to figure out that 'hold onto him' thing?

Ty grinned. "She's a good lady -- always here when I need her."

"I'm glad to hear it." He chuckled and relaxed back into the chair, opening the menu. "What tickles your fancy, this evening?"

"I'm going to have the meatloaf -- it rocks on Tuesdays." Tyler gave him a warm smile. "And after that... we'll have to see."

"Meatloaf, eh?" Kit blinked and grinned back, just long enough to realize what he was doing and look back down at the menu. "I'm thinking I'll go with the chili, myself."

Surely the guy wasn't flirting. One -- surfers didn't flirt with cowboys. Two -- nobody flirted with a gimp. Christ, he was getting desperate in his old age.

Ty chuckled. "Like you've got a choice."

His laugh rang right on out. "You might have a point there, Ty."

"You've got a great smile and a good laugh," Ty said. "Honest."

"Thank you, Ty. That's kind to say." He nodded over, holding Ty's look a little longer this time. "You grow up 'round here?"

Ty nodded. "We had a little apartment a few blocks over. Mom's worked here as long as I can remember. Dad used to be the line cook."

"Used to?"

"Yeah, he passed away a few years ago. Cancer."

"Oh, that sucks." Kit shook his head. "That's a damned shame. I'm sorry."

Ty nodded. "It's a hell of a way to die. We were all pretty happy when he finally went in the end."

Vera came back out with a pair of beers. "Hey now, why the long faces -- Ty-baby, you aren't telling him about your misspent youth are you?"

"No, V. We were just talking and Dad came up."

"Bless his soul." V crossed herself and gave Tyler a kiss on his forehead, earning her an eye roll.

Oh, he did like her, very much. "He was a lucky man to have y'all, if you don't mind me saying, ma'am."

"Why thank you, Kit. I don't mind at all. Now have you two decided?"

"I'll have the meatloaf, V."

She nodded. "I knew you would -- Danny's already got your plate half ready -- I wasn't sure if you'd got with your usual fries or have the mashed and gravy today -- better'n' usual batch done up today."

"I'll do the mashed."

"Good boy. And you, Kit? You gonna give our famous chili a chance?"

"Yes, ma'am, I believe I will, and a dinner salad, if you don't mind." He offered her a grin. "Greens, you know."

She chuckled. "I'll bring one out for Ty, too, so you aren't made to eat alone."

When she gone, Ty took a drink of his beer. "So you used to be a country singer. Not one of those twangy ones, I hope."

"I did and I suppose twangy would depend on your definition, but I wasn't never accused of it, no." He chuckled and took a swig.

"Maybe you'll sing for me sometime and I can judge for myself."

"Oh, I don't sing anymore." He fiddled with the silverware, seeing the eyes of family, of friends wanting to know why, of all those wonderful men, why he lived. "I bet I could rustle up a CD or two, though."

"Oh, your pipes were hurt in the accident, too? I'm sorry, that's a really rough break." Ty looked out at the beach a moment. "I didn't mean to bring up hard memories."

"Oh, no. No. I... I can. Well, I figure I can. I just don't." He blushed dark, shook his head. "Not my line of work anymore."

"You never sing? Ever? Not even in the shower?"

"Nope. Not ever." It was the truth, too. Not once since the accident. He hadn't. He couldn't. "I play sometimes though, if a band needs me."

Tyler shook his head. "I can't imagine not singing along to the radio, or belting it out in the shower." Tyler blushed suddenly. "Christ, I'm being unbelievably rude, I'm sorry. Again."

"Oh, hey. Don't." Kit reached over instinctively before stopping himself. "I mean, no one ever asks about it. I mean... it's been almost six years and no one talks about it. It's okay."

"Yeah? Cool." Tyler gave him another one of those easy-going, lingering smiles. "I was kind of hoping I was leaving a good impression, not making you crazy."

"No crazy-making. Honest." He smiled at Vera when she brought the salads. "Thank you, ma'am."

She beamed at him and patted his shoulder. "You're very welcome, Kit."

"Thank you, ma'am," chimed in Tyler, wicked grin on his face.

Vera gave her son an arch look. "You could learn a thing or two from Kit about manners, young man and I know I taught you better than that."

"I said thank you!"

"You sassed me, is what you did." She bent and kissed his forehead again. "I go off-shift in five. Beti, that's with one t and an i apparently, is going to bring out your food. She's new so be nice, but make sure she serves you right. Will I see you for supper on Sunday night, Ty-baby?"

"I'll pick you up at 6."

"Good boy." Tyler got another kiss and then they were left alone again.

"I didn't intend on getting your ass chewed, honest." Kit was fighting his grin for all he was worth.

"Naw, she was right -- I was sassing her." Tyler gave him a grin. "She's a great lady, but to be honest I'm glad she's off-shift now."

"Yeah? Too much mothering for one night?" He dug into his salad, munching happily.

"Well when a guy's out with another guy, he doesn't necessarily want his mother around, you know?" The words were casually said, Tyler looking at his food and then glancing up at him.

He was never going to stop blushing. Never. "How did you know?"

Tyler gave him a sweet smile. "You flirted back."

"Oh." Nope, never going to stop blushing. "Did you mind?"

"Did I mind? That you flirted back? Why would I mind?"

"Well, I guess I usually wait to know someone better first." He chuckled, grinned. "'Course, I've met your

mom now."

Tyler laughed. "You have! In some countries that makes us practically engaged."

"Oh, they have a hell of a time pairing off us lame ponies, Ty. I'd make sure I had one hell of a dowry first."

"I was with a chick in a wheelchair for a couple of months. Dead from the waist down, but what she could do with her mouth? Woo. And her mind was sharp. Too sharp. She finally dumped me for a physicist."

"No shit?" He chuckled, shook his head. "I'm a musician. Not too terribly sharp."

"Yeah? How are you with your mouth?"

He blinked, surprised and more than a little stunned, then managed a recovery. "Honestly, I do all right in that arena, but my claim to fame is my hands. Any man who can pick like I do? He can make your body sing."

Oh, God. Had he just said that?

"Well there you go, Kit, sounds to me like you've got a hell of a lot to offer, lame pony or not."

"Thanks, Ty. I'll try to keep that in mind." He gave himself a solid, strict thump as the food came. Ty was right. This self-pitying bullshit was frigging boring.

"So will I," Ty told him with a wink and more than a little interest.

He couldn't help but grin back. Ty was a fine-looking man, all sex and gold-skin and sensuality pouring from him. Damn.

They ate in relative silence, the food good, solid and real rather than some of those showy dishes that left you still hungry.

He ordered one more beer and nursed it. No way he was going to get home if he didn't take it easy, but it felt good relaxing and just being with Ty.

Ty shared a story or two about some of his favorite bikes and a bit about growing up near the beach. "It gets into your soul, living out here." Ty grinned. "I don't sleep half as well if I can't hear the waves at night."

Kit nodded. "My house is about twenty miles from here, right near the water. I always wanted to live by the ocean. Got a ramp built where I can roll out, early in the morning."

"Sounds really nice. How long have you been there?"

"About three years now. I was in the hospital for a good bit. Then rehab. I had the house and studio built so I could live there, be comfortable." Kit nodded. "It was worth the wait."

Ty nodded. "I'm surprised we've never run into each other before."

"Well, I'm still getting used to the legs. In fact, today's a record day for keeping them on." Kit stretched, hands rubbing his knees. "When I'm in the chair, I tend to stay home. With these? I do some better about being social."

"Does it hurt?" Ty asked. "I mean, if it bothers you to have me ask, just tell me to shut up and mind my

manners."

"No, it's okay." Kit frowned. "You ever worn a real tight pair of new shoes? This is kinda like that, except I'm resting my weight on a shit-load of scars hanging at my knee. It just gets to aching after a while."

Tyler nodded. "I get it. Kind of sucks, doesn't it?"

"Yeah. Yeah, it does, but I'm alive and 10 of us aren't, so I can't really bitch."

"A smart man knows to count his blessings instead of focusing on the negative. The waves'll still be hitting the beach tomorrow."

"Yeah." Kit stretched. "That they will. And, as much as I'm loving watching these waves, Ty? If I'm going to drive myself home, I'm going to have to head that way."

He surprised himself with the depth of his regret.

"Will you be all right?"

"Hmm?" He grinned, nodded. "I reckon. If I get too sore, I'll find a resting place on the way."

Ty took out his wallet and handed across his card. "Call if you run out of steam and I'll rescue you."

Kit took the card, digging out his own. "Same to you." He grinned. "You never know when you might need rescuing."

Ty returned the grin. "I'd imagine I'm more likely to need it than you."

"I'd be happy to rescue your ass, Ty. Anytime." He blushed as he said it, but meant it, so he let it stand.

"You might be sorry if I take you up on it." Ty gave him a wink.

Laughing, he shook his head. "Somehow I don't think so." He stood, groaning as his knees complained. "Okay, I do need to go. I'm reaching the end of my tolerance and I have a bit of a drive ahead of me."

Tyler stood and shook his hand. "It was really nice to meet you, Kit. I'm looking forward to working with you."

"Same here. Please, let me know when you want to get together and discuss the next steps."

"What are you doing Thursday night?" Tyler flushed a little. "There's a party on the beach. Lots of music, some food."

"I..." He couldn't take his chair down, but if he was careful, he could walk down on the sand. Hell, if he tried and fell, he could just turn his cowboy ass around and go home. "What time and where?"

"Diana beach -- it starts at five and if we get there 'round then it shouldn't be too crowded yet. We can stake out our spot." Ty looked pleased.

"Okay. Should I meet you there, then?" He grinned. "And what type of beer should I bring?"

"I'll meet you in the parking lot and the beer should be cold." Ty took his hand again, giving him another squeeze. "See you Thursday."

"Good deal." He left money on the table and turned, heading toward his truck, slow and steady. As he

headed out of the driveway, Kit figured he might want to take a few walks on his own beach during the next few days, just to practice.

Chapter Three



Tyler sat on the rail at Diana beach, feet swinging as he kept an eye out for Kit's red truck. He was a little surprised at himself, at how eager he was to see Kit again. Something about the man held his interest though, called to him.

He was usually pretty casual about his relationships. There were always exceptions. He never would have picked an ex country singer as one though.

He grinned as he saw Kit pull up, hopping off the fence and heading for the truck. By the time he got there, Kit was swinging his legs out, wearing jeans and a black tank top, giving him a look at beautiful, strong, tanned arms and pecs. He had to grin at the ubiquitous ball cap over the shorn brown hair. "Ty. Howdy."

"Hey. I'm glad you made it."

"Yeah. Thanks for the invite." Kit was moving easier, steps more natural as a towel and a folded lawn chair was pulled from the back of the truck. Ty got a glimpse of a folded wheelchair and a guitar case before the hard cover was locked down. "How's it going?"

"Good. You don't need the chair you know, I brought a couple. I hope you don't mind -- I went ahead and chose a spot, put out the blanket and chairs, brought down the cooler."

"Oh, cool. Saves me the carrying of it." Kit stowed the chair away and gave him a smile. "Lead the way."

"You got it." He'd chosen the spot with care, somewhere not too far from the parking lot, but out of the main crowd still affording them a decent view of the ocean and close enough they could hear the bands rather than the crowd. Kit looked like he approved, settling carefully in one of the chairs, legs looking odd and stiff on the sand, tennis shoes digging in.

"Comfortable?" he asked, crouching by the cooler and pulling out a couple of beers.

"Doing good, thanks." Kit took a beer, nodding. "Thanks again for the invite, by the way. It's a damned pretty evening for a party."

"It is," he agreed, settling in the other chair. "Nice way to get to know a man, too."

"It is." Kit grinned and laughed, eyes crinkling up. "So, twenty questions?"

"Deal. I'll go first." He took a swig of his beer, considering. "Where'd you pick up that accent?"

"Enid, Oklahoma." Kit nodded. "How many tattoos do you have?"

"Just the one, but there's a lot more to it than what you can see." He gave Kit a wink. "Any siblings?"

Kit's laugh was fucking sweet. "No. Only child. My mom died when I was two. Are you a natural blond?"

Oh. Blushed nice, too.

"I am and I can prove it, if you know what I mean." Oh yeah, blushed real nice. "You bi or gay?"

"That sort of depends, I guess. I've slept with both, but only been in serious relationships with men. Which do you figure that is?"

"That would depend on whether or not you were attracted to both. I mean, if the women were just the nearest warm body or an experiment or trying to convince yourself you weren't gay..."

Kit was glowing, but nodded. "One was because we were lonely and one was wanting a baby. It was nice enough, but not... deep? Intense, maybe?"

He gave Kit a long look. "You'd make a good father," he said quietly. "So you're not looking for a relationship with a woman. You looking at all?"

"I didn't think so. I..." Kit swallowed and looked at the ocean. "I haven't had sex but once since the accident, and it was... bad. I'm comfortable with the fact that I lost that. It's hard to ask a partner to accept the scarring, the deformity. Are you involved with someone?"

"If you're asking am I seeing anyone seriously, then the answer is no. If you're asking if I'm sleeping with anyone then the answer is sure -- I've got a lot of friends who're happy to help a guy out when he's in need and I feel the same way 'bout them. You jack off at all since the accident?"

"I... Yeah." Kit shifted, nodded. "I'm handicapped, not dead. What's your favorite song?"

"Favorite all time just one song?" He took another haul on his beer, watching Kit move.

"If you've got one, yeah." Kit reached down, moved his legs to a more stable position.

"I don't know if I could pick just one. V loves Elvis, owns every record he ever made, but Love Me Tender was always her favorite. I can remember hearing it most nights growing up." He shifted his chair around a bit, moving a bit closer to Kit, also angling slightly so he could see the man a little better. "Any time I hear it I stop whatever I'm doing and sing along. I suppose that's the closest I have to a favorite. What's your favorite food?"

"Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Do you have a pet?"

"Nope. You ever have that baby?"

"Yes. Her momma died in the bus. Cate lives with her grandparents on the east coast." Funny how Kit could talk about so much loss with such a peaceful look on his face. "Do you play an instrument?"

"Like every boy in California I wanted an electric guitar and bugged my parents until I got one. I can still mess around on it some. Do you want to sleep with me?"

Kit looked over at him, eyes a little shocked, a little stunned. That long throat worked hard for a second. "Yes. Does it matter?"

"Seeing as I want to sleep with you, I guess it does. I'm not in the habit of bedding unwilling partners."

"Oh." Kit watched him for a moment longer, then nodded. "You got any soda in that cooler? Two beers is my limit for driving."

He wondered at the change of subject, but shrugged mentally and went with it. Kit likely wasn't the kind of man who slept around easily even before his accident, Ty imagined that was even truer now.

"Yep, coke and ginger ale and munchies. We can get something off the grill when you're hungry." He gave Kit a considering look. "We done playing?"

"Nope. I'm just thirsty and trying to stretch out my beer consumption." Kit grinned and reached for the cooler, fishing out a coke. "What do you do on your days off?"

"Surf, paint, make-out, work on bikes." He grinned over at Kit. "What about you -- what do you do for fun?"

"Oh, I hang out, jam every now and then. I have a pier that I sit on and watch the water. Adam is trying to teach me to swim better in the pool over at the rehab center. I workout. Normal shit." It was obvious that Kit worked out, the man's upper body was cut and sculpted, fine to look at. "Hmm... my turn. What's your favorite color?"

"Just one?" he shook his head. "I guess blue if I'm forced to choose. What're you doing Saturday night?"

"I'm having a little jam session at the house -- two tiny bands that I think will make one great group. Would you like to come out for an early supper and maybe stick around? The music should be fabulous."

"I'd like that very much, Kit." He grinned, looked like Kit was interested enough. "What should I bring?"

"Just yourself. I'll throw something on the grill for supper." He got another grin. "Is it my turn again?" Ty reached for a coke and nodded. "When's your birthday?"

"July 11, 1971. When's yours?"

"June 20th, same year. Sucks having a summer birthday, don't it?" Kit was relaxing, that warm laughter coming easily, the stiffness of his body gone.

"Are you kidding? It's the greatest." He laughed. "V used to take me and all my friends to the beach and we'd grill hotdogs and play in the water. She'd give out prizes to whoever brought her the most interesting beach stuff. It was the greatest."

"Oh, man, I hated it. Hotter than hell, all the chores you didn't have to do when you were in school having to be done, and everybody was off visiting family or working animals." Kit shook his head, chuckling. "It was better when I got older, but when I was a boy? Damn."

Ty chuckled. "Well I'll have to see what I can do to make it up to you this year. How do you feel about tequila body shots?"

Kit's laughter was loud, happy. "Oh, Christ! Just remind me to start in my chair, yeah? Can you imagine me otherwise? Good Lord! You'd have to pour me into a bed."

"That doesn't sound too terrible, Kit." He winked and watched Kit over the top of his can as he took another drink.

That blush came back, but the stiff nervousness didn't and he got a slow grin. "We'll have to see what you think after I have a few and am laughing over some joke my imaginary friend told me."

"You've got imaginary friends, too? Cool."

"A man's got to have friends to yell at the TV with, Tyler." The look was almost serious, the laughter almost hidden.

"Have you got a lot of friends?" he asked, Kit's words making him suddenly curious. "Of the flesh and blood variety I mean."

Kit tilted his head, seemed to think some. Then he shook his head. "No. I've got Adam and his wife, Kerri. They live next door and I trust them with my life, but that's about it. I know a bunch of musicians, people in the industry, but they're not friends, you know?"

"Seriously? Aren't you lonely?" He couldn't imagine that. Couldn't even dream of a world where there was only one couple he could call friends.

"Sometimes." Kit shrugged. "I lost... I guess you could say I thought I'd found everybody I was ever gonna need and then I didn't anymore. I guess I haven't had time to start filling those empty spaces."

"How long has it been again?"

"Six years in October."

"That's a long time to have empty spaces and no friends to fill 'em with."

"I guess." Kit took another drink, meeting his eyes. "Sometimes it feels like forever, and some days it feels brand new. Memories are funny that way."

He nodded -- that he could understand. "So is your being here mean you're ready to have one of those holes filled?"

As soon as he'd said it, he realized how it sounded and he laughed at himself.

Kit blinked for about half a second and then burst out laughing, doubling over, shoulders shaking like he was tickled. "Oh! Oh shit, Ty! That was funny as fuck..."

God, happiness made the man look young, made him look completely different, like a mask had slipped off or something.

Still chuckling he nodded. "I just wish it had been intentional."

"Oh, the look on your face was more than half the fun." Kit's laughter slowly eased. "Oh, Lord. I haven't laughed so hard in a month of Sundays."

"Well you should do it more often, Kit -- looks good on you. Real good."

"Feels pretty damned good." Kit nodded. "And yeah, I'd like to be your friend, Ty. Get to know you. I mean, I've already confessed to thinking about you in a not-purely friendly way, but if you can forgive that, I do enjoy your company more than I've enjoyed anything in a long while."

"Oh, I can forgive the thinking about me in a not-purely friendly way if you can forgive me encouraging it," he replied, more pleased than he was willing to question by Kit's words.

"Well, then. Sounds like we've got ourselves a deal." Kit chuckled, then caught a stray volleyball that came winging by and threw it back, the shot sure and strong.

"You into sports?" he asked, stomach growling a little as a waft of air brought the scent of burning meat with it. He could go for a burger.

"I'm a big baseball fan. Used to play, once upon a time. You?"

"Anything you can do on the beach." He nodded off toward the where the nets were set up. "Volleyball, swimming, surfing, Frisbee."

"You want to go play? Won't hurt my feelings a bit. I'm a world champion watcher."

"Nah, today's games are set up for the youngsters." He gave Kit a wink. "Unlike surfing, you don't improve with age in volleyball." He got up and stretched. "Besides, I'm getting hungry and the company here is just fine."

Ty got a pleased little smile from Kit,, "Go on, feed that monster in your belly before it eats you alive."

"What can I bring you back?"

"Cooked meat on bread -- any flavor. I'm not picky, so long as it's dead."

He chuckled. "Condiments -- or just the dead meat?"

"Just dead meat. I'm a simple man." The phrase sounded familiar, well used.

He chuckled. "All right, Mr. Simple Man. I won't be long."

He headed off across the sand, the sun good and hot on his back, the waves hitting the shore, the sound just whispering underneath the crowd and the music playing. He picked up four hamburgers and a box of fresh cut fries, chatting amiably with the guy behind the grill.

On the way back he ran into Melissa and Teresa, the twin girls giggling and touching and hugging and finally letting him go after a promise to show up at their double wedding in the fall.

He was pretty hard by the time he got back to Kit and the sight of the cowboy lounging in his chair did nothing to make that change.

Kit had pulled his hat down low over his eyes and looked as if he could have been a thousand miles from the nearest person, still and quiet. Weird, given that Kit was surrounded by people.

He cleared his throat, not wanting to wake the man if he was napping.

Kit smiled gently, nodded. "Looks good. Thanks."

"Just a couple of burgers. I figured we could share the fries -- fresh cut and you can still smell the grease."

He passed one plate and pulled his chair up close to Kit's, letting his legs spread comfortably, unembarrassed about the wood he was sporting.

Kit took a quiet look, but didn't say a word, digging into the burger with a healthy appetite and making random small talk.

The sun was starting to set by the time they'd done eating and he collected their garbage and took it over to a can.

He came back and settled again. "You just let me know when you've had enough. I brought a blanket though, in case we got cold."

"Are you happy just sitting up here? I mean, it's a party and the dancing and serious fun will be starting soon. I... I don't want to cramp your style." Kit didn't seem embarrassed or angry, just a touch uncomfortable. "This is so awkward, isn't it? The balance between I don't want sound like I don't want to be with you and I don't want to be a huge stone around your neck."

He reached over and slid his hand along Kit's thigh. "Just relax, Kit. If I didn't want to be here, you'd know it -- I tend to speak my mind." He chuckled. "You may have noticed the open mouth insert foot phenomenon several times already this evening."

Kit nodded, but those eyes were on his hand, just watching, a little stunned.

He squeezed gently and pulled his hand away. "I'm sorry, I should have asked first."

"What?" Kit met his eyes, blinking. "No. No, please. I... No one does. No one ever acts like they're even there. It felt good, is all. It just felt good."

Ty chuckled and put his hand back. "Sorry, thought you thought I was being forward. I can see where they might not get noticed though -- people too focused on that sweet little ass of yours to notice your legs."

There came that sweet blush again, lighting Kit's face right up. How this man ever made it on stage was a mystery.

It was endearing, made him want to lean forward and give Kit a kiss, see what that would do to those cheeks. At the same time, he was enjoying getting to know Kit, the easy sitting together and sharing and wasn't sure he wanted to press for more just yet. So he sat, smiling into sweet brown eyes, hand moving slowly on Kit's thigh.

The big muscle in Kit's leg jumped under his palm and it took him a while to realize it was moving in time with the music, Kit listening to it, moving to it. He'd bet the man had been a wicked dancer back before the accident. He himself was humming along, on finger starting to tap against Kit's leg.

"Do you like to sing?" The question was soft, wistful. "You can sure carry a tune."

"I like to sing along. And in the shower -- it's not really a shower if I haven't belted out a tune or two."

"I can understand that." Kit nodded, eyes on the sea.

"Have you really given it up? Totally completely?" He didn't want to push the sore subject, but it just seemed so unbelievable to him."

"I... I don't know how to explain it. I don't think I can. I didn't get to go to any of the funerals. The other guy that survived, he did. And what all those people wanted to know was why we lived and everybody else died." Kit swallowed hard, lips pursed. "It was my singing that had us all in that bus. My career. My music. My act. It seems like a fitting thing -- to give that up, to let all those families know I cared too."

"That's a hell of a thing to give up, Kit. I mean, you lost your legs, do you really think any of the people who were killed would have wanted you to stop singing?"

"I don't know, Ty. I guess I never will." Sad, quiet eyes met his. "Don't get me wrong, this isn't about them. It's about me. It's about trying to stop being guilty of living when the past comes haunting. It's about trying to make amends."

"You never thought you might make amends by using your talent and going on with what they supported you in?" He knew he was being pushy, but holding back just wasn't his style. Neither were regrets or living in the past.

"I am using my talent, Ty. I run one of the more solid indie labels in country music. I'm no fool -- the entertainment business is about looks and talent. I was in rehab when my singing career died. Nothing -- not a thing -- was going to bring that back."

Kit shook his head. "I don't expect anybody to understand. It hurts to think about singing, to dream about used to be. So I don't."

"I can't say I understand, but I'll respect your feelings and try not to push. Well, mostly -- do you mind if I ask why you can't sing but you can still play and work in the industry?"

"Like I said, I'm no fool. I have connections; I have a good ear. I know good music." Kit arched an eyebrow. "It's not like I can go work the horses with Daddy, now is it? I play because I can. That's not really what I did before, I was the singer, not the picker. Besides, I never said I couldn't sing. I said I *don't*."

Ty nodded. "I worded the questions wrong. I know you don't sing, my point is you choose not to do that, because you say it hurts too much -- it doesn't hurt just to be in the business?"

"Sometimes. Sometimes it feels good. Sometimes it's just a job." Kit offered him a smile. "I guess that's part of it. Singing was never about the job, about the money. The performing, the dancing, the work? That was hard and tiring and work. The singing? It was about loving and living and being happy. It was about believing."

Kit looked down. "And I reckon I've made myself look like a real fool to you. I'm sorry."

"I don't think you're a fool, Kit. I do think it's sad that you've stopped believing."

The words sort of hung there, the light fading away over the ocean. He was about to speak when Kit's voice sounded. "I loved Tim with all I was. In ten years, we didn't spend more than eight hours apart. We lived together, we worked together, we sang. I had been sitting in his lap when the wreck happened and I went to the front to grab a copy of the itinerary. If I believe, then I have to believe that I was meant to be here alone and Tim and rest of them were meant to die."

"I'm really sorry about that, Kit." He squeezed the man's leg again. "Of course if you don't believe you were meant to go on, can you? The wheel keeps turning; the universe doesn't hand out rewards for being stoic. You don't believe you weren't meant to live, you won't, not really."

"I don't know what I believe anymore. I don't know that I can. I get up in the morning, exercise, drink my coffee and go to work until it's time to stop." Kit chuckled. "Well, that and decide I need a friggin' motorcycle and meet a most interesting man."

"You see," Ty gave him a warm grin and leaned in a little. "The wheel keeps on turning, the universe offering you new opportunities if you look for them."

"Is that what you are? A new opportunity?" Kit's cheeks were pink again, eyes smiling.

"I'd like to be, Kit. I really would. If you're ready to look for one."

"I... I hope I'm ready, Ty." Those eyes were warm, steady. "I want to be."

He leaned in until their lips were almost touching. "Well how about a kiss? Are you ready for that opportunity?"

"I... Yes. I could maybe manage that."

He closed the distance between them, torn between closing his eyes and concentrating on the taste of the kiss, the feeling of Kit's lips beneath his own and watching the kiss happen in Kit's eyes.

He kept his own eyes open.

Kit's mustache and beard were soft, tickling his lips, those eyes warm and dark, almost black in the moonlight. He slid his tongue out, licking at the soft lips and the ticklish hair, it made him smile. Kit moaned, lips parting, eyes crinkling as he smiled.

Kit tasted like burgers and beer and something deeper, more lasting. Ty dipped his tongue in. The kiss was gentle, warm. Clumsy in that way that only first kisses could be.

It was nice and as he drew back he knew he wanted to do it again. He thought maybe it was Kit's turn to make the next move though. The guy had gone this long, it wouldn't do to rush him.

"Oh. My." Kit leaned forward, touched his cheek with those callused fingers. "That was nice."

He nuzzled his cheek against Kit's fingers. "Yeah, it was."

"Would you like to do it again?" The words were careful, drawled slow and sweet. Sexy.

"Oh yeah." He sure would.

"Me too." Those lips brushed against his, the kiss feather-light and gentle, Kit's tongue just sliding over his bottom lip. It felt good. He slid his own tongue out to meet Kit's. Kit gave him a quiet little groan, and the kiss deepened, just hinting of Kit's banked passion, that quiet, hidden hunger. He brought his hand up to cup Kit's head, tilting the man just a bit, tongue sliding in deeper.

As gently as it started, he let the second kiss end. This wasn't the place for making out like teenagers, well, the beach might be the place, but the middle of a party wasn't the time.

It made him chuckle -- he was getting older; there was a time he wouldn't have cared how many people were milling about.

Kit grinned over, settling back in his chair. "Thank you."

"You're welcome and thank you." He grinned back. "That was very nice and I hope we can do it again sometime soon."

Kit started chuckling. "Yes. Perhaps we can schedule in another meeting."

He laughed. "Well we could always just change locations." He made the offer casually.

"Do you have a location in mind?"

"Well I live over the shop. Got a great view of the ocean. There's stairs," he added as an afterthought.

"I can manage stairs, but it's clunky and slow and definitely not sexy." Kit smiled sheepishly. "Not that I'm incredibly vain or want you to think I'm sexy or anything."

"Are there stairs at your place?"

Kit's smile widened. "Not a one. Would you like to see where I live? Have a cup of coffee? Change locations?"

"I like the sound of that a lot, Kit." He leaned in to give the man another kiss, sweet and slow, the hairs still tickling, making him smile again. Kit tasted his smile, the softest moan sliding over his lips. He pulled back with a grin. "We'd better go before I get too involved to care where we are."

"Yeah. I guess we'd better." Kit squeezed his hand. "Help me up?"

He nodded. "What do I need to do?"

"Pretty much just stand still and help me find my balance." Kit grasped his upper arms and nodded, then pulled until they were standing together, Kit weaving just a bit.

He put his arm around Kit, helping to steady him, not unhappy with being close to Kit's body.

"Oh." Kit looked over at him. "You could make standing up something special."

Then those cheeks darkened again.

He smiled and nuzzled the warm cheeks. "It would be my pleasure."

Another soft moan sounded and Kit rubbed their skin together. "Let's go before I forget how to drive."

"If you can make it back to your truck on your own I'll pack up my stuff and then follow you home." He chuckled. "Like a stray dog."

Kit laughed. "Oh, Lester and Lindy would love that. They're always looking for a playmate."

"You've got dogs? Cool."

He gave Kit another quick kiss. "All right, cowboy, I'll meet you in the parking lot."

He watched Kit head off for a moment, impressed at the way Kit handled himself in the sand and then started gathering everything up. Ty sure hoped Kit wouldn't have changed his mind once they'd gotten to his place.

Chapter Four

The ride home with Tyler following behind was too quick, too slow, too much and not near enough.

He kept flipping radio stations, worrying, wanting, mind going ninety to nothing over shoulds and coulds and oughtas.

The party had been nothing like he'd expected -- well, the music was, and the games, but the company?

Damn.

He didn't know how to make Ty understand him. Hell, he didn't know how to understand himself, and he'd spent enough fucking time working on that, hadn't he?

Oh, but the kisses were enough to make him tingle and the touches -- oh, fuck. It had been so long, and he still wasn't sure he could do it, could show his stumps to another man and keep it up.

But the kisses. Oh, he liked those.

Still, one way or the other, good or bad, he kept driving, didn't he? Leading Tyler home. Kit pulled into the drive and punched in the code for the gate, watching it swing open.

They meandered down to the house, a sprawling one-story made of stone, recording studio on one end, his home on the other. The pups came barreling around the house, huge and hairy and happy as hell to have him home. He parked and killed the engine, opening the door with a grin. "Lester! Lindy! Hey babies!"

Ty's van pulled up behind him and the man came out cautiously.

The Saint Bernards turned -- Lindy barking, Lester tail-wagging. "Hey, these are my babies. Lester, Lindy -- this here's Tyler."

"Hey Lester. Hey Lindy."

Ty grinned and came forward, making a fist and holding it out about muzzle height.

Lester bounced up, licking and wagging, while Lindy trailed behind, watching. Kit reached down, scratching Lindy's ears. "It's okay, girl. He's a white hat, honest."

Ty chuckled and gave Lester a good petting. "I bet I have one back home somewhere. Might even be a cowboy hat."

That tickled him and he nodded. "Oh, I reckon there's one in here to fit. Come on inside."

He led Tyler into his house. It was decorated in light woods and deep reds and blues, all the way through. The whole set up was wide, airy, giving him plenty of room to move about in his chair.

"This is really nice, Kit. Warm, but not close, if you know what I mean."

Kit nodded, grinning wide. "I love this house. Had it all built exactly as I needed it. Tell you what, you give me ten minutes to get my legs off and into my chair, and I'll give you the grand tour."

"If I can have a kiss first, you've got a deal." Ty gave him an easy smile. "And if there's anything I can do to help?"

Oh. Okay. Yeah.

He stepped up, looking down so he didn't step on Tyler's toes. "I've never kissed anyone standing on these legs. Don't let me fall?"

Tyler's hands slid around him, one at his shoulders, the other at his waist. "I've got you."

He wrapped his arms around Tyler's waist, trembling inside. Tyler was his height, or damned near, and it was so easy, to lean in, rest his mouth against those open, soft lips, and take a taste.

Ty moaned a little, tongue sliding out to meet his, stroking. Oh, Lord, that was nice. He hummed, eyes closing as the kiss deepened, bit-by-bit, Tyler's flavor warm on his tongue.

It was Ty who finally pulled away, licking at his lips. "We'd better get you all set up."

"Yeah. Come on back to the bedroom. You can keep me company." He blushed a bit, but met Tyler's eyes.

Tyler just smiled at him and nodded. "Cool."

He walked Tyler through the house, pointing out the rec room and the kitchen, the dining room, the guest rooms. His bedroom was messier than the rest of the house, less decorated and more goofy cowboy, the low-resting mattress covered in multiple comforters, the TV on low from this afternoon and the armchairs covered in magazines and discarded jeans.

"Oh, good, I can relax now," Ty told him with a grin. "In here I won't have to worry about knocking something over."

Blushing, he laughed. "My cleaning lady would be so ashamed I brought you in here. It's the one room she's not allowed to mess with." He picked a mess of crap off of one chair. "Have a seat."

He found his chair and unfastened his jeans, pushing them past his more than decent undershorts before he plopped down in it. At Tyler's look, he shrugged. "In case I need to take my legs off in public. Can't go around being indecent."

"Ah. And here I thought I was gonna get a peek." Ty gave him a wink, sprawled easily in his chair.

"Oh, that would be damned rude of me." He chuckled and worked the pants down, peeking every now and again at Tyler's face. His right prosthesis was longer, had a knee on it and he had to release the vacuum, using the pressure sock to pull his stump out.

"That's quite the rigmarole," Ty noted. "How long does it take to put on?"

"The below knee one takes me five minutes or so. The above knee about ten. It all depends on how sore I am, how late I am." He unlocked the liner on his left leg, sliding free of the socket. Once he put the legs and jeans aside, he unrolled the pressure socks and wiped his stumps off with a baby wipe.

Ty got up and came over to him, kneeling next to the chair.

"May I?" Tyler asked, hand hovering above his legs.

Kit stomach wrenched, the look of those hands near his skin so hot, so unexpected. "Yeah. Yes."

Ty touched the stumps, fingers tracing the heavy scars. "Can you feel this? Where does it hurt?"

"I... Yes. I can. I... It aches inside -- just from having stood on them." His voice was husky, eyes fastened

on those hands. Oh, God.

God.

The light touches became firmer, massaging gently. "Does this help?" Ty asked, looking up at him.

"Uh-huh." He shivered, almost gasping. He was going to die. Right here. Right now.

And it would be worth it.

"Good. It's the least I can do seeing as it's my fault you were out making them ache in the first place."

Tyler just kept massaging his stumps, eyes smiling up at him like it was the most natural thing in the world.

"Oh... Ty..." He leaned forward, brushing a soft kiss against those lips, shaking.

"I'm not hurting you, am I?" Ty asked, one hand leaving its massage to stroke across his cheek.

"No. Oh God, no. I just... It feels so good, so... real." He was fighting tears, fighting the wave of need that poured over him.

"It is real, Kit." Ty leaned forward, the hand on his cheek guiding his head down. "I want to kiss you again."

"Please." He whispered the word against Ty's lips, watching those amazing eyes.

Ty's tongue licked his lips, parting them just enough for that tongue to slide in as their mouths pressed together. His eyes closed, a single tear escaping as he melted, moaning into the kiss. Tyler's hand was still on one of his stumps, fingers just stroking now as one kiss slid into another and then another.

So good, so sweet. Kit whimpered, hands sliding into Ty's hair, thumbs rubbing Ty's cheeks. Ty tilted his head slightly, turning the kisses deeper.

He fell into the kisses, body thrumming, need coursing through him. Oh, if they didn't stop, he was going to come. Right here. Ty just kept on kissing him, tongue stroking and playing with his own, one hand still on his leg, caressing from the top of his thigh on down to his stump, over and over again.

His balls tightened and he pulled back, forehead resting on Tyler's. "You... you're going to make me come, Ty. I'm sorry. It's just... It's been a long time."

"Oh, man, it must have been if you're ready to come from a few kisses." Those eyes watched him as the hand on his leg slid up to cup his erection through his shorts. "Let me help take the edge off..."

Kit whimpered, body jerking, hips shifting towards the touch. Oh, dear God. Please. Good.

Ty brought their lips back together again, tongue sliding into his mouth as that warm hand pushed past the waistband of his shorts and wrapped around his prick. He cried out into Ty's lips, body moving instinctively, hungry for sensation, wanting this so bad. Ty hummed into his mouth, hand hot and tight around his cock, finding a quick pace.

It didn't take any time, none at all, but it was sweeter than honeycomb, lights bright and sparkling behind his eyes as he came.

Ty kept kissing him, hand moving slow and sweet now, drawing the sensations out. He started shaking, overwhelmed, stunned. "Oh, Kit. S'okay, man, you're good, you're doing good."

Ty's lips slid over his cheeks, his jaw, hand sliding away from his cock as Ty's arms slid around his back, just holding him.

"I'm sorry." The words were husky, just whispered. "I'm not being a stud here at all. I... I'm not usually so big a dork."

Ty chuckled. "Hey, I'm not complaining -- this way I get to be the stud."

Kit started laughing, just to keep from crying. "Ride 'em, cowboy!"

Ty shook his head. "I can't believe it's been so long, Kit. You're a hell of a good-looking man. You've got that sexy smile working for you, those eyes, the whole cowboy thing." Ty kissed him. "So... are you interested in moving to the bed? Getting things going again?"

"I..." He nodded. He was. It might be perverse and wanton and stupid, but it was the best offer he'd had in years. "I am."

Ty smiled. "Cool."

Then he was being kissed again, Ty eager and warm.

He met the kiss eagerly, with a hunger he hadn't let himself enjoy in so long. "Bed, Ty. I... I'd like to touch you."

"Oh man, yeah, that would be great." Ty smiled and stood up, moving toward the bed. "You need any help?"

"Nope. I got it." He threw the brakes and moved towards the bed, more sure in his chair than with the prostheses. He hauled himself onto the mattress, sure and comfortable, knowing that his upper body looked strong, looked good.

Ty stripped off his jeans, so he was wearing nothing but briefs and a t-shirt. "Now we're even. I'll take off the rest of mine, if you take off the rest of yours."

"You've seen the worst of me and I've been wanting to see that tattoo." He pulled off his t-shirt, the pattern of scars on his left side just visible, almost like a spider web on his skin.

"Oh-ho, so that did intrigue you. I was hoping." Ty winked and took his skivvies off first, followed by the t-shirt. Turning around, Ty let him get a good look at his back. The tattoo continued across Ty's shoulders and down his back in the same swirling pattern, the ink following the lines of muscles and curling over one ass cheek. The very bottom of it kissed the top of Ty's thigh.

"Oh, that's something else." He moved closer, reaching out, fingers tracing the patterns slow and easy. "Sexy as fuck."

Ty's back rippled beneath his touch. "Mm... feels good."

Kit grinned. Yeah. He had good hands, real good. He didn't answer, just kept touching, kept finding the spot here or place there that made Ty shake.

"Oh man, I need to sit down, Kit."

He backed up, patted the bed. "Come on, then. There's plenty of room."

Oh, oh, that made him feel... Oh. Ty turned and climbed onto the bed. Ty's cock was hard, the red tip

moist, a light flush covering the tanned skin. He shifted, pulling off his shorts, leaving himself bare, hoping to hell Ty wasn't finding him too lacking.

If Ty's smile was anything to go by, he was doing all right. The man slid close and brought their mouths together again, fingers stroking over his shoulders. His own hands slid down Ty's belly, stroking and petting, tickling through the mass of curls crowning the hot shaft. Oh, soft. He smiled into their kiss. Sweet.

"You have incredible hands, Kit," Ty murmured, licking at his smile.

"Years of playing guitar. They're smart." He traced a line up the center of that flat stomach, then followed the curve of a rib. Ty made a sweet noise and arched into his touch. He let himself relax, let himself play and touch and feel. Let himself want.

Ty's lips slid down to his neck, exploring.

Oh, that made him chuckle, made him moan. "Damn, Ty. 's fucking sweet."

"Fucking should be sweet. Or hot. Or fun. Or," Ty laughed, licking at his earlobe. "All of the above."

"I'll take D, thanks." His laughter mixed with Ty's, his hands tilting that long face for another kiss.

Ty was smiling as they kissed, pulling him down onto the mattress so they were lying side by side. Long fingers explored his body, slid over his skin, making him feel like the center of Ty's universe. He could handle that, even when Ty's hand cupped his ass and slid down the back of his leg. His knee rubbed against Ty's leg and he moaned, tongue sliding along Ty's smile.

"You got any lube, cowboy? I've got condoms but no lube and I want to ride you." Ty kissed him between words.

"Ride..." He leaned back, looking into Ty's eyes. He... He'd never moved so fast. Never. "Are you sure? I... It'll be hard to push up into you like that."

"You just lie back and let me do all the work." Ty gave him an easy smile. "I'll take you to heaven, cowboy."

"But will you get there with me?" The question was important. No pity fucks. Never.

Ty took his hand and brought it down to the hot, hard cock jutting from Ty's body. "I'm counting on you taking me with you."

He grinned, cheeks heating. Him. He did that. Damn. He stretched up, feeling sexy for the first time in years and reached for the lube.

Ty moaned softly, hand sliding along the muscles of his chest. "Very nice."

The sound that came from him was almost a hum, body arching into the touch. "Believe it or not, I used to be skinny."

"Yeah?" Ty chuckled, both hands sliding over his chest now, fingers tracing his muscles. "You're not skinny now." One hand danced down over his abs. "This is one very sexy six-pack. And I know my six-packs."

His muscles flexed, leaping towards Ty's touch. "Mmm... You know how to make a fella feel sexy, all right."

"Oh, you are sexy, cowboy. Trust me, I know sexy."

He opened the lube, watching Ty. "Let me touch you? Get you ready?"

"Oh yeah, that sounds good."

Ty lay back, legs falling open, hair spread out over his pillow.

Kit shifted, settling so his cheek was on Ty's belly. Slicking his fingers, he first stroked the hard, full cock, learning its heat and weight before cupping the velvety soft ball sac. He'd be damned if he hurried this.

Ty moaned softly, legs spreading wider. The long fingers slid over his head, petting. "Magic fingers, cowboy."

He nodded, dropping a soft kiss on Ty's belly, fingers sliding down behind those heavy balls, exploring the line of soft, tender skin. Ty's cock jerked, another soft moan filling the air. Kit played there for a long time, stroking and touching, slicking his fingers up again and again. Finally he slid back and circled the tiny wrinkled hole, getting Tyler slick and used to his touch.

"Oh man, you're killing me. What a way to go."

Chuckling, he slid a single finger inside. "I believe the request was to take you to heaven, after all."

Ty's laughter was mostly moan, the fingers on his head holding on. "It was, cowboy, it was."

Kit focused on doing just that, stretching and slicking Ty, one finger becoming two, two fingers pushing deep to play that gland.

Ty's stomach jerked beneath his cheek, soft gasps filling the air. "Oh, yeah, Kit. Again. Shit, again."

"Mmm... yeah." He dropped soft kisses on Ty's stomach, eyes closing as he touched and stroked, sending Ty as high as he could.

Ty was whimpering when his hands dug into Kit's shoulders. "Stop. I want to come with you inside me."

Shuddering, he nodded, lips sliding on Ty's skin. Fuck, yes.

"On your back, cowboy," murmured Ty.

He scooted up, taking a kiss before he settled on his back. Ty rolled a condom down over his cock, fingers stroking as it went on. Then his hips were straddled, Ty guiding his prick back to that hot little hole.

"Oh..." He watched, eyes trailing over Ty's body, taking it all in.

Ty moaned, pushing down and taking in the tip of his cock. He shook, legs parting, the instinct to draw his knees up and push strong, distracting. Ty took him in so slowly, thigh muscles working as his cock was swallowed up and then Ty's ass hit his hips and he was all the way in. "Oh, Kit. Feels good."

"Yeah?" He met Ty's eyes, forcing his breath to slow, forcing himself to settle.

"Oh yeah." Ty shifted, dropping forward, arms to either side of his head. The long, blond hair fell around his face, curtaining them. "How about for you, Kit? Is this the stairway to heaven?"

"Yeah. Oh, yeah." He relaxed, tilting his chin to take a kiss. "I... Oh, it's good, Ty."

"Cool." Ty kissed him back, hips rotating, pulling up a little and then sliding back down again.

"Oh..." He moaned, biting his own bottom lip. "Again."

"Oh yeah." Ty licked at his teeth and lips and then moved again, coming further off him this time before dropping back down. "Oh! Yeah, that's the spot."

He moaned, shoulders lifting off the mattress. "Ty!"

"Yeah, Kit. Feels good. Feels so good." Ty moved on him, body rippling.

"Yes. Damn." He reached out, hand wrapping around Ty's cock, pumping in time.

"Oh Kit..." Ty moved harder, faster, moaning, face growing tight. Fuck, Ty was... beautiful. Just fucking beautiful. Kit's body shifted, pushing as best he could. Ty's ass tightened around his cock. "Soon, Kit..."

"Y...yes. Yes. Soon. Please." His thumb slid over the tip of Ty's cock, pressing into the slit.

"Oh Fuck! Kit!" Ty shouted, back bowing, ass coming down hard as heat shot over his fingers.

The grip on his cock was sweet and he let the sight of Tyler take him, send him right over the edge. Damn. Oh. Oh, wow.

Ty collapsed onto him, breathing hard.

He wrapped one arm around Ty, holding on. "This okay?"

"Long as I'm not too heavy."

"Not at all. You're fine." He stretched, stroking along the line of Ty's spine.

"Cool." Ty was touching him softly, not trying to arouse, just touching, every now and then leaving a kiss on his skin.

"This is my favorite part," Ty murmured.

"Yeah? Mine too. It's like floating." He sighed, nuzzling Ty's hair.

"Yeah. All touching and feeling good and floating. Being close."

"Yeah." Kit stroked and touching, just as relaxed as he could be.

Eventually his cock slipped from Ty's body and Ty grew heavy, breath slowing, hands growing still. Kit slipped off the condom and tied it off, throwing it away before draping a sheet over them. Ty murmured something indistinct and nuzzled, settling again.

Relaxing, he let his eyes fall closed, let himself sleep.

Let himself dream.

Chapter Five

Ty woke up warm and horny, feeling cozy and happy and just right. He was pretty sure it had something to do with the arms wrapped around him, the nice, muscled chest he was more or less lying on.

He cuddled in happily, morning wood finding a mate.

Cool.

It had been awhile since he woke up with someone.

Who'd have thought it would ever be a cowboy?

With a grin he started to slide slowly against Kit, cocks rubbing between their bellies as he left soft kisses on Kit's sweet skin.

Kit stretched, humming low and sweet for a second before his eyes flashed opened, blinking at him. "Mmm... Mornin'."

Low and rich, just husky enough to be sexy -- Kit sounded fine first thing in the morning.

He smiled up. "Hey, cowboy. How's it hanging?" he asked with a wink.

He knew well how it was hanging, he was rubbing against high and hard and it was good.

"Not bad, not bad at all." Kit shifted, moving closer, cock nudging him.

"Mm... so tell me what you'd like to do this morning? A little rubbing? A little sucking? A little fucking?"

"Is yes the wrong answer?"

His cock twitched happily. "I'd say yes is the perfect answer."

He gave Kit a quick kiss and then slid down the man's body until he was able to lick at the tip of Kit's cock.

"Can you reach one of those rubbers, cowboy?"

"I reckon." He got a wide grin and Kit shifted, stretching until those clever fingers grabbed one and passed it down.

He licked his way down one side of Kit's cock and back up the other. Then he worked the condom down with his mouth, taking the sweet heat in.

"Oh. Oh, Ty. Hot. I..." Kit rose up on his elbows, watching with dazed eyes.

He bobbed up and down, sucking lightly, watching Kit's face.

Kit watched him like a man unable to believe he was awake, sort of dazed, sort of lost. Kit's body, though? It knew what it needed, no question.

He increased his suction, one hand going down to play with Kit's balls.

Kit's head fell back, the man's legs shifted, bunching beneath him.

He hummed around Kit's heat, one finger sliding back to tease the soft skin beyond Kit's balls and the hot, hot crease hidden beyond that.

"Oh, sweet. Ty. Feels damned good." Kit was stretched out in the sun, a fine sheen of sweat making that tan skin shine.

He hummed again and nodded his head, sucking hard. His finger stroked between Kit's ass cheeks, finding the wrinkled flesh around the man's hole. The muscles jerked, tightened under his touch, even as Kit's cock throbbed.

He backed off and concentrated on sucking, on reaching up and tweaking one of Kit's nipples. The little nub tightened for him, hard as a little pebble under his fingers. He played it and its mate, stroking one and then the other.

"Mmm... Close. Damn, Ty. Close." Kit grabbed his hand, drawing it up toward a hungry, wet mouth.

He hummed again, saying let me have it without words and traced Kit's lips, the hair tickling his fingertips before he dipped them into the wet heat of Kit's mouth. Those lips wrapped around his fingers, sucking hard as Kit bucked, filling the condom with jerks of those strong hips.

He hummed happily, rubbing his own cock against the sheets. Man, he loved fucking in the morning.

He pulled up and got the condom off and disposed of and then kissed his way slowly back up to Kit's mouth. Kit took a long kiss, hand sliding down his spine. "Hell of a way to wake up, there."

"Best way in the world, I'd say." He grinned, hips moving slowly, lazily rubbing himself against Kit.

"Yeah." His ass was stroked, hips tickled. "What can I do for you, Ty?"

"What sounds good, cowboy? I'm easy."

"Oh, no. None of that now." Kit goosed him. "What do you like?"

"Oh, I like getting fucked, blown. Hell, cowboy, I'm happy to rub off on you."

Kit shook his head and grinned, turning him to face the window with its amazing fucking view, cuddling up to his back, hands sliding over his belly. "Then let me touch you, make you come."

"Oh yeah." He pressed back against Kit, loving all that warm skin. "I like being touched, Kit. I like it a lot."

"Mmm... Good." That hand petted and stroked, tangling in his curls, then moving up to tease his nipples.

He gasped and moaned, moving against Kit, loving the touches, the feelings going through him.

Steady and slow, Kit didn't seem to be in any hurry, just focused on his skin, his pleasure.

It felt good. So very good. He undulated, pushing into the touches, moving with Kit's hands. Those hands were truly magic.

"You're beautiful." The words floated against his ear. "Moving under the sun."

"You make me feel beautiful, Kit. Sexy. Wanton. Oh, yeah," he arched as Kit's fingers stroked over his cock. "Touch me there."

"Yes." Kit's lips brushed over his nape, fingers sliding. "So hard."

"For you, Kit. Please." He moved into the touches.

"Yes." Kit's thumb slid across the slit, stroking hard. "God, yes."

"Oh!"

The view merged, colors sliding into each other as pleasure shot through him and from his cock.

Kit moaned, kept touching, drawing out each shudder, each sensation.

At last he lay against the solid warmth behind him, boneless and sated.

Oh yeah, he loved waking up in a lover's arms.

Chapter Six

They'd napped a little, but Lindy and Lester wandered in, whining, Lindy's pregnant belly getting bigger by the second. He eased out from behind Ty and into his chair, herding the pups out of the bedroom and into the yard so he could feed and water them.

Then he came back in, started some coffee, checked his messages and then headed back out to exercise.

It wasn't until he started doing his work on the chin-up bar that he realized he was whistling.

Whistling.

Kit grinned and kept working out, strengthening his arms and back, mind going over last night and this morning again and again.

Ty appeared, giving him a warm smile. "Hey, Kit. Wow, look at those muscles work. You are one sexy cowboy."

He grinned, pulling his body up two more times before settling into his chair, wiping his chest and belly off with a towel. "Mornin' Ty. There's fresh coffee made."

"Cool. Thought I'd hit the waves first -- get some swimming in, that okay?"

"Help yourself." He nodded toward the pier. "I'll wheel down and watch."

The pups followed them, Lindy slow, Lester bouncing like a huge puppy.

Ty grinned. "He gonna come in with me?"

Kit shook his head. "Only a few steps. They're not allowed out too far. I'd hate to lose them because I couldn't get to them."

Ty stopped and looked at him, head tilted. "You don't swim? With your upper body strength I'd have thought you'd be a natural."

"I do in the pool, yeah, but never in the ocean." Truth was, he was scared of the undertow, of being swept down the shoreline and not being able to get back to his chair.

"Oh man, the pool's got nothing on the ocean! You want to come in with me? I'll be your swim buddy."

"I..." He blinked, gave it a thought. "Okay, for a few minutes. I don't want to fuck up your morning swim, but I've always wanted to get in for a while. Thanks."

"Awesome. And you won't fuck up my swim. I just want to get wet and play in the waves." Ty gave him a wide grin.

He smiled back, rolling down to the end of the pier. It tilted down into the water, allowing him to slide out of his chair and sit at the edge, let the water splash against him.

Ty got into the water, looking about as at home as a man could without having fins, scales and gills.

"What do you need me to do to help?"

"Err... I don't know. I can't roll out there and I'm going to look like an asshole, scooting along on my butt." Kit chuckled, shook his head. "Maybe this is a sign."

"I think it is -- of course I don't think we're looking at the same sign." Ty winked and moved over to him, standing between his stumps and sliding warm arms around his waist. "Hold onto me, cowboy, and we'll get you in the water without a hitch."

"Oh!" He blinked up and then nodded, wrapping his arms around Ty's shoulders. "Don't hurt yourself."

Oh, wow. Just... God, it was hard to be down with this beautiful man making shit happen.

"The water's going to do all the work, Kit."

Ty stole a kiss and then stepped back from the pier and just like that there they were in the water, bobbing together. Ty's skin was warm where it touched him, so different from the cold water that moved around them.

"Oh..." He laughed, head thrown back as the dogs barked and whined on the pier. It felt so good!

Ty was chuckling along with him. "This is my lady, Kit. The one who's always here for me. She's a real lover, isn't she?"

"Yeah. It's why I came here, to the ocean, after. I always wanted to live near the ocean." It only just occurred to him how weird living near the ocean and never getting in really was.

"But this is your first time in the water?" Ty shook his head. "I'm going to be here every morning and bring you out into the water, so you make sure you stock up on towels."

"I..." Kit blushed dark, leaned back to look into Tyler's eyes. "I can manage towels."

Oh, God. Oh, he was so very fucked in that long-term, heartbreak way.

Tyler smiled, warm and slow and sweet. "Cool. It's a standing date. Of course if I'm lucky, it'll be a lying down date, if you get my drift."

Ty gave him another wink and worked them a little deeper. "You ready to give this a go without the Tyler life preserver?"

"Yeah. Sorry, I could get used to that. Holding you, that is." He blushed and let go, arms moving slow as he kept himself mostly afloat.

Ty gave him a pleased smile. "Well, I think I'd like you to get used to that, too."

It was harder work than he remembered from swimming in the Gulf as a kid. Not having his legs meant he had to use his arms constantly, fight the waves. Damned good exercise.

Ty kept close, but not so close that he felt like he was cramping the man's style and just as he was thinking he was going to have to ask for help getting back to the pier, Ty swam up to him. "I'm about done -- you ready to go in?"

He nodded, catching his breath, arms a little shaky. "Yeah. 's good exercise."

Ty nodded and scooped him up around the waist again as if it were the most natural thing in the world. Ty stopped to kiss him, lips salty and warm.

Kit moaned into the kiss, opening easily, inviting Ty in to taste.

One kiss melted into another, the waves buffeting against them. Finally Ty pulled back. "Let's go in. Fun as it might be -- it's dangerous making love in the ocean."

"Yeah." He let Ty get him back to his chair, laughing at Lester jumped up into his lap, barking and unhappy. "Shh! Hush, you big mutt! I'm fine!"

Ty laughed and pet the dog before bending to give him another soft kiss. "I'm starving -- you think we can find some breakfast?"

"I imagine there's something in the kitchen, yeah." They made it back to the house and into the kitchen, moving easily and confidently. The cabinets were all low, barring storage, and the stovetop was built into an island that he could easily reach. "Eggs and sausage and biscuits work okay?"

"Homemade biscuits?" Ty asked hopefully.

He laughed and nodded. "You make the orange juice and you got a deal."

"You're on. You got a squeezer?" Ty moved around his kitchen like he was comfortable in it, finding the oranges in the big basket, pulling down a couple of tall glasses.

The man looked sexy as hell in nothing but his swim shorts, that tattoo rippling as Ty's muscles moved.

"Yep. There's a walk-in pantry on the other side of the fridge. The little appliances are in there." He pulled out canisters and started measuring and mixing, stopping halfway to turn on the stereo system and let it fill the house. They worked together companionably, Ty humming along to the music, and it wasn't long before they had a five-star restaurant breakfast set out on the deck.

Kit pulled up to the table, nodding. "Not bad. Not bad at all." He poured a cup of coffee and grinned over at Ty. "Dig in."

They didn't say much while they ate -- both of them hungry from their swim.

Ty sat back once his plate was empty, sighing and rubbing his belly. "Those had to be the best biscuits I have had ever. Bar none."

"Thanks. I worked for a little bakery one summer when I was in high school. Learned there." He laughed, remembering the funny little old lady who ran the store, insisting she was going to bring taste into the town. "I can make a decent pie crust too."

"Oh, all my weaknesses. I can see it's going to be awfully hard to ever leave your home, Kit."

He blushed, trying not to be too pleased. "You say that, but you haven't seen the all-night jam sessions, yet. You might run screaming."

"Given that they're country music jam sessions, you just might be right. Or maybe I'll just join the dogs and howl at the moon. I'd love to watch you play, actually. I get a kick out of seeing people in their element."

"Would you like to see the studios? That's what's in the other half of the house. That and the swimming pool and Jacuzzi." He blushed. "God, that sounds so uppity -- come see the pool. I'm sorry."

Ty laughed. "Oh, Kit, I have never met anyone as down to earth as you -- I don't think you'd know uppity if it bit you in the ass."

"Well, then, come and see? I'll introduce you to Miss Betty." He pushed back from the table, gathering up dishes to take in. He was falling hard -- in like, in lust, in love. The whole kit and caboodle.

"Miss Betty? If you have a live-in maid I just might decide you're uppity after all," Ty teased, getting the

rest of the dishes and following him in.

"A what? Hell, no. Miss Betty's my guitar. She even made it through the wreck, with a little mending. She and I go way back." He let Ty get the door and loaded the dishwasher quick while they were standing there.

"Cool. I've got a board like that."

"Yeah? Cool. That's on my list. I'll have to get you to come shopping with me one day." He led Ty through the house, into the studio.

"Have you ever surfed? Man, I'd love to take you out on a day when the swells aren't too bad, teach you to feel the board, ride a few waves together."

"I haven't, but I want to and I hear they can make boards I can use."

"Yeah. I can take you shopping for one if you like. I know more about boards than I do about bikes."

"No shit? Cool!" He grinned up, impressed. "You're a talented man, Mr. Tyler."

Ty shook his head. "Nah, I just know boards and bikes. Now are you going to introduce me to this lady of yours?"

"Yep. She's right here." He led Ty into his office, pulling Betty out of the case. He ran his fingers over the body and then picked some, listening to the warm tone filling the air.

"So what's the etiquette here, do I say hi to her? Feel her up? Or just stand back and watch the magic happen?"

"No feeling her up." He grinned and winked, fingers continuing to play. "I got her from my Aunt Julie when I graduated from high school. Thought I was the luckiest son of a bitch on Earth. Johnny Cash played her once. James Taylor did too."

"Really? Cool." Ty flopped down on his couch, eyes watching his fingers.

"Yep." He started playing one old song after another, the melodies burned into his soul, into his heart. Then, when those were finished, he played Ty his songs -- the ones that were hits, the ones that weren't, the ones that might have been.

Ty watched him for a while and then lay back on the couch, humming along. Sometimes Ty's feet counted the beat, sometimes his fingers tapped along.

Kit played until he could feel the need to hum along, feel the old pain encroaching, and he let the last song fade, slow and easy. "Th...this is what I do."

"Wow, Kit. That's a gift you have. A real talent. I think you're safe on those all night jam sessions because I could honestly listen to you play all night long."

Blushing dark, he dipped his head. "You're going to have to stop being so good to me, Ty. I'm going to end up falling in love and looking like a moron."

He said it, half-joking, half-dead-on honest.

"Now why would love make you look like a moron?" Ty shook his head and came over, kneeling in front of his chair, hands on his thighs. "Love's a beautiful thing, Kit."

"It is, but there's a big chance of loss, for a few minutes of happy."

Ty nodded. "Or a lot more than a few minutes. How long were you and Tim, wasn't it, together?"

"Yeah, Tim." He pointed to a picture on the wall of him and the band, back when he was young and skinny and just a puppy. "Ten years. Tim's the one in the black hat."

"That's more than a few years, Kit. How much loss before it wasn't worth it anymore?" Ty's hands were sliding on his legs, touching him there.

"I could fall in love with you so easy. You make me want things I thought were gone forever." His voice was harsh, sand-papered with truth.

"Tell me what they are and I'll see if I can give them to you." Ty smiled, hands squeezing on his legs. "Kit, you're a good man and a good-looking man. I love your smile and the way you play guitar and you turn me on. Would loving me be such a bad thing?"

"I hope not, Ty." He reached out and stroked the long hair, giving his lover a smile. "You want a shower, wash the seawater off? Mine's big enough for two."

He was just going to have to take it as it went. One hour at a time.

Chapter Seven

Tyler stretched out on the bed, watching Kit get dressed for the jam session he'd set up.

They'd spent the last couple days making love and swimming and eating and showering and making love some more. His skin felt good, kissed by salt and sand and wind and sun and bearded man. His own clothes were currently doing a turn in the dryer, having been washed after he admitted he'd rather stay here and explore all those beautiful muscles some more rather than go home for a change of clothes.

He'd had his share of lovers, mostly casual, but not all. Still it had been a very long time since he'd shared the bed of someone he cared about as much as he was coming to care about Kit. The man got under his skin, made him want to make promises he wasn't in the habit of making.

Kit rolled on some white pressure socks, then stuck the metal legs into a pair of blue jeans before attaching his legs and standing to fasten his jeans. The man was moving loose and easy, almost glowing after their day.

He liked that, liked that he had a part of putting that half smile on the man's face.

Keeping it there was promising to be a bit of an addiction. Maybe a whole lot of an addiction.

A royal blue shirt was shrugged on, Kit leaving it unbuttoned as that sweet little beard was trimmed, hair brushed. Then Kit walked over, turning his face back and forth. "Am I even?"

"I think I need to examine you more closely to tell." He held out his arms, encouraging Kit to come down for a kiss.

Kit sat on the bed, then moved into his arms, eyes shining, lips kiss-swollen and warm.

He licked first, laughing at the way the beard and mustache hairs tickled. Then they were kissing, the flavor of it becoming more and more familiar.

"Oh..." Kit's hand slid around his neck, fingers stroking slow. "Taste so good."

"So do you, cowboy." He was practically purring under Kit's touch, skin just one big erogenous zone after a day of lovemaking.

"How much time before your bands arrive?"

"Hour, hour and a half." Kit nibbled at his neck, his jaw. "You think we could possibly go again?"

He grinned, letting his head drop back to give Kit more skin. "I think we should try, just to see if we can or not."

"Mmm... I can handle that." Kit shrugged off his shirt, nuzzling. "So it won't wrinkle."

He smiled, hands smoothing over Kit's chest, fingertips following the muscles. "The fact that this chest turns me on like crazy's got nothing to do with it."

"Not a thing." Those little nipples tightened up, six-pack rippling under his fingers.

He murmured happily, leaning up to take one of Kit's nipples in his mouth, tongue flicking back and forth across it.

"Oh... Oh, damn. Ty... Oh..." Kit arched, almost humming, sounding so good to him.

He slid his hands down along Kit's sides, fingertips stroking, teasing at the top of Kit's blue jeans. He couldn't remember the last lover he'd had who'd been this responsive. Kit's hands slid over his shoulders, rubbing, touching, encouraging.

Kit had such fine hands. The man made him want in a serious way. The calluses were smooth against his skin, fingertips finding hidden bundles of nerves that made his skin sing. He started working on Kit's jeans, bucking and arching beneath each touch, each glide of skin along his own.

"Make me want you so." The whisper was sweet, moaned as Kit drew one of his fingers into those hot lips, sucking gently.

"Oh, Kit..." He whimpered, writhed, pushed a hand into Kit's jeans and wrapped it around the man's prick.

So hot. So good.

Kit, for all his joking, was hard again, full and thick against his palm. The suction around his fingers grew harder, Kit's fingers finding his cock.

He shuddered, pleasure singing through him.

"Ty... 'mere." Kit hauled him up, wrapping both of their cocks together in their twined fingers.

"Oh man. Kit." He whimpered, bucked against Kit and then settled, their hands doing the work now.

"Yeah." That's when the kisses started, sweet and rich and so hungry, so eager for each sensation, each second of pleasure.

He could understand that. He even admired it, gave each kiss and touch the attention they deserved because they meant so much to Kit and in return to himself. Kit kept his eyes open, watching, those quiet eyes taking everything in, so happy, so hot.

"It's good, Kit." He murmured softly, eyes rolling back in his head as Kit's thumb slid across the tip of his cock.

"Uh-huh. Fuck, Ty. Sweet." Kit groaned, crying out, those hips thrusting. He brought their mouths together, latching onto Kit's tongue and sucking on it. Kit shot with a cry, spunk shooting over his hand, his cock.

Oh, it smelled like sex and the ocean and Kit and his cry joined Kit's, his heat spilling over their hands, too.

Kit caught his breath, eyes twinkling as they relaxed together. "I... I think I need to buy some vitamins."

He threw his head back and laughed. "I think you're doing a damned good job on your own, cowboy."

Soft chuckles tickled his throat, Kit nuzzling close. "Yeah? Excellent, 'cause you're making me fly, Ty."

"Awesome. Who needs speed, eh? We'll just take a dose of each other." He chuckled. Yeah, high was definitely how he was feeling.

"Damned straight." Those eyes just twinkled. "Or maybe not exactly straight..."

He kept on laughing, burying his face in Kit's neck and just enjoying himself, enjoying Kit's happiness.

Kit held him for a long time, hands stroking, a soft, almost silent humming ghosting in the air.

"I could get used to this," he said quietly, hand stroking the ripped belly.

"So could I."

"Okay."

He drifted there in Kit's arms until it got to be time for them to get dressed.

By the time the musicians arrived, Ty was settled in a large, comfortable room watching Kit warm up Betty again, the music sounding happier this time, easier somehow.

He sipped at a V8, watching them set up, joking together, working out what they were going to play.

It was good, seeing Kit in his element. The man led the group of musicians through the setting up with an easy hand, clearly the veteran, clearly commanding the respect of the other musicians.

There was a lot of laughter, a lot of juggling, but they all settled, and started playing. It was awesome, Kit leading them through song after song. The vocalists changed -- sometimes it was the pretty little mandolin player, something the massive bassist. Once or twice the drummer lead them and they all sang harmony, all but Kit.

Kit was deep into the music though, entire body moving as he played, completely focused on what he was doing. The man was simply gorgeous. That Kit was made for music was damned obvious when you saw him playing.

Ty felt himself going hard, not desperately, just... it was good, really good, watching Kit.

They were singing something slow and sweet, filled with a soul-deep longing, when they stopped, started into a discussion about the lyrics. Finally Joanne, the mandolin-player, laughed and held up a hand. "Come on, Kit. You wrote the song. What are the damned words?"

Kit grinned. "I forget that I have never always held you/For in my heart, always is now." Then those eyes glanced over at him for a heartbeat. "Take it from the top."

Oh.

Oh, Kit was a lover.

Kit was a keeper.

Those cheeks warmed and the song started again, Kit leading the melody, rich and warm and beautiful.

He wished Kit would sing, imagined that it had to be an amazing thing.

The music went on and on, finally fading off, leaving the room almost ringing with silence as everybody packed up and left, one by one. He waited for Kit to say goodbye to the last one of them and then went over to his lover. "That was a truly amazing experience, Kit. Thank you for letting me share it."

"They're a good group." Kit smiled up at him, eyes peaceful, happy. "Not too bad for country music, yeah?"

"Not bad at all, Kit." He leaned down to give Kit a kiss. "Watching you play turns me on," he whispered.

Kit blushed for him, those eyes twinkling. "Yeah? I'll have to show you video of me performing. Almost as good as porn."

The fingertips that trailed over his cheeks were hot, just a little swollen.

He moaned softly, moving to straddle Kit where the man sat. "I want to see that. Definitely not in company though -- I want to be able to jump your bones at will."

"That sounds mighty fair to me." Kit's hands slid down his spine, cupped his ass. "You are a fine, fine man."

"You're not so bad yourself, cowboy." He pushed back against Kit's hands and then rolled forward, bringing their cocks together, regretting two layers of denim.

Kit shifted, giving him more solid strength to push against, lips fastening over his with a sweet moan. He kept rocking slowly, hearing the rhythm of that last song in his head as he moved, letting the need build between them. Those hands cupped his ass, helping the rhythm, making him ache as the pleasure grew heavy, thick.

He started to unbutton Kit's shirt, moving slowly, making them both wait.

Kit's mouth slid along his jaw, tongue licking and tasting, nuzzling his skin.

"Oh, it's good, Kit. So good." He writhed, fingers moving faster, pulling the rest of Kit's buttons open and stroking the hard muscles.

"Make me ache, wanting you. Make me want so much." The words were whispers, low and needy, pressed below his ear.

"I've been hard since you started playing," he whispered back, fingers finding the hard bits of flesh that were Kit's nipples, teasing them, twisting them.

"Ty..." Kit arched, moaning, fingers squeezing his ass.

He bent his head to take a nipple into his mouth while his fingers worked open their jeans. With a gasp, he pressed their pricks together, suddenly needing it urgently.

"Fuck. Yes." Kit's hands pulled them together, moved them faster, harder.

"Oh God, Kit! Kit!" Sensation chased down his spine, made him shake, made him shout out as he came.

The sound that tore from Kit's throat was pure need, filled with joy, as more heat joined his own.

He wrapped his arms around Kit's neck, holding on tight as he panted.

Strong arms wrapped around him, held him. "Come to bed with me? Let me hold you while we sleep?"

"I'd like that."

In fact there wasn't anything else he could think of wanting just now.

"Oh, good." A soft kiss brushed his hair. "Thank you."

"Thank you, Kit. You're a good man and I'm happy you let me in. I get the feeling you tend to keep the world out."

"Who? Me? Whatever made you think that?" Soft chuckles tickled his ear.

Oh, he loved that, the laughter that Kit brought to things. He kissed the man and then stood, shedding his jeans in favor of tripping over them, and held out his hands to Kit. "Come on, cowboy, take me to your bed."

Kit took his hands and stood. "Sounds good to me, beautiful man. Let's go."

Hand in hand they made their way to Kit's bedroom.

Oh yeah. He could get used to this. Real used to it.

Chapter Eight

He was dreaming about riding on the beach. The view was beautiful and clear, the horse strong underneath him. There was something in the waves, someone looking for him. Kit sighed, he'd had this dream before, knew that soon the sky would go dark, the horse would throw him. Knew that Tim, slick and sleek and ghostly would swim away, caught in the waves.

Still, this time the being kept motioning to him, kept moving closer. The sun kept shining. The horse kept running. It was frightening. It was wonderful. It felt so real.

It distracted him enough that it drew him up out of sleep, right into Tyler's warm arms. The sun was shining. The waves were crashing. Tyler was snoring softly. Oh. Right. Frightening. Wonderful. Real.

Tyler shifted, morning wood rubbing against him.

"Mmm..." He shifted down, curious and hungry. He slowly licked his way along Ty's belly until he could lick and nuzzle at Tyler's shaft.

There was a soft gasp. "Kit!"

He grinned, kept licking, kept touching. Salt and musk and warm and... Mmm...

"Oh, God, Kit. You make waking up good."

Tyler's hands slid over his face, stroking, caressing. He smiled, licking the tip of Ty's cock in thank you, lips wrapping around the hot flesh and sucking carefully. Ty moaned, hands moving over his head, stroking through his hair, tracing where his lips met Ty's cock. Kit nibbled on Ty's fingertips, tongue flattening over the tip of Ty's cock and rubbing. Oh, he could so get used to waking up like this.

Ty bucked and whimpered, gasping softly and saying his name like it was a prayer. He started stroking and petting, doing all he could to make Ty's body sing for him, even as his mouth moved over that hard prick. Ty writhed beneath his touches, whispering words like more and oh god and Kit.

He started thinking about finding a condom when another need hit him, deep and low in his belly. Kit lifted his head, lapping at Ty's prick. "I want to feel you in me. Will you?"

"Wha? Oh. Yeah, Kit. Yeah. Oh man, you sure don't have to ask twice." Ty smiled down at him, eyes happy and horny.

Kit licked again, moaning. "Oh, good. Want you."

"Yeah. Yeah, Kit. Want you too." Ty wriggled down and kissed him, mouth warm and sweet. He pushed into the kiss, lips parted wide, cock stiff and caught between them. Ty kissed him for a long time and then pulled back, licking at his lips. "How do you want to do it?"

Kit offered Ty a shy grin. "Never tried without my legs. I'm not sure I can do hands and knees."

"Hey there's more than one way to skin a skunk." Ty gave him another kiss. "Besides, face to face is really nice. You can kiss while you fuck."

"I can so handle that." Kit ran his hands up Ty's belly to tease those tight little nipples, feeling his balls tighten at the thought. Oh, yeah. Yeah, he could handle that.

Ty moaned. "Oh man, your hands... love what they do to me."

"Love the way you feel." He dipped his head, licking at Ty's shoulder, Ty's neck. "So good."

"Mm... gonna make you feel good, Kit. Gonna make you fly through the sky."

"So long as you catch me at the end? I'm your man." He sucked up a little mark on Ty's neck, licking and sucking until the blood came to the surface.

Ty gave him another moan. "Are you kidding, Kit? I'm gonna go flying with you. But don't you worry -- I know how to land."

"Not worried. Wanting. Big difference." Kit grinned, lifting his face for a kiss.

Ty's lips closed over his, the kiss going on as Ty shifted and moved them until he was on his back, head on the pillows.

He fastened his lips around Ty's tongue, sucking, hips rocking, cock so full.

Ty got his fingers slicked up and then one of them was teasing the skin down behind his balls. "You sure about this, Kit?"

"Yeah, I'm sure, Ty. Please. I want you." He met those bright eyes, nodding. "I'm sure."

"Cool." He got a kiss. "I just didn't want you to feel you had to. But I'm way glad you want to."

Then Ty pushed against his hole until the tip of one finger slid in. Kit relaxed, pushing down into Ty's finger, moaning soft. "Oh man, Kit. You're tight. And hot."

"'s been a long time." He met Ty's eyes. "Been waiting for the right touch to find me."

"I'm right here, now." Ty leaned in and kissed him, finger sliding the rest of the way in.

"Oh..." He moaned against Ty's lips, body tightening around that finger.

So good.

Oh.

Oh.

"Yeah, Kit. 's gonna be good." Ty licked his lips, nuzzling. "Just relax and open for me, yeah?"

"Yeah. 's good." His legs parted, shifting on the sheets. "Good."

"Yeah. Gonna make you fly, cowboy." Tyler moved that finger inside him, in and out and in and out, making him need.

He rocked on that finger, sliding steady and sure, riding it. He would have responded, would have agreed, but he was busy feeling, busy making love.

"Another finger now," whispered Ty, lips sliding over his cheek, his jaw, his neck. Sure enough, the glide of one finger became the push of two, stretching him, filling him like he hadn't been filled in years.

"Full... Oh, Ty. So full, so good." He was moaning, humming, body damned near singing.

Ty worked him for a long time, fingers stretching him. Then they started pushing in further, scraping across his gland.

"Ty! Oh, again! Please. Again." His shoulders left the pillow, rocking towards Ty's touch.

Ty obliged him, fingertips sliding over his gland again and again. He was on fire. Burning. Aching. He twisted, crying out again and again, needing so badly.

"Not too much now," whispered Ty. "Wait for me. I want you to come on my cock."

Oh. Oh, God. Yes. Yes. He nodded, hand gripping the base of his cock. "Yes. Oh, I want that too."

Ty's fingers slipped away and Ty settled between his thighs. The heat of Ty's cock was so much, the blunt head pressing against his opening.

"Oh..." He blinked up into Ty's eyes, wanting so bad. "Please, let me feel you."

"Stop me if it's too much," Ty told him. Then his lover was pushing in, slowly, carefully stretching him open. Oh, it burned, but the sensation wasn't sharp, more like drowning in heat, his entire body sinking into the feeling. "Oh Kit -- you're so tight. So good."

Ty groaned and kept pushing in, not stopping until the man's hips were pressed up tight against his ass.

"Oh... Ty..." He couldn't catch his breath, the pleasure was so huge, the intensity overwhelming.

"Yeah, 's good, cowboy." Ty leaned down and gave him a long, slow kiss. "You tell me when it's good to move."

Slowly he relaxed, taking careful kisses, body remembering the feeling of being loved, being filled. "Now, Ty. Make love to me."

"Yes, Kit." With that Ty started moving. Ty pulled almost all the way out and then slid back in, body moving slowly.

It took them a minute or two, to find a comfortable place for his legs, to smooth out the rhythm, to get it right. Once they found their stride, though? Kit was lost, body and heart and soul.

Ty peppered his face and chest with kisses, moving in and out, shifting until each push in included a nudge to his gland.

He cried out, the sound almost a song, almost a prayer.

"You're glowing, Kit." Ty kept moving, stroking across his gland with every thrust. "Amazing."

His fingers were fisted in the sheets, lightning shooting along his spine. "Soon, Ty. Oh, God. Soon."

"Yeah." One of Ty's hands wrapped around his cock and Ty's thrusts got harder, faster, more.

It didn't take much, a tug and a thrust and he was flying, body convulsing. Ty moaned and kept thrusting, keeping him high, sending sweet aftershocks jerking through his body.

He felt good. Hell, he felt so far on the plus side of good he wasn't sure what it was called.

Ty thrust a couple more times and then froze, calling out his name.

He caught Ty as his lover slumped onto him, holding close. "Oh, fuck. Ty. So good."

Gasping, Ty nodded. "Damn good."

He took a soft kiss, licking Ty's lips. "Fuck, yeah."

Ty chuckled, chasing his tongue. "Man, being with you makes me feel good, Kit. And I don't just mean the fucking."

"Mm... yeah? Because I could so fall for you." Could so fall in love.

"It's easy to be in love while in the sack, Kit. The trick is making it work every day." Ty really looked at him, eyes serious. "There aren't a lot of folks willing to do that. Are you?"

He met Ty's eyes, so sure. "I've never done anything but every day, Ty. I'm a forever sort of man."

"It's been a long time since I've had anyone who wanted every day, Kit, but I'd sure like to give it a shot with you."

He reached up, cupped Ty's cheek. "You make me want to believe."

Ty nuzzled and moaned softly, softening cock sliding out. "It feels good being with you. Better than anything in a long long time. I don't want to lose it."

"I can live with that." He grinned, watching the sun in Ty's hair. "I can so live with that."

"Cool." Ty's lips covered his, the kiss warm, long, full of promise.

Oh, yeah. He could live with this.

Chapter Nine

Monday morning, Ty reluctantly left Kit's bed to go open the garage.

He figured unexpectedly closed for three days was probably long enough. He'd called V and had her put up a sign for him, but he had a few bikes needing work that were supposed to be delivered this week.

He'd been reluctant to go though. As if leaving Kit's might break the spell between them. He'd meant what he said though -- it was easy enough when it was just the two of them making love all day, every day, normal every day was harder and it had to start sometime.

Monday night was lonely, sleeping in his own bed all by himself.

There were any number of ex-lovers he could have called for company, but he found that it wasn't just any body he was missing, it was Kit himself.

He checked his watch again -- 4:20. He was closing up at 5 sharp and calling Kit. He wanted to see the man.

At 4:25, the front door opened, the smell of fried chicken strong. "Y'all still open?"

He grinned and popped up from behind the bike he was working on. "Kit!"

"Hey, stranger." Kit gave him a grin. "I brought supper."

"Cool." He wiped his hands on a rag and made his way over to Kit. "I'm a mess, but if you'll risk the grease, I'm dying for a kiss from my favorite cowboy."

Kit's face just glowed. "I'm wash and wear, Ty."

"Awesome." He took Kit at his word and wrapped grease stained arms around the man, pressing up close as he brought their mouths together.

Oh, Kit tasted good. Smelled good, too and that beard and mustache tickled just like he remembered.

Kit moaned into his lips, tongue sliding into his mouth and tasting. Just like that he was hard, hungry. And not for chicken. He deepened the kiss, wishing like hell there wasn't a set of stairs up to his place.

Kit's fingers trailed through his hair, opening wide for him, then pulling back. "Mmm... Ty. Are you finished for the day?"

"No, Kit. I'm just getting started."

Soft chuckles pushed into his lips. "Show me your bed?"

"You okay with the stairs?" he asked softly, hands sliding over Kit's hips.

"I'll manage. You won't let me fall." Those eyes shone at him.

"You're right. I won't." He gave Kit another kiss. "Give me two minutes to lock up."

"Sure." Kit was grinning, ear-to-ear. "Would you think I was pushy if I said I brought an overnight bag?"

He laughed. "No, I'd think you were a man who didn't want to share a toothbrush."

The laughter was warm, rich, and he watched Kit make it out to the truck and grab a bag and a guitar case.

Grinning and almost bouncing, he covered the bike he'd been working on and quickly put away his tools. Once Kit was back in he closed the doors and locked up.

Then he took Kit's hand and led his lover to the stairs.

Kit let him take the food and the guitar up, then together they slowly did the stairs, talking about this and that, relaxed, easy, not a bit of worry on his lover's face.

They made it without a hitch and his hand tightened on Kit's.

"There's the kitchen and the living room," he said, waving in their general direction. "The bedroom's this way."

"Very nice." Kit grinned, following him to the bedroom, stepping carefully.

His bedroom was painted blues and greens, like being caught in a huge wave. The bed was low, unmade. "I'm not the neatest housekeeper," he admitted.

Kit grinned. "I'm not worried. Well, maybe a little about getting up off that bed..."

He grinned back at his lover. "You're not going to hear me complaining if you wind up stuck in my bed."

"Oh, then I'm not worried at all." Kit took a long kiss, licking at his lips until they parted.

"Love the way you taste," he told Kit, fingers working on the buttons of the man's shirt.

"Mmm... was lonely last night without you. Reckoned you might feel the same." Kit started working on his jeans.

"Big time lonely. I was just waiting for five to close up shop and show up unannounced on your doorstep. Hadn't thought of bringing supper with me though -- that was a good one."

"I knew I wasn't interested in cooking or going out." Kit grinned, cheeks pink. "It's still all new, just the thought of you makes me ache."

He nodded, helped Kit get his jeans past that sweet ass and then helped the man lower down onto his mattress so Kit could take off the legs.

"I know what you mean. I've had a hard-on for two days straight."

Kit chuckled. "I'll take care of that for you, Ty. Don't you worry."

The legs were put aside out of the way, his lover turning to push into his arms. "Hey."

"Hey, cowboy." He wrapped his arms around Kit, licking at the man's lips, chuckling softly as the short hairs around Kit's lips tickled him.

He was fed the sweetest little moan, Kit's hands moving down his back and working the muscles with a strong, sure touch. He pulled his t-shirt off, eager for those warm hands to be touching directly on his skin.

"Mmm... Ty." Kit's mouth trailed over his jaw, his neck, licking and nibbling, hands pushing into his open jeans.

"Oh God, Kit." He whimpered a little, like a love-starved teenager, hips moving, eager.

"So sexy. Want you so bad." Kit pushed at his jeans, one hand squeezing his ass, the other wrapped around his cock. "Taste so good."

He pushed his jeans off with a whimper. "You make me so hot, Kit. So damn close so quick."

"Yes. Need you now, then we'll go slow, yeah?" One of Kit's legs rubbed against his thigh, hot and soft.

"Oh yeah. Slow later." He wrapped his hands around Kit's ass, tugging his lover closer.

"Uh-huh." Kit's teeth fastened on his earlobe, tugged. "Dreamed about you, about your eyes when you come."

"Sweet talker," he accused with a gasp.

"Truth." Kit laughed, the sound sweet. "Besides, I'm a songwriter. 's what we do."

"Love that sound," he murmured, hips moving, pushing his cock through Kit's hand.

"Mmm... Love you, Ty." The words were soft, quiet, almost silent.

"Oh!" With a gasp he came, body shuddering as he sprayed over Kit's hand.

Kit buried his face in Ty's shoulder, dropping soft kisses on his skin.

"Oh, Kit... Oh." He squeezed Kit's ass and then stroked the broad back, one hand moving up to slide through Kit's hair.

"Ty..." Kit lifted his head and they kissed, Kit's eyes closed, hidden.

He put everything he felt into the kiss, all his hopes and fears and if he couldn't say it yet, he could show Kit how much the man meant to him.

Kit took all he offered, cock sliding against his belly, the motions of those hips growing jerky, restless.

He wanted to suck Kit off, but the condoms were on the shelf by the head of the bed. Instead he wrapped his hand around the man's cock, tugging.

It didn't take anything before Kit was crying out, seed pouring over his fingers. He kissed his lover, hand still moving, drawing out the pleasure. Soft cries filled his mouth, Kit's eyes meeting his, shining, bright.

He let go of Kit's cock and slid his hands through the short hair. "I think I'm falling in love with you, cowboy."

Kit's eyes closed for a second, then opened again as Kit nodded, a small wondering smile on his face. "Yeah?"

"Yeah." He kissed Kit again, slowly. "Yeah."

Kit's fingers brushed through his hair. "I'm glad."

"Good."

His own fingers began some explorations of their own, sliding over the lovely muscles of Kit's arms and

back. That got him random little noises -- sighs and moans, little hums and purrs. All the while Kit was loving him, touching and stroking, mouth taking long kisses.

The fast had been good, necessary, but the slow... oh, this slow moving together was magical. They were stretched out in the bed, moving together in waves, skin on skin, lips together, breathing each other's air. The magic just grew and grew, getting stronger between them, making him ache in the best of possible ways.

Kit smiled at him -- the look warm and happy, pure joy, something he could feel deep in his soul. He caused that look. He made Kit happy.

He wanted to keep it there. Forever.

"Ty... " Kit took a deep kiss, tongue pushing in for a long, slow taste.

He wrapped his lips around Kit's tongue, sucking softly. It was a keening sound that pushed into his lips, those strong hands counting his ribs. So vocal. So responsive.

He slid his leg between Kit's, rubbing his knee against his lover's balls as they kissed. His hands were busy too, sliding over Kit's sides, his hips, on down to trace the scars where the man's knee should have been.

"You're the only one who's ever tried to touch me there." Kit nuzzled, legs shifting. "Thank you."

That just blew him away, the skin was so different there -- soft but with the rough scars, and sensitive. Not to mention the way it made Kit react. "Maybe you never gave anyone else a chance. I can't imagine any part of you I don't want to touch. With my fingers, with my prick, with my tongue..."

Kit cried out, jerking in his hands. "Oh..."

He pushed Kit onto his back and started licking and kissing his way down his lover's body. "Gonna taste you everywhere, Kit."

"Ty... Oh, God..." The words were cries, Kit beginning to writhe beneath him. "How you make me feel..."

"Love that look on your face, that sound in your voice -- like you've never felt anything like how I make you feel." He dipped his head and licked at Kit's navel.

"You're like magic." Kit shivered, lifted up to look at him, biting that kiss swollen bottom lip. "You make me feel whole, real."

He shook his head. "You are whole. Legs have nothing to do with it."

His fingers trailed over one stump and he took a quick bite of Kit's hip before moving further down, wanting to see what would happen when he tasted the scarred skin.

Kit watched him, eyes wide, teeth sinking deep into those lips, biting back sweet, hungry noises.

"Love you," he whispered, the words true and good. He nuzzled Kit's stump and then began to lick, tongue tracing the pattern of scars, tickling the soft soft skin in between them.

A single tear slid down Kit's cheek, shining in the sun. "Please don't stop."

"I don't plan to, cowboy." He explored the one stump thoroughly and then went to work on the other, hands sliding over whatever other skin he could find.

His lover was gasping for him now, cock throbbing, balls so tight. His name was called over and over, Kit's hands gripping the sheets. He moved over Kit's stumps thoroughly and then made his way up his lover's inner thighs, spreading Kit's legs as he went.

"Good. Oh, fuck." Kit sobbed and laughed all at once. "Shit, nothing should feel so fucking good."

"Are you kidding? Fucking should always feel good." He mouthed each of Kit's balls and then moved past them, spreading Kit's legs further so he could lick at the wrinkled skin of Kit's hole.

"Ty!" Oh. Oh, that was a sweet cry.

He licked again and again, wetting Kit's hole.

"I... I... Love!" Kit arched, shifting on the sheets, gasping and crying out again and again.

He hummed, making Kit this happy just turning him on so much. He pointed his tongue and stabbed it into Kit over and over again.

"Ty! Please!" Kit pulled back, eyes wild. "Make love to me. Together. Want to come together."

He nodded, reaching over to his side table, finding the condoms. His hands were shaking as he put it on. "Need you so much, Kit."

Kit just watched him, slowly pumping that dark cock, humming softly.

"So beautiful, my cowboy."

He settled back down between Kit's legs, pushing his arms beneath Kit's thighs and spreading his lover wide. Kit was open to him, hole just swallowing him up as he pushed in.

"Oh, love. Yes." The look on his lover's face was pure bliss.

He made love to Kit, body finding a rhythm that suited them both. Kit's hands loved him, that sweet rough voice filled the air.

He'd made love a lot throughout his life, but he'd never felt such a connection, like he was made for this. He bent, pushing Kit's thighs further back as he shared a kiss with his lover.

Kit's eyes were dancing, happy, tongue pushing deep into his lips, body rippling around his prick. He moaned, moving faster, harder, loving Kit with everything he was.

"I love you. Oh, Ty, it's so fucking good." Kit arched, shaking.

"I love you, too, cowboy." And he did. The truth of it was pure pleasure, making him come. It didn't take anything to push Kit over the edge with him, riding the waves together. He collapsed against his lover, pressing kisses over Kit's face.

Kit started chuckling, laughing as his kisses were returned. "Our dinner's going to get cold."

God, he loved that sound. "I've got a microwave."

"Oh, excellent. You got a VCR too?" Kit rubbed their noses together. "I brought something to show you."

"I do, cowboy." He licked Kit's nose, laughing.

Their laughter mingled together, twined together like their bodies. "I brought a tape of one of my concerts

for you. So you could see me in action, so to speak."

"Oh... Oh, Kit -- you're going to let me hear you sing?"

He got up and went to the cupboard, opening it up to reveal his TV and VCR.

Kit rolled over on the bed, tugging his bag over -- fine ass in the air -- and pulled out a tape. "Here you go. Houston, seven years ago."

He took the tape and another kiss. "Thanks, cowboy. I really appreciate this."

He put the tape in the and grabbed the remote, going back to sit with Kit.

They watched together -- Kit had been so young, thin and lanky, no beard or mustache. The music was romantic, warm, for the most part, the band tight. Watching Kit laughing, dancing, eyes alight as he sang was either the most heartbreaking or the most beautiful thing Tyler had seen in a long time.

He reached for Kit's hand, squeezing tight.

"I can't believe you could give that up," he whispered.

"I didn't have a choice." Kit leaned into him. "My career was dead before I got out of the hospital."

"I meant the singing. It... transports you."

"I..." Kit watched the screen. "It made me happy."

"I can see that. You're glowing, man. High on it." He brought Kit's hand up to his lips and kissed it.

They watched the tape all the way through, the final song one about forever and dreaming and shit that didn't sound impossible from Kit's lips.

He turned to Kit, eyes not quite dry and kissed his lover, long and slow. "Thank you for sharing that part of yourself with me, Kit."

Kit held him, fingers running over his face. "Thank you for wanting to see it."

"I want to see all of you, Kit." He let his hand slide down to stroke across one of Kit's stumps. "You don't need to hide who you are with me."

Kit blinked, eyes filling with tears as his lips were taken in the softest kiss.

When the kiss broke, he licked at Kit's cheeks, taking the tears in, the salt not quite bitter on his tongue. "Sorry. I just... I thought I would never... I thought no one would ever..."

"Don't be silly, Kit. So your legs aren't like everyone else's -- neither is your voice, man. I believe in taking people as they come."

Kit arched an eyebrow, that laughter so close to the surface, even now. "I thought it was taking people until they come..."

He laughed and gave the man a quick kiss. "Yeah, that, too."

"Can we eat now? I'm starving. You worked lunch right off."

He chuckled and bent to kiss the beautiful stomach.

"Anything you want, cowboy. Anything you want."

Anything at all.

Chapter Eleven

Kit threw a pair of swim trunks and a towel in a backpack, along with a change of underwear and a clean t-shirt. He had a toothbrush over at Ty's already, sitting in the bathroom along with his spare robe and the portable shower seat they'd found.

Guitar? Check. Traveling chair? Check. Cell phone? Check.

He fed the dogs, patted Lindy's so-pregnant belly and headed out to spend the day with his favorite person. Ty had called last night and suggested they go for a drive, spend the day together, play.

It was almost embarrassing how eager he was.

Almost.

After damned near a month together, Kit kept expecting the intensity to fade, to ease. So far, they'd just managed to have a damned good time -- laughing and swimming and making love and learning each other.

He made good time, pulling into the shop with the radio blaring with a song from one of his artists. Too cool.

Ty was outside waiting for him, leaning against a tarp-covered bike. His lover's face was warm and happy.

"Hey there, you sexy thing." Kit swung his legs out of the truck, grinning, letting his eyes travel over that sweet body. "You finish another bike yesterday? Damn, you're hauling butt on those things."

Ty grinned and came over to kiss him. "I want to get all my orders wrapped up -- gives me more time to play."

After a bit of a snog, Ty stepped back. "Besides, this one's a bit of a special order."

"Yeah? Can I see?" He stroked one hand down Ty's arm. He loved to see Tyler's work, loved the enjoyment Ty took in it.

"You sure can."

Ty was just grinning at him like a fool; this bike was obviously special.

Ty pulled the tarp away revealing a low-riding, heavy Harley, sitting on a wide, two-sided kickstand.

"What do you think?"

"Oh, wicked!" He walked around it, hands sliding over the bike. "Oh, Ty, it's fucking beautiful!"

"You think so? It's yours."

"What?" Kit blinked over, eyes wide. "But... Oh. Oh, my."

Ty nodded. "Yep. It's the latest low-rider from Harley with a few Tyler Jenkins' specials. Like the kick stand -- you operate it up here and it goes down on both sides to give you a good solid sitting bike for when you're getting on and off."

"Oh... Oh, man. This is too fucking cool..." He was almost bouncing, so excited. "Can we try it? Will you take me for a ride?"

"That's the plan."

Ty handed over the keys, still grinning wide.

"I don't have an M-class yet and I haven't ridden since I was a kid. You'll drive?" Kit let Ty steady him as he straddled the bike. "Wow."

"Yeah, I can drive. I want you to get a feel for it first though -- turn it on, feel the power of her under your thighs."

"You make it sound sexy." He grinned, exploring the controls and learning the bike's console before starting the ignition.

"It is," Ty shouted over the noise. "All that power, just thrumming between your legs."

Oh, God, he loved this man. "You're a perv!"

His laughter was shivering with the bike vibrations.

Ty was laughing too, one hand on his thigh as Ty leaned in to speak against his ear. "Me and every other bike owner out there -- I'm telling you, it's three quarters of the appeal."

He turned his head and took a long, deep kiss, filled with their laughter. "Thank you."

Ty's eyes were shining and happy and his lover said, "You're welcome."

He was handed a helmet and Ty shrugged on a leather jacket. "You want a jacket, Kit?"

"I've got one in the truck." He put the helmet on, damned near beside himself, he was so excited, so happy. A motorcycle. For him. So fucking cool.

Ty fetched his jacket for him and put on a helmet before settling on the bike in front of him. He was snuggled up tight behind that fine ass and long back.

"You all set?" shouted Ty.

He wiggled a little, settling in and wrapping his arms around Tyler's waist, nodding. "Where do you want my feet?"

Ty leaned over and helped him settle his feet into little stirrups where the footrests traditionally went. Oh, Ty had thought of everything.

"Here we go!"

Ty revved the engine a couple of times, making the bike vibrate strongly beneath them and then they were off, moving slowly along the city streets, headed for the old ocean road.

Oh. Oh, wow. He leaned into Ty's body, eyes wide as he watched the scenery, felt the vibrations and the heat and the wind and Ty and... Wow.

Ty drove for about an hour before stopping at the beach, turning off the engine.

He didn't say a word, just kept holding on, eyes watching the waves as he smiled.

Pulling his helmet off, Ty leaned back. "You good?"

"Oh, yeah." He chuckled, rubbed his hand against Ty's belly. "So much more than good, I'm sort of stunned."

"Awesome." Ty picked up his hand and kissed it before putting it back on the slender belly. "I'm glad I could help give this to you."

"Me too." He stroked slowly, just quietly loving Tyler, thanking his lover with all he was.

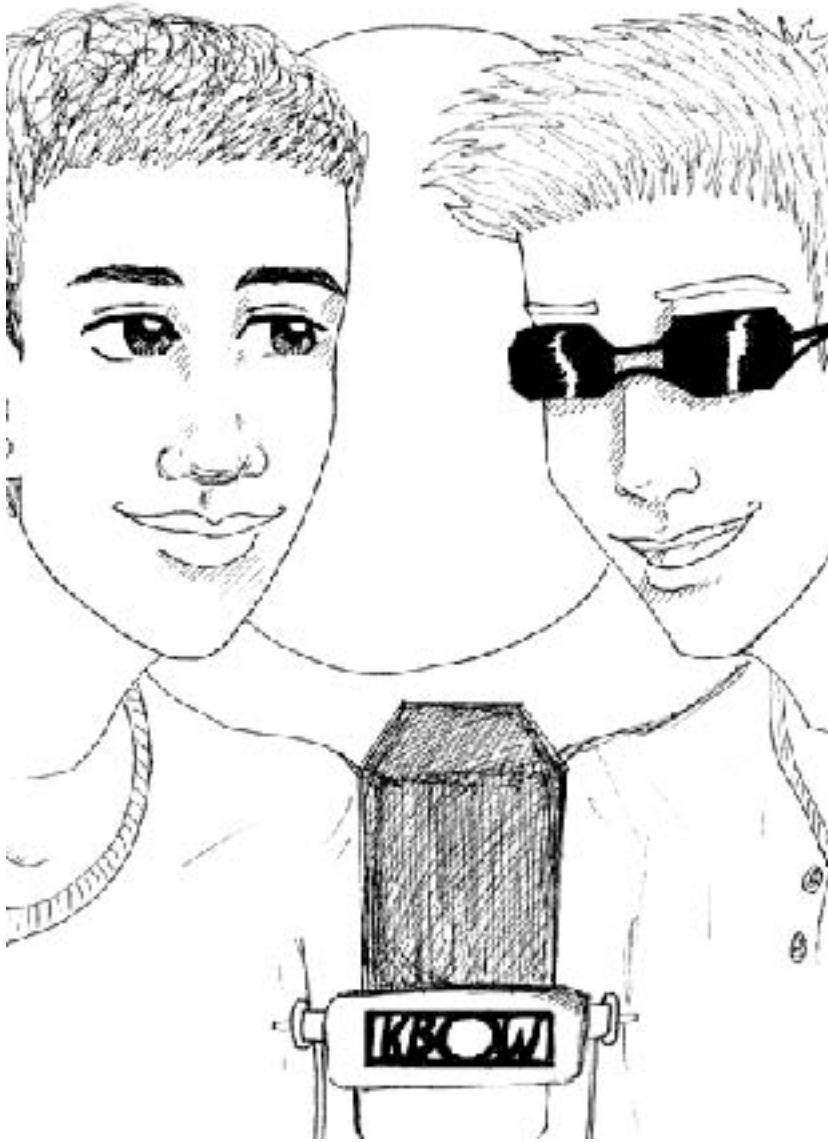
Tyler's cheek rested against his shoulder, one hand sliding along his thigh.

Such a great gift -- a bike for him. One he could use, they could use. From the minute they'd met -- Tyler singing with the Eagles and working on a bike, so blond, so fucking beautiful -- Tyler had been giving and giving to him.

He closed his eyes and said a little prayer -- partly forgiveness to those he'd lost, partly thanks to the good Lord for giving him another chance.

Then he cleared his throat and started to sing.

Radio Boys



They started out with Nat King Cole, sang a few Perry Como standards for dad, then moved on to Sinatra. He was relaxed, settled on his stool, Bill and the boys solid as granite behind him, never missing a beat.

The slight smokiness of the bar, the heat of the lights, the smell of olives and gin and perfume -- Paul loved the Lucky Lady with a unique passion, from the worn velvet seats to the way Linda the bartender flirted with Dad. Two Saturday gigs a month for what... nine years now? Ten? And it still felt good.

Their audience was older, Dad's age and a little younger, but they applauded for them, liked them and, since they got the first set, Paul could usually talk Dad into staying for the late set, to hear the bluesier and younger groups -- like tonight's fucking stunning Billie Hollidayesque vocalist.

He finished with "Send in the Clowns," standing and bowing at the smattering of applause. "Thank you very much. I'm Paul Michael Stearn and this is Bill and the Beltons. We'll be back again on the 23rd.

Have a good evening."

Then the heat of the lights faded and he turned, tilted his head, grinned. "Good set, as usual, Mr. Keuper."

A soft, worn towel was pressed into his hand. "Yeah, Sherlock, it wasn't bad at all. You need a haircut though, you're looking raggedy around the edges." Bill's voice was warm and rich and full of teasing. "You sticking around to hear the next set? I'm filling in for Kathy's bass player. He's in jail."

"No shit? Again?" Paul shook his head, mopping the sweat off his face. "Kid's living a rock and roll life in a blues club band. Yeah, Dad and I are staying. You ready?"

"Yep, c'mon." With that, his hand was put on Bill's corduroy clad elbow and he was led down to Dad's table, fourth one over, third back.

"Hey, we were good?" He settled easily, Bill greeting his dad quickly before disappearing. Probably going to neck with Kathy in the break room. Lucky bastard.

"As always, son. You need to watch the tempo on 'Fools Rush In' and you might gargle tonight and rest your voice before you go on the air tomorrow night, you're a little hoarse, but overall I was pleased." A mug of hot tea was set near his fingers. "We're staying for Kathy's band?"

He nodded. "If you don't mind, yeah."

"Cool."

Paul grinned, settling back and pulling off his tie, popping the top few buttons of his shirt. "Yeah, Dad. Cool."

"Hey there." The voice was that of a stranger, male, young. "Look I'm here by myself and wondering if I could join you if you two aren't expecting anyone else?" He could hear the smile. "Your next round of tea's on me."

Paul grinned and nodded. "Can't deny a man willing to spring for the tea. Have a seat."

"Great, thanks." The guy sat next to him on the bench, close enough they were touching at shoulders and hips. "Oh, I'm Thor. Thor Sorenson."

Warm. Thin, too. And he was a swimmer -- there was a hint of chlorine hidden under the Cool Water cologne.

He held out a hand with a smile. "I'm Paul and this is my father, Lew Stearn."

His hand was taken in a loose, easy grip. "Hey Paul, Lew, nice to meet you both."

Thor kept his hand for a moment, stroking it with his fingers. "You've got a great voice."

"Thanks. I've got one hell of a band backing me up and fabulous tunes, so it makes it easy." His hand was tingling, Thor's fingers leaving a warm impression that felt so... God, he needed to find a live body and get laid. The man just shook his fucking hand.

"I've got to say you don't look anything like your publicity photos." His hand was finally let go. "I'm from Albrechtville -- listen to your radio show every night if I'm home." Thor laughed a little, the sound rich, from the man's belly. "I recognized the voice but I wasn't sure until you introduced yourself."

His mouth opened and Paul could feel his cheeks heat. He'd been at the radio station for six years,

deejaying KBOW's Love Songs, Requests and Lonely-hearts show, and no one had ever recognized his voice. Not even once.

It was Dad that spoke up. "Yeah, I think it's dumb as hell that they won't use my boy's picture -- like anyone would care that a blind guy was a deejay. Idiots. And Paul, you owe me twenty bucks. I told you eventually somebody would recognize you."

"You can't tell me I'm the first one to recognize you by your voice! It's... very distinctive."

Paul chuckled, pleased down to his bones. "People don't tend to listen. The blind thing freaks them out and unless I'm doing..." He dropped his voice a half-octave, letting a little half-growl ride him. "'Good evening, lovely ones. This is Paul Michael Stearn with the Rainbow Room's Loving and Leaving Show', then they don't make the connection."

Thor gave a little shiver and cleared his throat. "Their loss then."

"Thanks. Oh, and thanks for listening to the show, too. I'm a big fan of loyal listeners." He reached for his tea, arm rubbing against Thor's. Mm... muscles. Not like Schwarzenegger muscles, but lean, strong ones. "You a student at Albrecht?"

Thor laughed, the sound cheerful. "I'm not the student type. Swim team coach. I teach diving on the side -- that's my real love, but the coaching pays the bills and then they let me use the pool for my classes."

"Cool." Paul chuckled as Dad gasped and the questions started flying. He listened with half an ear, focusing on the scent of Thor's body and the sound of Thor's voice.

Dad was going on about snorkeling in Florida, retiring with his wife, living out his life on the beach -- when were classes? How much was the equipment? Etc., etc. Paul grinned and tilted his head as the band started warming up. There was something basically unnatural about the concept of being underwater. Thor was very enthusiastic though, talking about his dream to dive at the Barrier Reef in Australia.

Every now and then his arm brushed Paul's as he waved them around. Then he laughed again. "Okay, I'll shut up now so we can hear the band. I swear Lew -- you get me started and I get... focused."

"I can understand that, Thor. It sounds fascinating. I'll have to talk to Tammy, see if she's interested. I wouldn't want to do it alone."

"Never dive alone, Lew. Always go with a buddy. Hell, the same's true for swimming. Always play it safe and never do it alone."

Paul shivered and finished his tea. Yep. Unnatural.

Kathy's powerful voice started, a capella. Low and rich, the song caught his attention, his focus. At some point in the set, his mug was refilled, Dad and Thor carrying on a soft conversation, the sounds of their voices comforting, easy.

As Kathy's set came to an end, Thor stroked gentle fingers along his arm. "I take it you're not a water man, Paul?"

"Me?" He grinned and shook his head. "No. Not at all. I bathe and wash dishes and water my plants -- that would be the extent of my relationship with the wet stuff. It's much too disorienting."

His dad started to chuckle and Paul kicked him under the table. Hard.

"I can see that," Thor said, fingers stroking over his arm again and then sliding away. "You'll have to let me take you to the pool sometime, teach you how to do the basics. Um... you know, in case you're ever

caught in a really big puddle or something. I, well, I'd love to try to share my love of the water is all."

"A really big puddle?" He laughed, nudging Thor with his shoulder. "I'm more likely to drown in my Earl Grey. Besides, teaching a hydrophobic blind man to swim must not be high on your 'things I'd like to do' list."

He heard Dad clear his throat, excuse himself.

Thor turned toward him, one arm sliding along the top of the seat behind him. "Well that would depend on the hydrowhatsit blind man, wouldn't it?"

Paul's eyebrow rose and he tilted toward Thor. If he didn't know better, he'd say he was being flirted with. "I only know one hydrophobic blind man. Are they common?"

"Not so far as I know."

"That's because we've all drowned in really big puddles, Thor. So, tell me, what is a diving instructor doing at a this club, an hour's drive from home?" He let himself relax back, his neck touching Thor's arm.

He felt Thor's shrug. "I like the music. And, to be completely honest, I like getting away from the atmosphere for a while. A-ville's a great place, but it's easy to get a little tired of all the kids. I like getting away from that scene."

Thor's fingers started to stroke the side of his neck.

"Yeah? I've been singing here for almost ten years. It's a good crowd." His voice was dropping, growing husky. Oh... that felt good. God, he hoped Dad went to talk at the bar. A nice long talk.

"I'm usually here a little later in the evening, I guess that's why our paths have never crossed before now. Which is a shame." Thor cleared his throat. "I'm not one to be coy, Paul -- with six siblings you learn to just step forward and say what you want, you know? And I want to see you. I mean date you. I mean..." Thor chuckled. "Maybe this is why I'm short -- I never did learn to just step forward and say what I wanted at the dinner table."

Thor groaned. "Tell me I didn't just compare you to a meal at my parents..."

That surprised him enough that he laughed, long and honest and from deep in his belly, completing derailing his insistence that Thor didn't know anything about him and that he worked weird hours and and and and... "Can I be the mashed potatoes? Those were always my favorite."

"What a coincidence -- I always wanted extra helpings of the mashed potatoes."

"I'm free every Sunday."

"Well then, can I cook you for breakfast? I mean -- what would you like for breakfast." Thor chuckled. "Hell, Paul. I like you -- would you like to come home with me?"

"Honestly? No." He held up his hand. "Please, I don't mean any offence, but I don't know you or where you live and if something happened, I'd have a terrible time getting home." Paul grinned. "Or finding the bathroom if I needed to pee. Of course, I have an apple coffeecake and a coffeemaker at my house..."

"So you're turning me down but inviting me back to your place instead? I can live with that."

He nodded. "If you're interested."

Of course the real question was why Thor was interested -- if it was a blind thing or a deejay thing or just

an available warm body thing. Not that it mattered, it had been a long time since he'd had sex and by tomorrow morning, the whys wouldn't matter.

Thor chuckled and the soft touches against his neck got a little firmer, a little more purposeful. "If you aren't sure if I'm interested, I must be using the wrong signals."

He gave a little, low purr. "That signal's coming through loud and clear, Thor. I live downtown, south of the college."

The fingers on his neck stilled and then started up again, sliding beneath his collar. "You want me to meet you there, follow you, or take you myself? I've got a little Honda. She's roadworthy."

"I'll just ride with you, if you don't mind." He bent his head forward, just a bit. "An hour's ride with Dad isn't conducive to working up an appetite."

"I know what you mean," murmured Thor, breath blowing across his cheek. "He isn't going to be upset you dumped him?"

"He's a very understanding man..." His voice lowered, hungry and rich. God, he was horny. Thor smelled so fucking good.

"I sure hope he's understanding enough to not mind watching a man kiss his son." Thor's lips slid across his, slow and easy before settling against them. He exhaled, lips parting just barely, tongue just tasting the hint of beer and salt and hunger on Thor's lips. The kiss stayed light, but the fingers at his neck were holding on tight. Then the kiss was over, Thor moving back a little. The man cleared his throat. "I'm not instant gratification man, Paul and normally I'd ask you to dance, draw the evening out, but I'm finding tonight that I just want to get you home. How does that sit with you?"

"I think I can live with that, Thor. We can have our dance in my living room. There's space." He pulled out a pad, leaving a carefully written note for his father on the table. Dad would understand. Well, Dad would be glad the kissing had gone away where he didn't have to look at it anymore. "You ready?"

"Yeah." Thor stood and a hand grabbed his. "So how do you want me to do this?"

He slid out of the booth, wrapped his hand around Thor's elbow. "You lead, I follow. Please let me know if we hit any stairs."

Luckily he knew this place like the back of his hand, so even if Thor couldn't lead him well, he wouldn't look like a moron.

Thor started off. "Just walk at a normal pace, right? One of my sisters' friends was blind and I can remember -- we're making a fairly sharp right around some tables here -- I remember her bitching about the amazing number of people who thought that blind actually meant lame."

Paul nodded and grinned, enjoying the feeling of Thor's body brushing against his. "Or deaf or stupid or crazy. You're doing fine."

He was itching to know what Thor looked like.

"There's a bit of a crush of people at the door here, Paul, we're going to have to get cozy." Thor slid an arm around his waist and pulled him close, half turning and pressing against him as they pushed their way out the front door. The arm stayed around his waist once they were out. Thor was some shorter than him and it was a good fit. "Is this okay?"

"Yeah. It feels good." The wind was chilly, the air crisp. Winter would be around before he knew it. He stepped a little closer. "You feel good."

"I'm not the only one." Thor chuckled softly. "And I've got to be honest with you -- the crush of people at the door? It wouldn't have been so bad if I had just waited two minutes to let a small group go through first, but... well, it was the closest I could get to copping a feel."

"You have to admire a man with improvisational skills like that." He managed to bump their hips together as they walked. "I don't suppose there's a crush out here in the parking lot?"

Thor chuckled and slowed, turning him. "Well it is crowded here around my car."

The cold steel of the car pressed lightly against his back, Thor warming his front.

"Yeah?" He purred again, hands sliding up Thor's body -- great tummy, tight little nipples, oh, sweet Jesus... those shoulders. "I'm noticing that."

Thor pressed another kiss on him, this one practically chaste and then he drew away. "The parking lot's not really where we want to do this, is it?"

"No. No, it's not, but..." His hands kept going, moving along a long, strong neck. "Let me see you? Just for a minute?"

"Oh. I'm sorry -- I never thought... Yeah. Sure. Go ahead." Thor took a half a step forward again and froze.

"Relax. It won't hurt a bit. I promise." He relaxed, concentrating on the feel and shape of the man before him. Thor chuckled, leaving him with a smile on his face. Thor had an oval face with wide lips and a wide nose. His skin was soft, almost oily, his hair short, made up of tiny curls. The curls tickled his fingers, made him grin. The jaw was strong, felt solid and good cupped in his palms. "You feel good. Thank you."

Thor's hands were very warm as they came up to cup his. "I look forward to you 'seeing' the rest of me."

A soft kiss was placed in each of his palms and then the car door was opened and he was guided in.

As he settled, he nodded. "Yeah, me too."

Me too.

Chapter Two

Thor waited as Paul unlocked the front door to one of the renovated buildings downtown. These were nice places; he guessed deejaying paid pretty well.

They'd chatted during the drive back and the more Paul talked, the harder his dick got. He'd somehow managed not to blurt that out, as well as keeping mum about actually masturbating during Paul's show, that honey voice pushing him to his climax. He was pretty happy about that; he didn't want to come off sounding like a stalker.

Which he wasn't. Running into Paul at the club had been pure coincidence; he was there about once a month and was surprised they hadn't met before.

On an impulse he'd introduced himself and once there... well he usually went home with someone when he went out and Paul was a step up from his usual. The man smelled good, sounded better and wasn't exactly hard on the eyes.

Touching him felt pretty damn good, too, and Thor reached over as the door opened, sliding his hand around Paul's waist and pulling him close as they went through the door. "The elevator?"

"Twenty-seven steps forward and twelve to the left." Paul stayed close against his side, square body warm and fluid. He followed the path with his eyes and found the elevator -- otherwise he'd be counting under his breath and that would just be embarrassing. The door opened immediately when he pressed the button. Paul walked inside with confidence, fingers sliding over the buttons and hitting five. "I've got a nice little place, share it with a doctor's office and a little dot com that's managing to stay afloat. Nice people."

"So it's pretty quiet weekends I guess." He stepped close to Paul and tilted his chin. "I can't wait to kiss you again."

"Very quiet." Paul flushed, lips parting just slightly. "And who said you had to?"

"Oh... good." He leaned up and pressed his lips against Paul's, pressing the man back against elevator so he could feel Paul against him.

Paul opened up to him with a groan, purring as the sweet, hot tongue trailed over his lips. His cock jerked and he pressed it against Paul's thigh, letting the man know what he did to him. His own tongue slid out to play with Paul's, learn the man's taste, learn the way he kissed. An answering heat swelled against his belly, Paul's hands moving to cup his head, tilting him to deepen the kiss.

He slid his hands around Paul's waist. Oh, this was nice. Good and warm and sweet.

The elevator stopped, dinged and Paul's lips left his reluctantly. "We're here. I'm the... the first door on the right."

He went back for one more quick kiss and then slid around so they were side by side again, his arm tight around Paul's waist. Oh man, he was horny. And every time Paul opened his mouth and said something, it got worse. Or better. Whatever. The point was he was getting hard enough he would come if Paul told him to in that sexy as fuck voice of his.

They found the door and Paul let him in, hand reaching for the light switch. The loft apartment was spotless, walls and floor bare and pale. There was a large leather sectional, a large bed in one corner and a tiny little dining table with a Tortoise-shell cat blinking at him and sitting smack-dab in the center.

The bookshelves that stood everywhere were filled with cds. Thousands and thousands of them.

Everywhere.

"Wow." He was distracted enough by the cds that he didn't shove Paul up against the door and kiss him until they both came. Which was probably just as well.

"The cds? Yeah, one of the perks of deejaying. All the bands send demos, samples and I get whatever I want." Paul chuckled again, the sound deep and rumbling and so sexy. "The really impressive thing is this -- name a CD. Any CD."

"American Woman -- The Guess Who." There was no need to make it easy.

Paul gave a soft purr, eyebrow lifting from behind the black glasses. Then he moved, singing the lyrics to the title song softly. He moved to the far wall, hands trailing along the cases and then pulled out a CD. "Here you are. I also have the cover by Lenny Kravitz and the original on a compilation."

"Holy.... You know what and where ever single one of these are?" He couldn't believe it. Most guys who could see, himself included, didn't have their shit this together.

He got a grin. "I'd be a little fucked if I didn't, now wouldn't I? Besides, music's sort of what I do. You think this is impressive? You should see the station's library."

He grinned. "So why don't you put on something... soft and sexy."

The CD was slid back into place, Paul grinning and pulling out a new cd, shucking his jacket and loosened tie and placing them on the back of a chair on the way. "Nina Simone okay with you?"

The CD was pushed in, slow bluesy music filling the loft, the acoustics fabulous.

"Yeah, that's great." He watched Paul move, fascinated by the way the man was at home in the place and his own skin. "We could have that dance now," he suggested.

"I'd like that." Paul smiled, voice riding beneath Simone's throaty tones. "I'd like that a lot."

His cock throbbed again at that voice and he stepped over to Paul, taking the man in his arms and moving to the music. Paul moved into his arms with a sigh, moving with a relaxed, easy tempo. "Mm... you're good at this, Thor."

Another soft shudder went through him. If he wasn't careful, Paul was going to make him come before they even really got down to business. "You're not so bad at it yourself, Paul."

A soft purr tickled his temple, Paul breathing in deep. "You smell good."

"Yeah? Cool Water. One of the few that actually does remind me of the ocean like it's supposed to and not too heavy. I'll bet you don't like that -- heavy colognes and perfumes, I mean, seeing how... well I've heard that when you lose a sense the others compensate for it."

Paul nodded, the motion rubbing soft lips against his cheek. "It's distracting. I can tell a lot about someone by the way they smell."

He moaned, just a little, quietly, still it was a moan. "What can you tell about me?"

"Mm..." Paul's voice dropped again, rumbling against his skin. "I knew you were a swimmer, that you used Cool Water and had showered -- you like Irish Spring soap. You don't use starch, but you do iron and..." That voice lowered further. "I can smell that you want me. You smell good."

"Oh, God." He shuddered and pressed closer, hands wrapping around Paul's ass. "You sound good. No,

not good, fucking amazing."

"I'd be in real trouble if I didn't." Paul laugh was sheer sex. "However, I don't think I ever talk to my listeners like this, do I? Never tell them I can tell they're hard, can guess what their cocks taste like."

He moaned, no longer dancing, just swaying in place, rubbing their fronts together. "You keep that up and I'm going to come," he admitted on a whisper.

"Mm... that would leave you sticky. Shall we go find my bed?" Paul's fingers were trembling just barely, but his voice was confident, sensual, sure.

"Yeah." He rubbed them together one more time and then stepped back, trying to find his breath and a thread of control.

Paul stepped back, hand held out until he found the edge of the sofa, then tension in the strong jaw relaxed. Paul looked rumped and adorable, dark red hair brushing his collar, dark Lennon glasses perched on a roman nose, lips kiss swollen and just parted.

He followed Paul to the bed and started to get undressed. "I'm taking my clothes off now -- I hope I'm not moving too fast here. You're just so fucking sexy..."

"Can I help? I... I know what your shirt feels like but I don't know what you're wearing." Paul's cheeks were blazing. "Just think of it as warped live-action phone sex."

"Oh, fuck, that sounds sexy." He stopped undoing his buttons and took Paul's hands, bringing them to his chest. "The shirt's silk, a deep burgundy -- it goes really well against my skin. I'm black -- my father was white though, so I'm kind of a light chocolate brown. My jeans are black. Tight. Maybe a little too tight right now if you know what I mean." His voice got progressively huskier as he told Paul what he was wearing.

"Oh..." Paul grinned, white teeth sinking into the swollen bottom lip. Then clever fingers started unbuttoning. "Thank you. Your skin is so soft, so smooth -- it feels good. Better even than the silk."

He groaned. "Your hands... and your voice. Feels fucking amazing."

His shirt was pushed open, belly explored. "You have an outie and you had... a hernia or appendicitis?"

He chuckled. "Appendicitis. When I was twenty-three. You should have heard the lecture my Mama gave me about grown boys scaring their mother's half to death."

Paul's laugh tickled and those fingers were hot on his waistband. "I got that lecture from my father. Car accident two years ago. It's okay though, I wasn't trying to drive. Although, I guess you know that, if you listen to the show, huh?"

"Car accident? The show? Oh! Yeah. Yeah, I remember you saying... oh fuck, you're a tease." He whimpered as Paul's fingers continued to play with his waistband.

"No. No, just feeling you. Just wanted to touch." Paul licked at his ear. "Tell me, are you smooth all over?"

His jeans were opened with shaky fingers.

"Oh, god, how did you know?" He swallowed, turning his hands into fists as he tried not to come. "Swimmers shave. Less drag. I make the kids do it so I do it, too and I figured awhile back I'd try shaving my pubes too and I liked how it felt, so I've kept it up."

Paul's fingers slid over his skin, tracing the top of his cock. "Oh... oh, fuck. So soft and I bet you smell so..." Paul stopped, blushed again. "Sorry, I'm focused. You smell so good."

He laughed. "Shit, Paul. You can focus on me all you like, as long as you don't mind me shooting before you're even undressed."

"I'm still dressed?"

He gave a short bark of surprised laughter. "Yeah, yeah, you're still dressed. I should stop living in my cock and do something about that."

Paul nodded distractedly, hands sliding his pants down over his hips. "Going to touch you, Thor. Need to feel."

He closed his eyes and swallowed hard. If Paul was going to say and do stuff like that, it was the man's own fault if he was coming while Paul was still fully dressed. "Yeah, touch me, Paul."

Paul's hand wrapped around the base of his cock, fingers warm, moan warmer.

"Oh, God, Paul. If you say one word right now, anything at all, I'm gonna blow my load all over your hand."

Paul groaned, the sound low and harsh and vibrating against his ear. His cock was pumped, once, twice. "Do it."

His mouth dropped open with a gasp, hips shoving his cock through Paul's hand as he came hard.

"Oh..." Paul's fingers kept moving, kept pumping, so easy. "Smells fucking hot."

"Feels..." He cleared his throat. "Feels pretty fucking good on this end."

"Good." Paul's lips found his throat, kissing with a soft touch. "That was the plan, after all."

"Half the plan, anyway," he murmured, brain waking up a little now that he'd come, now that that awesome fucking voice was only making him hard again rather than making him need to come with an ache that drove everything else from his mind.

He slid his hands over Paul's shoulders, dropping them down to play with the shirt buttons. "Your turn, Paul."

"Oh. Right. Still dressed. Yeah." Paul grinned, blushed. "I was busy."

"Yeah, me too."

He took Paul's mouth, kissing and licking at the soft lips, searching for the warm taste of Paul as his fingers slid open buttons. Paul relaxed against him, cock hot against his belly. Thor could see himself, dark and hungry, in the reflection of Paul's glasses.

He slid Paul's shirt off, making a soft, happy noise into Paul's mouth as their skin kissed for the first time. Paul was warm and smooth and smelled really good. Paul was sweet, groaning and shivering as they moved together, Paul's body finding the rhythm of the music again. He let his fingers tease around the waistband of Paul's pants, sliding, teasing, turning the tables just a little.

"And you called me a tease." A soft bite stung his shoulder.

He jerked, cock suddenly right there again.

He undid the top button and carefully pulled down the zipper before sliding his hands in to grab Paul's ass. The rounded flesh fit perfectly in his hands. The warm ass pressed back, a little whimper sounding, lips pulling at his skin.

"I think we'd better move this to the bed," he murmured, pushing Paul's pants down his legs.

"Yeah." Paul stepped out of the pants, toeing off his shoes and then drawing them onto the mattress. Solid and wide chest easing down into a little, pert ass, Paul looked strong, sure. Sexy.

"You are one fine man, Paul." He climbed into bed after Paul and pressed their bodies together, groaning a little at the heat. Oh yeah, this was nice.

Paul rocked, snuggling for a second before reaching up and removing the dark glasses, setting them up on the wide headboard. Then Paul buried his face against Thor's throat, licking with a slow, easy rhythm. Thor slid his hands down along Paul's back, stroking and arousing.

"What do you like doing?" he asked.

"So long as it doesn't involve hide and seek, I'm pretty open to suggestion."

He chuckled. "Does that mean hide the salami is out?"

Paul's laughter filled the room again, one hand sliding down his belly to tweak his cock gently. "I bet I can figure out where it goes."

His own laughter turned into a moan. "Anywhere you want it, Paul, anywhere you want it."

Paul moved until their cocks were side-by-side, Paul's long, thin cock sliding alongside his own. "Oh... this okay?"

"Oh yeah. This'll do just fine." He slid his hand down to grab Paul's ass again, pulling Paul tighter against him. Their pricks slid together and he moaned.

Paul moved against him, body finding the angle to keep their dicks close, then repeating it, over and over. He turned Paul's face up, closing their mouths together again, feeding off the sweet flavor.

Hot tongues fucking. Hot cocks fucking. Yeah, this was it, this was good. Purring into the kisses, Paul seemed to agree, body driving their motions. Paul's hand was on his ass, his lower back, moving and petting and making him feel fucking amazing. Pushing his hand between them, he wrapped it around both their cocks, sliding over the silky hot flesh. That got him a rumbling growl, Paul moving faster, hips jerking as he pumped them both.

"So sexy. Hot." He murmured into Paul's mouth as his hand worked their cocks.

"Yes. You're fucking burning, Thor." Oh, shit, close to coming, that voice was sheer porn.

He needed Paul to come with him this time. He slid his thumb across the top of their cocks, pressing in against Paul's slit as he passed it. The fingers of his other hand slid along the crack of Paul's ass.

Paul cried out, nipped his shoulder hard as spunk sprayed over his hand. Oh yeah, that's what he wanted. The hot splash against him, the smell of man and sex. He jerked and came, too, mouth open on a silent scream.

Paul nuzzled his shoulder, aftershocks causing the man to shiver against him. Paul's hand stroked over his belly, his hip.

"Mm. That was nice, Paul. Felt good, hot."

He tilted Paul's head and took a long, slow kiss. Paul's tongue was lazy in his mouth, exploring and tasting with careful motions. He murmured happily, letting Paul lead the kiss, doing some exploring of his own with his hands.

"You taste good. Hot. I like it." Paul licked at the corner of his lip.

"Good." He grinned and touched the tip of his tongue to Paul's. "I'll let you taste me anytime you like."

"I like." Paul flushed again, but followed his tongue with hungry lips.

"I love how sensual you are. A lot of guys just want to fuck -- you want to taste and touch and take your time." He shrugged, maybe it was a silly thing to like, but he did.

"Well, most guys get to look and admire -- I'm working at a deficit in the beginning." Paul grinned, fingers tickling his ribs, "I like to learn up close and personal."

"I like the way you learn." He chuckled and retaliated, sliding his fingers along Paul's ribs and down by his navel, just on the right side. Man had a ticklish belly -- it was something to remember.

Paul snorted, jerking against his fingers. "Feels like you're learning yourself."

"I like touching you. Like the way your skin feels under my fingertips. I bet your skin is unbelievably soft when it's wet."

"Wet?" Paul pressed close. "As in the shower?" The low voice was hopeful and teasing all at once.

"That's what I was thinking. Nice and warm, get us all unsticky." He slid his fingers through the come that was drying out on their bellies. "Your shower big enough for two, Paul?"

"I bet it is." Paul grinned, that soft, sexy chuckle sounding again. "And if it's not, we'll just have to snuggle."

"Oh, am I the first one who gets to try it out with you?" For some reason he liked the sound of that. "Don't you usually let your dates stay long enough to clean up?"

To his surprise, Paul turned a deep red. "I haven't had any dates since I moved in. I'm sort of married to my work, odd hours, you know?"

"Wow -- not one? 'Cause I've got to tell you, the place is neat, really neat, but it doesn't feel like you've just recently moved in either."

"I've been here awhile. I moved in at Christmas, 1998."

"Whoa. That's a long time without a date." He'd gone six months once between picking up guys. One-night stands weren't at the top of his list, but they sure beat a solo act. "That's a long time without any companionship aside from your hand."

Paul shrugged and sat up with a grin. "Like I said, I work a hell of a lot, building up the show's reputation, doing voice-overs, commercials. There's just not been any time. I mean, Dad's cool, but he's not likely to drive me to the bathhouses, you know?"

He watched as Paul stood, moving confidently through the apartment. "You coming to shower? I'm curious about this whole 'big enough for two' thing."

"Yeah, I was just watching you move. Pretty fucking sexy." He got up and followed Paul.

The bathroom was completely spotless -- towels and washcloths stacked, bottles standing side-by-side, each one labeled. The tub was huge; they'd have plenty of room. To his surprise, there was a telephone on the wall, right by the tub.

"You make a lot of calls from in here?"

"No. That's for Dad. He worries." Paul's face screwed up, voice changing, morphing into Lew's. "What if an axe murderer came in? This way, you could call 911 from the bathroom. Or what if you fell?"

Thor chuckled. "He's got a point. Well not so much with the axe murderer, I mean, an axe would go through this door long before you had 911 dialed, but about the falling -- 'course you don't have to be blind to do that. My mom got stuck at the bottom of the basement stairs for four hours when she fell a few years back. Dad put phones in every single fucking room in the house after that."

It felt good to see Paul grin, relax, as he bent down and started the water. "Yeah, exactly. Dad's a little protective -- I was born blind and he had a lot of adjustments to make."

"You haven't though. I mean, it must be easier like that than..." He chuckled. "Well, don't I sound like a jerk 'it must be easier for you to be born blind than turn blind'? Sorry."

"No apologies needed. You're mostly right. I don't know what I'm missing." Paul's hand slid down his arm and drew him into the warm water. "I'm curious, mostly -- especially about color. I mean, I read about them, but I don't understand them at all."

He closed his eyes, enjoying the fall of water, looping his arms around Paul's waist to keep them close. "I can't imagine that. No color... it's one of the first things I notice about something. The first thing I'll mention if I'm describing something is its color."

Paul's hands started exploring, not even trying to arouse, just sort of... looking. "I tend to replace colors with stuff I know. Red is hot, green smells like plants, blue is wet. That sort of thing."

He nodded. "Yeah, that makes sense. What's brown?"

"The smell of good coffee."

He chuckled. "That's my skin -- brown, like good coffee -- but with milk in it."

"Oh..." Paul nuzzled his temple. "That's how I take my coffee. Works out nicely."

"Cool." He reached over for the soap. "Can I wash you? I like the idea of sliding my hands all over you."

"I'd like that." Paul's fingers slid around his waist, tracing his hips, exploring the muscles of his thighs.

"I like the way your hands slide on my skin, too." He stretched and then soaped his hands up. Starting at Paul's shoulders, he slowly soaped up the pale skin. Paul felt good, skin soft from the water and slick from the soap and there was something very sensual about closing his eyes and just feeling. Soft throaty moans filled the shower, Paul's body responsive, warm, following unselfconsciously towards his fingers.

He explored thoroughly, giving up the pretense of soap after the first few minutes. No, he was just enjoying the wet, warm, soft skin of his lover.

Paul's fingers stroked over the bare skin above his cock, the man purring. "So sexy. So smooth."

Then his balls were cupped and stroked.

"Oh fuck!" He pushed into Paul's hands, the lazy sensuality disappearing in favor of wanting, not quite desperate but tinged with it. "I'm kind of sensitive there without the curls."

"Does that mean I should stop?" A last caress and Paul was murmuring in his ear with that aged whiskey voice again. "Or that I shouldn't."

"Don't stop." He took a deep breath and slid his hands around Paul, holding on. "Don't stop touching, don't stop talking. Oh, fuck, please don't stop."

"Oh, I was hoping you'd say that." Paul's tongue slid around his ear, fingers moving to explore his bare skin again. "The skin here is so smooth, so sensitive, it almost moves under my fingers. I wonder... You think it would jump under my lips? My tongue?"

"Oh, Paul, don't tease me, man. You know it would."

The purr vibrated on his jaw. "No teasing, Thor. I'm just talking and touching. Touching your fine skin, so smooth and hot. Want to taste you all over." Paul chuckled. "Want to know you so that you can walk into a McDonalds and I'll know you're there."

"Oh, God, I'm going to come any second here."

"Oh yeah, come for me. Please." Paul's warm hand slid around the base of his cock and caressed his balls. "So fucking sexy."

"Fuck, Paul..." He moaned, body arching as he shot his load.

"Mm... yes." Paul was curled against his side, hand still moving. "Yes, the shower's big enough for both of us."

He laughed, the sound startled out of him. Wrapping his arms around Paul, he brought their lips together, the kiss sloppy. Paul's laughter felt damned good as they kissed, warm water still splashing around them, between them.

He slid his hands down along Paul's sides, tickling and hoping to arouse at the same time. Then he hit Paul's cock and well, it was a moot point, the man was already hard and ready for his touch.

Another moan sounded, then Paul's hips shifted, pushing towards his fingers. "You inspired me again."

"We seem to be good for each other that way." He brought Paul's hands to his shoulders. "Here, hold on."

Going to his knees, he nuzzled Paul's groin, the hot shaft sliding along his cheek.

"Oh... Oh, God." The hands on his shoulder held tight, fingers trembling. "That feels... Oh..."

"Uh-huh." He grinned. He knew exactly how it felt. He nuzzled for a while, nose buried in Paul's pubes, breathing him in. Then he started to lick, the sweet balls, the base of Paul's cock, the man's navel, the veins that were visible in the fine cock. Finally he was ready for the real deal and he rubbed his cheek against Paul's belly. "You got any condoms in here, lover?"

"Yeah. Yeah, in the medicine cabinet." Paul shivered. "Hope they have a long-assed expiration date."

He chuckled as he stood. "They usually do and at least in the cabinet you don't have to worry about folds or ass grooves."

He took one of Paul's hands from his shoulder and put it on the wall. "Gimme a second."

Paul nodded, head tilting back into the water so it poured over the wide chest.

He opened the cabinet and searched for the condoms, trying not to see anything else that would make him feel like he was prying. There it was -- shit the box hadn't even been opened and thank god for long-assed expiration dates because these had another year of life in them.

He tore open the box and grabbed a couple, just in case, and went back to the shower. Back on his knees, he sheltered Paul's cock from the water with his head and free hand and worked the condom down. "You been sucked in the last four years, Paul?"

"Thor, I haven't had more than a friendly hand job almost ten." Paul groaned, hips shifting. "I work a lot"

"Jesus fucking Christ -- hasn't anybody ever hid under your desk and surprised you with one? I know I for sure as fuck have contemplated it a time or two and then decided it was too stalkerish."

He stroked Paul's cock, letting his hand and the water take away most of the "lubrication". Tasted bad enough as it was, thank you very much.

Paul gave a laugh that was mostly moan, hands sliding over his head. "I'll have to ask Tom how often that happens."

"Tom?"

"The guy who plays me on TV and in promotions and in the publicity shoots."

"Oh, I don't want to blow him -- looks like an asshole and I bet he's got a high, screechy voice. Not like yours. Fuck, your voice makes me co --" He wrapped his lips around Paul's cock before he could give that sorry little secret away. He was not a stalker and he sure as hell didn't want Paul thinking that's why he was here. Oh sure, it was what had peaked his interest in the first place, but not why he was here. No, he was here because he wanted to suck this sweet, thick cock in his mouth.

And so he did, going all the way down on it -- this had to be good, it was Paul's first in at least ten years -- fuck he could screw it up big time and as long as he didn't bite, Paul was going to think it was fanfuckingtastic. Still, he wanted it to be good by any standards -- no reason not to make the next guy have to really work for it.

Paul cried out, hips jerking convulsively, pushing deep, then stilling. "S...sorry. You... you startled me. So fucking good."

He sucked hard on just the head and then pulled off. "I'm fairly good at this." He laughed. "I practiced with a cucumber until I could deep throat it. So you just do what feels good, I'll let you know if I can't take it."

He slid his hands around Paul's ass and took that nice prick back into his mouth.

"A cucumber? Good lo... Oh, fuck! So hot!" Paul thrust slow and steady, encouragement and need pouring down with the water in that voice, that fucking voice calling out his name, so fucking wanton.

It made him whimper around the hot flesh in his mouth, made him hard again, so fucking hard just from that goddamned voice. Well, that and the hard piece of meat throbbing in his mouth and he was pretty fucking happy he could do this for Paul. Ten years was way too long between blowjobs.

It didn't take long before Paul's hands tightened on his shoulders, hips rocking in quick, needy motions.

"Oh, so fucking good." He looked up -- oh... Paul's eyes were dark, dark brown, hot, like they were looking at him -- and that voice lowered, rumbled. "So sweet, Thor. Oh... Yes..." He sucked harder, pulling Paul in, tugging on that fine ass with his hands, encouraging his lover. "Yes. Fuck, yes." Oh, yeah. That was a growl. Paul came, fingers gripping his shoulders, hips jerking convulsively.

He grabbed his cock and pulled himself off, coming before Paul had finished shuddering.

The water was starting to get cool, Paul stroking his cheek. "Wow."

He chuckled, leaning his head against Paul's hip as he took off the condom, letting the water wash Paul's cock. "So that wasn't bad?"

"Oh, man. Awful. Utterly." Full of warm, sated laughter, Paul's voice made him grin. "Thank you."

Smiling, he placed a soft kiss on Paul's cock and then stood and turned off the water. "I don't know about you, but I think I hear your bed calling my name. Hell, I've come enough tonight I could probably curl up in the tub and sleep here. But your bed would be more comfortable."

"Yeah. It is. Much." Paul stepped out of the tub and handed him a towel. "I feel like my legs are just jellied."

"Yeah, I can relate." He used his towel to try Paul off and then did a quick job on himself. "Come on, let's get your sexy-assed self to bed."

A soft hand slid over his butt. "Oh, I'm thinking you're the sexy-assed one. Damn."

"I'm not going to argue that with you." He chuckled and slid his arm around Paul's waist, heading them toward the bed, hitting the lights as they went. "Lights are off -- you're going to have to guide me from here," he murmured.

"Mm... I can do that." Paul led him easily, talking soft and low until they were at the bed, sliding in between cool sheets. "So, is it bad form to cuddle?"

"I sure as hell hope not." He pushed close, letting Paul hold him. A lot of times he liked to be the one to hold, 'cause he wasn't the tallest or the biggest guy on the block and it made him feel good -- to be holding the other guy. But with Paul... he didn't feel like he had to be macho or tall or anything that he wasn't. He was liked for who he was. "So you gonna let me eat mashed potatoes in the morning, Paul?"

Paul chuckled, the sound sleepy. "I think that can be arranged, Thor. In fact, I'm thinking you mentioned something about feeding me breakfast yourself."

He laughed. "Yeah, and then you vetoed that idea and invited me here." He nudged Paul with his hip. "Thanks."

A kiss brushed against his temple, Paul shifting. "Mm... goodnight, Thor. Sleep well."

"You too, Paul."

He shifted, found a spot that was warm and close and him-shaped. He'd come more in the last few hours than he had in at least a week -- he was going to sleep like a baby.

Chapter Three

He had a moment of disorientation when he woke up, the sensation of sharing a bed, having something snuggled up to him, completely foreign. It had only taken a heartbeat to remember, to relax, to let his fingers trail over the tiny curls covering the head resting on his shoulder.

Thor.

He grinned, fingers exploring slowly. Thor's skin was smooth, warm, almost silky under his fingers. It felt good to touch someone, to hold them.

To wake up and not be alone.

Thor shifted, muttering in his sleep. Something hot and hard and silky slid against his thigh.

"Mm..." He purred, reaching down to stroke the throbbing veins, the flared tip.

Thor's hips moved, sliding the hard cock along his thigh, into his hand. Another half shift and he could feel long lashes flutter against his skin. "Mmm."

Paul searched the so-smooth skin above Thor's cock, then down to weigh the heavy balls, rolling them gently. Oh, he was horny, hard and full and hot, but unwilling to give up the searching to focus on waking Thor up, getting them both off.

"Paul..." Half whimpered, his name slid through the silence, the glide of Thor's cock along his thigh beginning to leave a trail.

"Good morning." He leaned his head down, lips trailing over warm skin, searching for Thor's mouth. Thor's head tilted and their lips closed together, Thor's tongue lapping at his mouth. He shifted, turning until their bodies were together, rubbing slow and steady, in time with their kiss. Thor's ass felt good in his hands, warm and firm. Sexy.

Thor murmured into his mouth, hands sliding up his sides and curling around his shoulders. Paul pulled until their cocks slid together, moaning into Thor's lips, body jerking. So hot! So sweet. Thor rubbed against him, body eager.

Paul groaned, the sound loud and low, harsh and desperate to his own ears. His fingers found their cocks, wrapping around them both and beginning to pump. By God, if this was the only one-night stand for ten more years, he wanted to remember it.

"Oh, fuck, Paul... Yeah, just like that."

"Your cock feels so hot to my hand, hard and silky. Touching you makes my balls ache." He was rumbling, hoarse with need, but it felt so good, so right.

"Oh, God!" Thor's hands tightened on his shoulders, hips driving harder against him. "Your voice... Paul. So fucking hot."

"You make me hot, make me want to whisper dirty little wishes all over you." His thumb slid over the slit in Thor's cock. Fuck, he was close. "Make me want to smell your spunk again. Know it."

"Oh, Fuck!" Thor jerked hard against him, heat spreading over his hand, along his belly and the smell of come filled the air. The heat and smell was just what he needed to send him over and he came with a low cry, face buried in Thor's shoulder. Thor held him close, hands sliding over his back now, fingertips exploring. "Mm... I like how you say good morning, Paul."

He chuckled, brushing a soft kiss against Thor's throat. "It seemed the appropriate thing to do. Morning, Thor."

"Man, I love your voice. It's so sexy."

Paul purred, hands rubbing hot come over Thor's smooth skin. "You've got amazing skin and you smell good, rich. I could get used to that scent."

"Yeah? Well I could get used to having that voice all to myself..."

He chuckled low, nuzzling and licking Thor's neck. "Given that my career is this voice, you might change your mind. After all, hearing 'This is Paul Michael Stearn with KBOW' a thousand times a day would get really old."

He firmly pushed down the little flare of curious, almost hopeful fear that blazed in his belly. There was no way he was going to get too involved here.

The man didn't even know him yet.

Thor chuckled. "I don't know, when you say it like that and sound all... like you've just had sex, it's quite the turn on." Thor kissed his forehead. "Seriously though Paul... I hope I'm not being an ass when I tell you that you're the first person I've picked up in a long time who I've been interested in seeing again."

"Yeah?" He let himself grin, let himself hope, just a little. "I'd like that. I'd like to know you, be your friend."

"Cool." Thor chuckled. "After all -- I still have to convince you about the whole submerging in water thing."

He shuddered and shook his head, grin spreading. "Not a chance, coach. Blind guys and water don't mix."

Thor's chuckles turned into laughter. "Well there, we've got something to keep seeing each other for -- I'm not going to rest until I've got you in the water and made you enjoy it."

"Hope you enjoy long-term relationships." He ran his fingers along Thor's ribs, tickling.

"Can't say as I've ever had anything I'd call long-term aside from family." Thor shook his head. "Oh, man, that makes me sound fickle."

"How about we start with breakfast and go from there, 'o fickle one?" He tilted his head for a kiss. "I'll buy your coffee, you buy my tea."

"As long as we go Dutch on the pancakes." Thor's mouth closed over his, lips wide and warm and soft. He smiled into the kiss, curling close. He could handle that. In fact, right this minute, Paul thought there wasn't much he couldn't handle.

Amazing what waking up with the right man could do for your day.

Chapter Four

The taxi let him off in front of the Swimming Center and it didn't take him long to find his way up the steep stairs and into a building that smelled of chlorine. He'd finished his voice-overs early and had left a message that he'd just meet Thor here.

It was about time that he started meeting Thor halfway.

The last few weeks had been fabulous -- they had gone dancing, gone to dinner, showered and slept and played and touched and tasted and... yeah. Fabulous. This weekend was the first after the test results came back clear, the first where he'd come to Thor.

"Can I help you?"

He smiled, nodding at the soft, nervous voice. "Coach Sorenson's office, please?"

"It's just a couple doors down, but he isn't in. He's on deck. You want me to take you to him?"

"Yes, please, if it's not a problem." Deck? Undoubtedly the pool, which meant water, but also meant nearly naked Thor, which made up for the worry.

He could hear the girl get up off her chair. "You uh... want me to help you?"

"I'll hold your elbow and you lead, if you don't mind. I promise not to bite." He chuckled along with the girl and then his hand was placed on a soft upper arm and they began to walk.

"He's usually done by now, but it's early in the semester and he's laying down the law with the swim team. Extra laps and stuff so they think he's tough. 'Cause he doesn't look tough, you know? Oh... well I guess you wouldn't, but he doesn't, he's a head shorter than pretty much all the team and he's pretty young for a coach. Rumor has it he got the job because his dad was a lifetime professor here, but if you've seen him swim, you'd know that was just hooey, 'cause he's really really good."

She paused to take a breath.

"Are you a swimmer, too?" Sounded like maybe he wasn't the only one admiring a certain swim coach.

Their footsteps echoed as they neared the water, disorienting him slightly, making him tense and uncomfortable.

He felt her nod. "Oh, god, I'm sorry. Yes. I'm a lifeguard actually. They pull us from the locals -- don't want the paying college kids wasting their time life guarding." He could hear the disdain in her voice.

"Hey Thor, your friend is here."

"Paul!" Thor sounded pleased to see him. "Okay, everyone, five more laps and then you can hit the showers -- I expect everyone back here at 10 am tomorrow. And I know it's the weekend -- one complaint and it's 8am instead of 10."

He grinned and leaned close to his guide. "I see what you mean about tough. Can you help me find a chair away from the edge?"

Before she could answer, Thor was there, slipping his free hand around a damp bicep. "That's okay, Laurie, I've got him."

"Hey, Coach. I got finished early and figured I'd save you the trip." He smiled, stepping closer to Thor.

"Is there somewhere I can sit out of the way?"

"I'm done -- the kids'll swim their laps and go home thinking I'm Satan's cousin." He could hear the grin in Thor's voice. "Now that I've got you here, how about a dip? The water's really nice and as soon as the boys finish up we'll have the pool to ourselves."

"A... a dip?" He blinked, shaking his head. "I don't have trunks on me."

No way in hell.

"I have extra pairs. I'm the swim-team coach, remember? I'm sure we've got something in your size." Thor started walking, towing him along. "We'll get you something to wear and then you can get your feet wet."

"I don't swim, Thor. I don't like the water." He pitched his voice low, forcing himself not to tremble.

"I don't like the water says the man who can spend an hour in the shower." Thor chuckled and pet his hand. "I'll be with you, Paul. I won't let you go, won't fool around or anything, just you and me and a bit of floating. It'll be fun."

"Fun? You sure?" He held on, the echoes and splashes and noises confusing him.

"Yeah." Thor pulled him into a room, the noise fading. He was turned, pulled into Thor's body. "By the time we get back out there, the place will be empty. Nothing but you and me and the soft caress of warm water."

He pushed up close, letting Thor orient him, settle him. "Okay. The noise isn't right in there, you know? It echoes."

One of Thor's arms slid around his back, hand grabbing his ass, the other cupped his chin, tilted it. "Yeah, I guess it does. I'll be just as close as we are now the whole time though and the minute you're wanting out you say so and we get out. I just... I'd really like to share this with you -- it's a big part of my world."

Before he could answer, Thor's mouth had closed over his.

He groaned, pushing down against the wet lips, tasting the chlorine and salt of the pool. He reached out, hands wrapping around his lover's head, holding on tight. His cock started to fill, balls growing heavy in his jeans. "Never going to get into shorts at this rate."

"I think I can do something about that," murmured Thor. His lover slid down, fingers working open his pants as a hot mouth closed over his cock through the material and blew hot air against his cock.

"Thor!" He arched, aching as his fingers moved over his lover's cheeks and nose and forehead. "Good. So good."

"Can't have my lover parading around town needing. People would think I was lousy at this, and I'm not lousy at this." On the last word, Thor's mouth circled his cock, sucking him in.

He fought to swallow his cry, hips rocking into that heat, that perfect, loving mouth. "Oh, Thor. Thor, God! So good. Love your mouth. Makes me fly."

Thor hummed around his cock, head going up and down on his flesh. He came with a groan, electricity sparking along his spine, shooting into Thor's mouth. Thor licked him clean, tongue soft and warm. Then he was tucked back into his pants, Thor sliding back up his body.

"Oh, God... That was... So sweet, Thor." His fingers traced Thor's full, parted lips. "So sweet."

Thor nipped at his fingers. "More salty than sweet, I'd say."

Paul chuckled, leaning down for a kiss. "Let me see." They shared a long embrace, tasting each other with a lazy hunger. "Yes. Definitely salty."

"So what do you think? Relaxed and ready to try my pool now?"

"I'll try." He held Thor's hand, trying not to tense up. "You'll stay with me, right?"

Thor's free hand slid over his stomach, stroking. "The entire time, I promise."

"Okay. For you." He leaned towards Thor, into the caress. He could trust this man -- they were friends, lovers. Thor wouldn't leave him alone in the water.

"Awesome." He could hear Thor's smile. "It's going to be great, I promise!" Thor held his hand, and pulled him over a few steps. "Let's see what I've got in my magic box. Here we are! These'll be perfect. A nice pair of trunks -- never been used. I know this because I bought them for myself only they wouldn't fit over my ass."

"Are you saying I have a skinny ass, Coach?" He grinned, starting to unbutton his shirt. "Do I need to get naked?"

"Well now that depends on what exactly you've got in mind," Thor drawled. Then he chuckled. "Yeah, you need to get naked to get the shorts on, funny guy. And there's nothing wrong with your ass and you know it. In fact one of these days you're going to let me fuck that fine ass."

Paul's fingers stuttered and he groaned, nodded. His prick jerked, trying to fill again. Oh yeah, yeah he was. "You don't stop it and I still won't fit into the shorts, Coach."

Thor chuckled and squeezed his hand. "Okay, Okay, I'll be good."

It didn't take him long to strip, carefully folding his clothes as he removed them, holding them in one hand. "Is this your office? Is there a chair? A desk?"

Thor took his clothes from his hand and passed him the swimming trunks with a grunt. "Fuck, I'm sorry, Paul. You got me all distracted with that bad boy in your pants. Yeah, it's my office. Two lockers, a desk that's messy as hell and a chair on either side of it. Two doors -- one to the locker room, which is locked and the one to the pool that we came through. There's college and swimming posters all over the walls."

"No windows, right? We're not on an outside wall?" He held Thor's hand for a second before putting on the trunks, taking a second to figure out the mesh and cloth.

Thor chuckled again. "No windows, babe -- I wouldn't do that to you."

Thor steadied him. He got the trunks settled around his waist and straightened up. "Are they on right? Do I look stupid? Should I leave my glasses here?"

Oh, yeah. He was squeaking. He wasn't nervous at all.

Thor's hands were on him, stroking gently, removing the glasses. "Just relax. You want me to give you another blowjob? And remember when you answer that we're going for relaxed here, not comatose."

He chuckled, shrugged, feeling truly naked without his glasses. "I'm sorry, Thor. I'm just a little nervous. I trust you. Where did you want to go this evening?"

Thor's hands kept moving over him, not arousing, just touching. "Hey, I'm sorry, Paul. Look, you really don't want to do this, we don't have to. I just think once you get to it, you'll actually like it."

"I want to try. I do." Paul grinned, took Thor's hand. "Hell, you might be right. I might manage okay. Let's go now before I lose my nerve, okay?"

His head was tugged down for a quick kiss. "All right, let's go."

Thor held his hand, tugging him along.

The room was quiet when they stopped, only the whirr of a motor and the splash of water against concrete and tile sounding. Thor helped him sit, his feet sliding into the water. "I'm just going to slide in."

There was a splash and then Thor was between his legs, hands on his hips. He ran his hands over Thor's head, tried to smile. "Hey, there."

A soft kiss was pressed to his upper belly. "Hey, Paul, you're doing great. I'm just going to get you wet now, okay, let you feel the water so it's not a shock when you come in."

"Okay. Wet I can do." This time the grin was real. "Hour-long showers, remember?"

"Oh, was that you?" Thor teased, splashing his legs and chest with water.

He shifted, chuckled. The water was warm, not bad at all. "I think so, yeah."

That earned him another kiss, Thor's lips so much warmer than the water. Then Thor took his hands and tugged gently. "In you come, then."

"Oh, right." He held on, shaking deep inside and scooted forward. "I trust you."

Then he lowered himself into the water.

Thor's arms slid around him, holding him close. "There we go. Not so bad, is it?"

"N...no. No... I don't guess. Don't let go, Thor." He stayed as still as he could, listening for the beat of Thor's heart.

"I won't," said Thor. "Here, let's try something." Thor turned him within the circle of the muscled arms and pressed his back along Thor's chest. "Solid as a rock back here, Paul."

Paul nodded, focusing on the increasingly familiar feeling of resting against Thor's body, Thor's strength. His body began to relax, his trust stronger than his fear. "You feel good, Thor."

Thor chuckled. "You keep saying stuff like that, Doc and you'll be feeling me, all right."

"Thought you liked hearing me say stuff like that, Coach." He leaned his head back against Thor's shoulder, shudders easing.

"I'm not complaining, I'm just warning you that you're about to have a hot poker against your backside."

"Just so long as you don't let go of me. This is so... disorienting." He squeezed Thor's arm. "You're the only thing I know here."

Thor began to talk to him. Telling him softly about the pool, where everything was, what it looked like, how the color of the water seemed to change slightly from shallow to deep end.

Almost without him noticing, Thor changed their position and he was floating in the water Thor solid beneath his back.

"We okay, Coach? Your head's not under the water?" He traced Thor's fingers with his own, listening to his lover talk and breathe.

"We're great, Doc. Just perfect. I've wanted to do this with you since we first met. Come here and just float together, the water lapping at us, you on my chest..."

"You make it sound so special." He loved being so close, being held. Thor made it easy to forget the water, forget his fear.

"Are you kidding? You and the water? I can't think of anything better." Thor chuckled. "Well, maybe a thing or two." And if the sudden poking against his backside was anything to go by, he was pretty sure he could guess what those things were.

He laughed, warm and happier than he could have imagined, given that he was in the water. "You make me feel so good."

"Good, 'cause you make me feel pretty damned good yourself, Doc." Thor stroked his belly with gentle fingertips.

Paul purred softly, focused only on Thor. "What would you like to do tonight after our swim, lovely man? Any requests -- movies, supper, dancing? What's your pleasure?"

"In all honesty, Paul? I want to take you home and make love to you until we stick to the sheets."

"Take me to your house this time?"

"Are you sure, Doc? I've tried to neaten things up, but it's not big like yours and a little cluttered. I just don't want you to feel like you're stuck on whatever piece of furniture I leave you on, you know?"

He thought for a few seconds, then grinned. "We'll manage. I need to know your home, too. I want to know you, Thor. I want to make love in your bed, too." He squeezed Thor's arm, the complications poking their heads up again. "I can call a cab to take me home whenever you need me gone. No worries."

"I've got kids showing up here at 10am, Doc. I'll take you home before coming here. Unless you don't want to stay overnight..."

"I love sleeping with you, Coach." He blushed dark. God, they were silly. So many stupid little steps to this dating business. "I was trying to be subtle and see if you wanted me there or not."

Thor laughed. "Oh, Doc, haven't you figured it out by now? Subtle always sails right over my head." A kiss was pressed to his shoulder. "I want you there, if I hadn't I would have said so -- maybe not outright bald like that, but I would have said so."

"Oh, then I want to come home with you, Thor." The sound of a door opening startled him and he stiffened, tilting a little in his lover's arms.

Thor's hands started moving on him again, gentling him. "That's Ben, nighttime clean-up crew." Thor's mouth came to his ear to whisper. "Pretty fucking sexy, he wears these tight, thinning jeans and these itty bitty t-shirts at least two sizes to small and he's all muscles."

Paul chuckled, shook his head. He had come to realize a long time ago that his definition of sexy didn't gibe with everyone else's. He whispered back. "You sound intrigued. Were you lovers?"

"Not nearly as intrigued as I was by your voice. I'd sometimes see him when I was heading home and think, 'hey, there's some nice fantasy material' but by the time I got home, had the radio flipped on, got into bed, well... lets just say I've come to the sound of your voice more often than the times you know about." Thor cleared his throat. "Hopefully that doesn't sound too stalkerish."

Paul thought his body was blushing all over -- he was definitely hot enough. "No... no, it sounds exciting, sounds sexy. Of course, now I'll wonder if you're listening, if you're hard for me."

Thor licked his ear. "Every night, Doc."

"Every night." He bit back a moan, voice low. "My show will never feel the same to me, knowing you're there."

Thor shuddered beneath him, the cock digging into his back jerking. "I think we'd better get out now, Doc. You keep talking like that and I'm going to drop you when I go off."

"Okay, let's go." He nuzzled Thor's jaw with a whimper. "I want you."

Thor nodded, one hand and his feet working in the water, making them sail through it. "Ben's finished in my office. I did mention both doors had a lock, didn't I?"

"No. No, you didn't." He was shaking, but not scared this time. Not at all.

"Yeah, they do. Which is a good thing, because I've got to tell you, I can't wait until we get back to my place. Hell, I can barely wait until we get out of the fucking pool." He got a squeeze. "You rock my socks off, Doc."

"You make me hard, make me want you, Coach."

Thor whimpered. "Doc, I'm not going to be able to walk..."

"I want to taste you, want your cock on my tongue." He was whispering, voice low, intimate, tongue sliding out to rub over his own lips.

"Paul..." Thor's voice was hoarse, their motion in the water changing as Thor braced them against the edge of the pool. The sound of a door closing came again and Thor started rubbing up against him. "No one here but us now."

"So I can tell you how much you turn me on? I can tell you how I went to bed last night and couldn't think of anything but your hands, your cock, the flavor of your mouth?" He pressed back, holding on to Thor's hands.

"Jesus, Doc, I'm going to blow."

Paul started rocking his hips, thighs parting. "Want you to take me home, Coach. Want you to make love to me, let me feel your cock pushing inside me. Fucking me and making me fly."

"Oh fuck!" Thor jerked pushing up against him hard. He could feel heat spread between them for a moment before the water stole it away. Thor pushed them upright and they were standing again, waist deep in the water.

He turned to face Thor, hands stroking over his lover's face. "Thank you. Thank you for not letting go, Coach."

Thor's pulled his head down, mouth warm and hungry. "I said I wouldn't. And I didn't, despite that

sexy voice of yours."

"I love the sounds you make when you come." He brought their lips together, tongue pressing into Thor's mouth and tasting.

Thor opened to him, hands on his hips, tugging him close. "I make sounds when I come, Doc? Me?"

Snuggling close, he nodded. "Little ones. Sexy as fuck."

Thor chuckled and gave him another kiss, this one quick. "Let's get out of the pool. I need to check the ph and put in some chemicals -- you wouldn't believe the bodily fluids that wind up in this water."

"Don't tell me. I don't want to know." He grinned and followed Thor's lead. "Just point me to a chair and I'll sit and wait."

Thor guided him over to the stairs, putting his hands on the railing. "It'll only take me a minute or two. I just don't want to forget or we'll get in tomorrow and I'll have to make them do calisthenics while the chemicals dilute."

"No stress." He made his way up the stairs and sat at the top of the ledge. Paul rested and listened to Thor move around, water splashing near his feet.

It wasn't very long at all before a hand fell on his shoulder, warm and familiar. "All right, Doc, I'm all finished up for the night. Let's get changed and get you into my bed."

"Sounds like an excellent plan."

He stood and followed easily. He still didn't trust the water, but he did trust Thor, trusted him enough to meet him halfway.

Chapter Five

Coming in the pool had taken the edge off and Thor managed to not jump Paul again in his office, in the car back to his place, or the minute he opened the door to his apartment. Instead, he gallantly offered his arm and asked if Paul wanted the two-cent tour to familiarize himself with the place.

"Hey, I'll even pay for the nickel tour." Paul wrapped his hand around Thor's arm, a look of concentration on his face. "We're at the front door, right?"

"Yeah and there's a hallway right in front of us -- it's clear all the way down to the kitchen with doors on the right hand side. Each one lets into a different room -- living room, bedroom, bathroom and then, like I said, kitchen at the end."

He took Paul around the small apartment, apologizing for stuff that was in the way and naming each piece of furniture as they went by it. Soon enough they were in the small kitchen and he sat Paul at the breakfast table.

"You want some supper? I make a mean spaghetti. Or we could, you know, order something later and just go make like rabbits."

Paul's hands moved over the table, finding the salt and pepper shakers, the stacks of bills, the little jar of toothpicks. "I'd love something to drink and honestly? I vote we order in later." Paul chuckled, the sound low and rumbling and sexy. "Besides, you owe me breakfast from that first night, remember, Coach?"

"I remember. I remember we tried several times to go to IHOP and got stalled before we got out the door each time." He chuckled, the memory making him hard. "I've got pop, water and coffee if you want to take the time for me to make it."

"Water. Save the coffee for breakfast." Paul tilted his head. "I smell something good -- cinnamon?"

"Cinnamon? I don't know -- I warmed up some buns from the bakery today and they had cinnamon in them. You've got a pretty good sniffer on you, Doc." He opened a couple of bottles of water and set one down against Paul's hand, sitting across from his lover.

"Yeah, I rely on it a lot." Paul's fingers slid up the bottle, almost stroking it. "Like you -- I can smell you in my bed sometimes now."

His cock went from interested to outright gotta have him now hungry. "Fuck, Paul... You're going to have me creaming in my shorts."

An eyebrow appeared over black glasses. "What? I'm just sitting, Coach!"

"And talking, and not just talking, but saying sexy things. Not to mention that thing you're doing with the bottle..."

"The bottle?" Those long fingers slid up and down again, tongue sliding out to lick pink lips.

He groaned. "Paul... are you finished your drink? I need you to meet my bed."

Paul wrapped those lips around the neck of the bottle, throat working as he drank. "All done, Thor. Take me to bed."

"Fuck, yes." He got up, almost knocking his chair over in haste. It was probably bad manners and horrible etiquette to rush your guest into bed like this, but Paul drove him crazy, made him so dammed horny.

Paul stood, holding his hands out to him, fingers trembling. "Show me."

He grabbed Paul's hand and started tugging him back to the bedroom. "You make me so hot, Paul."

Paul followed along, laughing and stumbling behind him. "You're something else, Thor. So fucking sexy."

"Me?" He laughed and pushed Paul up against the wall, rubbing and kissing. "I'm an amateur in the sexy department next to you, Doc."

"Not a fucking chance." Paul's hands found his ass, squeezing and rubbing. "Want to feel you inside me, Thor. Want to feel you everywhere."

A shudder moved through him. "Fuck. Bed. Now."

He grabbed Paul's hand and got him into the bedroom quick, pulling his own clothes off and then working on Paul's. Paul grabbed his hands, brought them to his lips. "Slow down a little. You're making me dizzy. I need to know where we are, where's your bed?"

"Fuck, I'm sorry, Paul. It's just that when you say those things..." A shudder moved through him.

"I don't intend to stop saying them, I just need to know you're here and I'm here and where it's safe to let my knees collapse." Paul winked, licking his knuckles, nibbling on his fingers.

His chuckle was half moan. "The bed's three steps behind you. Me? I'm right here." He turned his hand, taking Paul's and pulling it down to his cock, already hard and eager.

"Oh, fuck. Thor. Feels so fucking hot in my hand. I can't imagine how it's going to feel inside me." Paul's cheeks were flushed, eyes bright and unfocused in the lamplight.

"Like heaven if we do it right."

"Everything we've done has been close to heaven, Coach. Hell, you even made the pool feel good."

"Well we've saved the best for last. I'm going to make you see stars, Doc." He leaned forward and whispered softly into Paul's ear. "And I mean that literally."

Paul moaned, pressing close. "I want you, Thor. Show me your bed. Show me stars."

He nodded, pulling Paul's pants off and pushing the open shirt off Paul's shoulders. He guided Paul to his bed, positioning his lover on hands and knees. "It'll be best like this."

Paul's hands explored the blanket, the sheets, the width of the bed, fingers searching the pillows. "It's big enough for two."

"Barely -- I sprawl, remember?" He stroked his hands along Paul's back, from shoulders to ass and back up again.

"You've always fit just fine next to me." Paul purred, arching under his hands, skin warm and soft, supple.

He tilted his head. Paul was right -- he didn't sprawl when they slept together. "I guess I just needed the right body to curl up with."

He started dropping kisses on Paul's spine.

"Mmmm... Thor... That feels good." Deep and rich normally, when Paul was excited, hungry, his voice

growled and purred. It was more than enough to make him come, but he forced himself to focus on Paul, to make this good for his lover.

"I just need to get some lube," he murmured, pressing a biting kiss onto Paul's ass. "Not going anywhere but leaning past you to reach the bedside table."

Paul squeaked and chuckled. "What's on your bedside table, Coach?"

"Well there's a lamp, my radio," he felt himself blushing as he mentioned that. "A box of condoms, some coaching handbooks and, what I'm here for, a pot of lube."

"Your radio? To listen to my show?"

He chuckled. Trust Paul to pick up on that. "Yeah, Doc. To listen to your show. Every night -- nine 'til midnight, I've got me a date with the sexiest voice in the world."

Paul blushed a bright, deep red. "How is it in person?"

"Even sexier, Doc. Even sexier." He got back and slid between Paul's legs. He kissed the small of Paul's back. "Your voice is a real turn-on, Doc. No doubt about it."

"Yeah? Good." Paul was trembling a little, pressing back against him with a purr.

He stroked Paul's skin, so soft and warm. His fingers danced along the sweet crease. Paul opened to him, thighs spreading a bit, so trusting. "You haven't done this before, have you, Paul?"

"No, Thor." Paul shook his head. "Does that matter to you?"

"Yes, it does, Paul. "

"Yeah?" Paul shifted, stilling a little.

"Yeah." He leaned over Paul and kissed the skin beneath his ear. "Makes it extra special."

"Oh..." The skin under his lips heated, Paul nuzzling into the touch. "Thank you."

"No, Paul, thank you for sharing this with me." He licked Paul's ear. "I'm gonna do everything I can to make sure it's the best you could possibly have."

"It'll be you. That's who I want."

He hummed against Paul's skin. "Romantic," he murmured, lips and tongue working over warm flesh, heading slowly back down Paul's body.

"What did you expect from the "Loving and Leaving Show" deejay, Coach?" Paul's chuckle was warm, a little breathy.

He circled the small of Paul's back with his tongue, while he got some lube on one of his fingers. "I'm not sure what I expected, Paul, but I like what I got."

Paul's answer was a purr, hips shifting, rocking slowly.

"Not only romantic but so sensual. I don't think I've ever had a lover who responds to my touch like you do, Doc. It's heady." He rubbed his slick finger along Paul's crack, teasing the wrinkled little hole. The little motions slowed, then Paul's body responded, skin flushing, muscles twitching and clenching beneath his touch.

"I'm going inside now," he murmured, free hand sliding along Paul's side. He gently, but firmly pushed his finger in. Paul was hot, so incredibly tight, squeezing his finger with a pressure that took his breath away. He moaned. "Oh, man, you're going to feel amazing around my cock."

A soft murmur sounded, Paul shifting, sliding slowing on his finger. "You think you'll fit, Coach?"

He bent and kissed Paul's spine, lips nibbling gently. "With a little work -- preparation's half the fun, Doc."

Paul chuckled, the sound mixed with a low moan. "Only half?"

"Yeah, Doc -- the actual main event's pretty fucking awesome."

Another chuckle and Paul's body clenched around his finger. "Pun intended?"

"I wish I could say yes, but it just kind of happened." Thor slid a second finger in. "I hope you aren't dating me for my scintillating wit."

"Nah... I'm dating you because you smell good and you have good taste in music and you make me happy." Paul's thighs parted, head dropping between his shoulders.

"Oh..." He could feel something get tight in his belly, something warm and good. He kept moving his finger, adding in another, stretching Paul, hoping to make him feel damned good. "Thank you," he whispered.

"For the truth, Thor?" Oh, God, that voice was sweet, rich and dark and husky and it was meant for him. "Anytime."

He moaned softly, rubbing his cock against Paul's thigh, fingers pushing, curling. They stroked across the tiny, flat gland and Paul jerked, body clenching, head flying back onto his shoulders. "Thor!"

He chuckled, the sound low and husky. "Yeah, Doc?" he asked, sliding his fingers across the same spot again.

"Oh! Oh, fuck. Coach! Love!" Paul cheeks were flushed, body shaking and rocking into his hand.

"Oh, you like that, do you?" He laughed again, feeling happy and good and wanting in that tight heat so badly.

"God, yes. Oh, Thor, it's like electricity but bigger, better." Paul was gasping, one hand reaching back for him.

He took Paul's hand and hit the spot again before letting his fingers slide away. "I think you're ready for me now, Doc."

Paul nodded. "I want you. Want to feel you."

He nuzzled the back of Paul's neck and gave his hand a squeeze. "It's gonna be so good, Paul."

One last kiss to Paul's neck and he was lining his cock up along the tiny, slick hole. He rubbed the tip of his cock against Paul's entrance.

"Oh... you're hot and so smooth..." Paul hummed, body still, focused on feeling him.

"Yeah, dicks are a wonderful thing." He groaned and pushed, just getting the very tip of his cock in

before he pulled back again.

Paul snorted and gasped. "Smartass."

He chuckled and bent to give Paul's skin another soft kiss. Then he started to push in more seriously, going in and out and back in again, a little further into Paul's body with each slow thrust.

Paul stayed still, body so tight and hot, surrounding and holding him in an incredible grip. He stroked Paul's sides, slid his fingers up and down the man's back, whispering quiet words of encouragement. Slowly Paul began to push back into his thrusts, just a bit, enough to feel.

"Oh fuck, oh yeah, Doc... good. Yeah, little by little, take me in." He was babbling a bit now, making noises he could hardly hear above the pounding of his heartbeat. Paul was so tight, so hot and it was so good inside him.

They moved together, Paul's motions slow and smooth, following his lead, finding his rhythm. It wasn't that long before he was all the way inside Paul's body, his thrusts slow and long now, hands hard on Paul's hips. Sweat sheened across Paul's back, the muscles rolling as they moved.

"Good, Doc. So fucking hot. And tight. Yeah, tight. Good." He thrust a little faster now as Paul moved with him, confident he wasn't causing his lover any pain.

Paul whimpered, keening soft and low, thighs wide as their hips met again and again.

When he was getting close, that feeling of too much goodness starting at his spine, he reached around and started pumping Paul's cock, thumb sliding over the tip every time it went by. The sounds grew more desperate, raw, the shudders that rocked Paul's body visible.

"Oh yeah, Paul. You like that. Like it so much. Gonna love this." He shifted, stroking in hard and nailing Paul's gland.

Paul's fingers twisted in the sheets, a sharp cry splitting the air. His cock was squeezed, muscles rippling as heat splashed over his hand, the scent of Paul's spunk sharp.

"Oh yeah, Doc. Fuck. So fucking good. Yeah. Coming now, Paul. Coming!" Small, sharp jerks of his hips accompanied his words and he spilled into Paul as pleasure shot through his body. He slumped down against Paul's back, feeling his lover fight to catch his breath, muscles shifting and shuddering beneath his weight. Groaning, he pulled out and managed to shift over next to Paul. He slid his hand over sweat-slick skin. "You all right, Doc?"

Paul nodded, settling beside him with a soft groan. "Yeah. You?"

"Fanfuckingtastic, Doc." He leaned over and gave Paul a soft kiss. "Thank you, lover."

One soft hand traced over his face, slow and careful, and then Paul smiled. "Thank you. I'll never forget what it felt like to see stars the first time."

He kissed Paul's fingers as they passed, that warm feeling back in his belly. "Hopefully the first of many."

"I hope so." Paul's face relaxed, fingers moving slow and lazy, mapping him.

"I like the way you do that."

Paul's eyebrow rose. "Do what? Look at you?"

"Yeah. Feels..." He shrugged, unsure quite how to put it. "Makes me feel special. I hope that doesn't

sound insulting."

"No, it doesn't." Paul reached up and brushed his bottom lip, a wry grin appearing. "Now hush. I'm trying very hard not to be a fool and fall in love and you're not helping right now."

"Oh..." Oh. The warmth in his belly kind of flip-flopped and grew. He squeezed Paul tight. "Can't have that, Doc." His voice was husky, slightly breathless.

Paul's arms wrapped around him, hot face burying in his shoulder. "No?"

"No, 'cause then I might have to admit I'm falling in love with you and that would totally shatter the cool image I've got working here."

He felt Paul's grin, felt the increase of heat in those cheeks. "I promise not to notice if your image slips, Coach. I'm good that way."

He blinked for a moment and then laughed, the sound easy, breaking the intensity of the moment. "Thanks, Doc, I appreciate it."

The chuckles tickled his skin, Paul's hands starting that curious, busy moving again. "Anytime, Thor. Anytime at all."

He reached over and turned out the light before turning onto his side and curling into the Thor shaped place against Paul's body. He could get used to anytime being all the time.

Strangely enough, the thought didn't scare him.

Bus Story #1

Author's note: Okay, so I was on the bus, right?

And this guy stomps on, so pissed off that you can smell the anger, you know? Body-building kid, blond and buzz-cut, fucking melt in your chair blue eyes. He's got the whole package, you know? Worn khakis, plaid button-down with the sleeves cut off, combat boots. Neat enough to suggest that he chooses to dress this way instead of has to, but not a poser. Sweaty, nostrils flaring, sheer fucking primal man.

He stomps on, walks down and sits, staring out the window. He's got some odd scarrage on his cheeks, but his neck is badly carved up -- interesting and rough edged -- this doesn't have the intent of razor work or even that fabulous somehow snake-like violence that knife wounds leave. This is a mark of an accident.

At any rate, the bus toodles on and heads toward the next stop. There's this skinny guy, holding a skateboard, running in the sun like the hounds of hell are going for his ass.

He makes the bus, steps up -- boarder all way: orange and purple spiky hair, eyebrow and lip pierced, tats, t-shirt, baggy jeans, canvas tennies -- bright red and panting. He's searching through his pockets -- no change. The bus driver (a big old black man who maybe has smiled three times in his entire life and all three of those were during blowjobs) barks at him to get off and the kid just sort of blinks and a couple of tears start and he turns to get off the bus.

The big guy sighs, stands up, pays the kid's fare without a word and takes the kid's transfer. He walks back and sit in a 3 seat row and the kid sits beside him -- not one word. The big guy looks out the window, the boarder sniffling.

Then the kid (although they were about the same age) turns his head. The kid has a tat on his neck the same size/shape as the big guy's scar.

Pretty fucking cool, huh?

And so the Bus Stories were born.

He was going to kick Benny's ass.

Kick it hard and brutal until that thieving, lying, lazy, ungrateful, selfish little son of a bitch landed into next week. Maybe next month. Maybe next fucking...

Benny sniffled again and he made the fatal mistake of looking down.

Damnit.

The only thing that broke his heart faster than those big eyes filled with tears was seeing those big eyes looking up at with that blind fucking faith.

He handed Benny the bandana out of his back pocket. "Stop it, Benny. Right now. We're fixing to have to get off at the transfer center and I don't want you getting your ass kicked. That's my job."

"I'm sorry, Jonathon," Benny told him for what felt like the five millionth time. He dabbed at his eyes and then blew his nose on the bandana before handing it back. "I'm sorry."

Johnathon tucked the bandana away and shook his head. He needed to stop at the payphone at the 7-11

and call Momma and ask if he could come do laundry this weekend. If they spent the day, that'd be a whole day of meals they wouldn't have to buy. Hell, Benny was looking skinny enough; she might buy a bill of groceries. Maybe. "I know Benny. Just let it be for now. Let's go home, 'kay?"

Benny sniffed again and nodded his head. A soft, brief touch slid against his arm, just above his elbow and then the kid was clutching his board with both hands.

He had \$64 bucks left in his pocket and Uncle Jerry wouldn't pay again until the 1st -- twelve days. But the lights were on and the foreman on the road crew said he'd be calling him back. Thank God Momma was good about coming over with messages or he'd be fucked.

And, what was it Benny said? Oh, right, not in that fun, spanky way, either.

Benny got up first, grabbing the transfer out of his hand and heading for the door, not looking back.

Jonathon nodded at the bus driver, going to sit and wait for the Number One, looking around for where Benny'd gotten off to. The kid was standing in a cluster with a group of boardies, bumming a cigarette off one of them, sunlight glinting off the ring in his eyebrow.

He watched the bag ladies and the coeds and the poor fucks in cheap suits that were temps in one building or another. He wondered about who they were, where they were going, almost asleep but not in that been pick pocketed at the bus stop before sort of way. He looked over at Benny and grinned.

Not that that was always bad.

As if he'd felt Jonathon's grin, Benny looked up over at him, a smile hiding behind the cigarette.

He was the biggest idiot in the state. Maybe the biggest idiot ever born. But he was a really, really lucky idiot who had a beautiful, kind-hearted, thieving, thoughtless bastard in his bed. "C'mon Benny. Here's our bus."

The kid handed the end of his cigarette to one of the other boardies and jogged lightly over to the back of the line-up for the bus. "We getting off early to pick up supper, J?"

"Sure babe. McD's has burgers for 47 cents apiece. For three bucks, we'll have a feast, you and me, right?" \$60 would be enough to take them through.

"Cool."

They got on, crowding together as the bus filled up. Benny looked up at him, question in his eyes; with the bus this crowded he could pick a couple of pockets with no one the wiser.

He shook his head at Benny. They had cash; they weren't going to steal. Not unless they had to. Benny gave him a half shrug and turned to look out the window. The bus started moving, Benny pushed against him as they went over a bump. He looked down at Benny, grinning. "My wallet better not so much as shift pockets, Benjamin, or you're sleeping on the balcony."

Those big eyes looked up at him, all innocence. "I wouldn't steal from you, J -- you're paying for supper."

"You just remember that." He reached up and pulled the string. "Our stop, Benny."

Benny let him cut through the crowd and then they were walking side by side, the kid almost skipping to keep up with his stride as they headed for McDonald's. "You want a coke or a shake with our burgers -- and not strawberry, we're gonna have to share."

"Chocolate shake, J. And you should have let me lighten someone's load -- we could have eaten like

kings."

"Those people work for their money, Benny, just like me." He sighed and shook his head. "What would we do if someone took the last of our grocery money?"

"I'd lift a few wallets." The kid blinked up at him like it was fucking obvious.

"Benny! You're not... Can't you?" Jonathon started to laugh. He loved Benny. Really. Really and truly. "Food, Benny. Food."

Benny grinned at him. "Yeah, I'm starving."

"I know, Benny. I know."

Benny scrounged through the bottom drawer; sure he'd stashed a pack of smokes there. He'd made do with only one burger and let J have the lion's share of the shake, trying to make up for screwing up back at the mall, but the hole in his belly wasn't very impressed.

A couple of cigs would do the trick though.

Aha! There it was, squished way at the back. He pulled it out and grimaced -- there was only one left. He shrugged -- it would have to do.

He headed out to the balcony and lit up, leaning against the rail as he smoked it slowly, making it last.

He kept an ear out for J, listening for signs he was still angry.

The music kept playing -- one song after another -- hard and grungy and loud and... fuck, yeah, J was still angry, but angry in that way that said J'd decided what was next and next and then next after that. That was J's problem, man; he was one fucking step after another, not just riding shit.

It was gonna give J a heart attack one day.

The cig burned down to the filter and he let it drop. Fuck it, he was going in. It was too hot to stand out here like a scared kid; if J was gonna yell at him some more -- well at least it was cool in the apartment.

When he opened the door, he saw something that made him grin. Sit-ups -- one after another. Fucking endless sit-ups that would leave J sweaty and breathing hard and ripped. Sit-ups always came after the crunches and the push-ups.

He went and crouched down in front of J, watching from up close. He loved how all those muscles worked together.

J grinned at him when he came up, kissing his chin. "Taste good."

Then he went back down.

He slid his hands over J's knees, waiting for him to come up again.

J's entire body rippled when he sat back up, tiny little nipples hard, entire body gleaming in the lamplight. Nobody was really expecting him to hold back now, were they? J knew, he just had to, that there was no way he was going to be able to resist touching.

Blue eyes -- blue enough that he'd thought they were contacts. Nobody but J had those eyes -- flashed at

him, teasing.

He grinned back and slid his hand along the tight, working muscles, loving the feel of them under his hand as J worked them: hard and hot and slick with J's sweat.

The next time J came up, one hand cupped his neck and pulled him into a hard, quick kiss that made his knees weak -- which was probably cool because he was kneeling, but still -- damn. Then he went back down again. He let his hand move up, flicking across one of those small nipples before going back down to the rippling stomach muscles.

Three more sit-ups, each one with a hard kiss, and then J collapsed backwards. Panting, arms up over his head, naked and sweaty and not quite hard -- fuck but his J was something else.

All those firm, thick muscles, the long body that just went on and on... J was everything he wasn't. He laid himself out on top of J, resting their lips together.

J's eyes were bright, fucking bright against the purple beach towel that he used to work out on. His tongue crept out, stroked against the corner of Benny's mouth.

Benny smiled. J had forgiven him enough for this. It was gonna be okay. He moved his lips against J's, the stud in his lip rubbing between them. J didn't deepen it, didn't move really -- just sort of came down from whatever adrenaline high he was on as they shared breath.

He loved this, loved lying on his J-mattress. It was warm and hardbutsoft and it made him hard but it wasn't urgent, it was just good.

A half-dozen times J took a breath to talk, or he did, but they didn't. They just didn't. The music just kept playing, one loud, driving song after another.

He finally couldn't take the stillness anymore and wriggled, rubbing himself against J, wishing he'd taken his clothes off. But the lights were on and J was so hot and hard and he was just... scrawny and pale.

"Lose the shirt, Benny."

"Yeah, okay." He got up and went and turned the light off and then shimmied out of his clothes, kicking away his shoes and letting everything else just drop on the floor where he was standing. Then he was back on top of J, groaning happily as all that hot skin pressed against him.

"You worried the neighbors are gonna see you still?" One of J's hands still down his back, cupped his ass. He half shrugged, most of his attention on the sensation of J's skin against his own, the large, hot hand on his ass. J's fingers were tickling, running along the crease where his butt cheek met his leg. "Love this spot. Feels good."

He pushed back against J's fingers, trying to make the touch harder. The motions rubbed his cock along J's stomach and he groaned. Shit, J felt so good. J chuckled, kept up the light, easy touches. Benny could feel J's cock -- hotter than the rest of him, even -- nudging against his thigh, sort of poking and just making its presence known.

He forgot about J's fingers and just concentrated on the hot cock, rubbing and rolling on the slick skin. J gave a choked little groan and pushed back, legs parting so they settled closer together. Benny slid down far enough so that their cocks slid together, his mouth finding one of those little nipples already hard and waiting for him.

One of J's hands cupped his head as the strong hips rocked up, pushing into him. Oh, shit, it felt so good. Not even the high from getting his tats could leave him trembling and needing like this.

"Oh, man, Benny. Oh, man..." J sounded like he'd just been running.

He left a bite on J's nipple and then went to find the other one, nuzzling along the warm skin. J's hands and hips moved against him, harder and more, wanting him so bad.

He wanted J, too. Wanted to feel that long cock inside him, making him forget everything but how good it felt.

J's hand tugged him up for another kiss, this one deep and slow and really hungry.

Oh...

Yeah, that was nice. Very nice.

"Gonna fuck me, J? Please?"

J shuddered, hands tightening. "Oh, God. Yeah, Benny. Yeah, whatever you want."

"Want you to fuck me." He did. He wanted to know J still wanted him, to feel the hard thrusts, to be taken and needed.

"Get on the mattress, Benny. I'll get the lube." J held him tight for another second and then let him go, rolling him and padding to the tiny bathroom for the tube of Astroglide as he climbed over onto the old blanket-camouflaged mattress. "You want it hands and knees or face-to-face?"

"I don't know, J. I want it hard -- I want to feel you."

J dropped the lube and stopped short. "Oh... oh, Benny. Get on the damned mattress."

He got on and lay down on his back, watching as J picked up the lube and came over.

J lubed up his cock, stroking it long and slow. He handed Benny the lube. "Get yourself ready? I want to watch."

That made him shudder, that hungry look in J's eyes, the way his voice got extra deep. Benny licked his lips and pushed some of the lube out onto his fingers and reached down, eyes on J's, watching J as J watched him.

"Fuck, Benny. You're so goddamned sexy." J's voice was everywhere.

He didn't see how J could think so, but when J said it like that he believed it and he rode his fingers, wanting to make J keep seeing whatever it was he was seeing.

"Yeah, Benny. I... oh, God..." J dropped to his knees, crawling toward him. "You're gonna make me come just from watching you."

"Me?" He looked down at himself, body slight and pale in the light shinning in from the street lamp.

"You, Benny. Fuck, you're..." J smiled at him. "You're who I want. Who I love, you know?"

That made him grin all over, even deep inside and he stopped fucking himself and held open his arms -- he wanted J to fuck him now.

J crawled close, cock pushing against him, insistent and strong. "Hard, right? So you can feel it?"

"Yes, J." He pulled his knees up, opening himself up to J. "Please."

J groaned. "Fuck, so sexy, Benny."

Then J dropped his head and pushed in, starting up a hard, slow rhythm that threatened to drill him through the floor. He whimpered, rolling up into each thrust, meeting it.

Nobody wanted him like J, needed him, ached for him -- and J proved it to him, fucking him just like he needed it. He wrapped his legs around J's waist and grabbed onto the solid biceps.

They rocked together, J humming and groaning and pressing and then one hand reached down and started pumping him in time with those deep, rattling thrusts.

Shit, that was really good, almost too good and he fought his orgasm -- he didn't want to come yet, he wanted to stay here in this place where he was sexy and J was loving on him and it was only the two of them, moving hard and fast together.

"Love you, Benny. Wanna fuck you forever." J's mouth moved over his cheek, looking for his mouth.

"Yes, J. Love you forever." Their mouths fused together, J's tongue fucking him like his thick cock and Benny felt like he'd been pushed off a cliff and now he was soaring through the air, coming and coming.

J was pushing fast now, grunting and pushing and making needy sounds that meant he was sexy and J needed him and love him and J was gonna come. He just held on, riding the thrusts, loving them, loving how J made him feel and he poured all that into the kiss.

He felt when J's heat filled him, the hard body shuddering and rocking above him. He let his hands slide up J's arms to wrap around his neck. "Love you, J," he whispered, holding on tight.

"Love you, Benny. Really, really." He sighed happily, loving the solid weight of J on him, pushing him into the mattress. J nuzzled close, eyes falling shut, lips moving in lazy patterns over his skin.

He could try to be good for this -- he didn't want to screw it up. He would be good. He made the silent promise.

He hoped it stuck this time. Really, really.

The Present

Something had the staff all-atwitter.

It was a strange word and not one that Gaston usually associated with his model of cool efficiency servants, but it certainly fit today.

When Consta passed the music room, he stopped her. "What's going on?"

"There's been a delivery."

"Of what?"

"I'm on my way to find out, so that I may announce it to you." He knew that tone of voice; it meant he was interfering with Consta's neat and orderly household.

He wanted to go see, but knew better than to follow the tall butler. She would be back, and if not, he'd ask one of the kitchen boys later.

He pretended he didn't care, pretended to listen to the aria that was playing. Ziantos' Prelude to War. It was a stirring piece. Captivating. Really.

He made Consta clear her throat before acknowledging her presence. "Yes?"

"Master Gaston, the delivery was for you -- a present from your Sire and Dame." The box behind the butler was large, taller than her knees. Silver and ornate, with a thick lock and a number of fine grates surrounding the top edge -- the packaging itself was quite regal, lovely.

"Oh!" It was interesting and unusual enough that he forgot to be mad and stuffy with Consta. "Is there a key?"

She nodded and handed him an envelope. He opened the fine paper and found a note in his father's heavy hand concealing a heavy metal key. *"Our dearest G., Your mother and I have missed you terribly on our travels and think of you always. We hope this gift finds you well and happy. Please enjoy your new companion and care for it well. With love and honor. Father."*

He bounced a little, happily ignoring the little voice that noted this was yet another gift instead of a visit.

He noted that Consta hadn't gone yet, as she usually would have -- she obviously was as curious as he was about what was in the box.

"Thank you, Consta, I wouldn't want to disturb your day any further."

He waited until she'd gone and closed the door behind her before walking around the box and trying to see in through the grating.

Something moved, scooting back away from him as he walked. The sound that floated up was soft, almost sweet, curious and frightened all once. Oh!

Father had not meant companion metaphorically. With trembling hands, terribly excited and curious, he undid the lock.

The heavy side of the box slid open, the metal covered in a lush, ruby-red fur. For a long moment nothing happened, then a small, five-fingered hand slid out into the light. Fine and smooth, almost glowing in the sunlight, the hand looked unreal, delicate.

Oh.

Oh, how wonderful!

He took a couple of steps back and looked down into the cage, to see what was attached to that lovely hand.

Huge, wide, dark eyes blinked at him and another soft noise sounded.

"Hello there," he said softly, holding out his hand.

Slowly, so slowly, his new companion appeared, bald and naked, skin perfect. It crawled on all fours, moving with a nervous trembling. Its head was round, nose small and thin, not a bit of fur or feather.

Very interesting. Very odd.

He reached toward it, moving his hand in front of its nose, cooing softly. "I won't hurt you, little pretty."

The little thing sniffed at him, nudged at his fingers. The big eyes looked around, wide and searching and the deepest blue.

He stroked the smooth skin, making a happy noise. So warm!

It clicked and cooed, almost rippling beneath his hands. Gaston watched as it rubbed against his hands, his legs, then started exploring, climbing up onto the furniture, face rubbing on the fabrics.

Oh, it was wonderful.

He checked the letter from his father again, wondering if it had a name, but it didn't. Or if it did, his father hadn't said.

"What's your name?" he asked it.

It looked over, blinked and trilled softly, then started to climb onto the table, legs stretching.

Oh. It was a he.

He giggled happily. He always got along better with males. Women... were very domineering. Like Consta. Or his mother.

He sat in his chair, legs curled up under him and watched, fascinated.

The entire room was searched, the books ignored, the bowl of riverstones clicked and purred over, the vase of flowers... nibbled on.

It made him laugh, the creature starting at the sound and scuttling into a corner, watching him. He stayed still and crooned softly. "I'm not going to hurt you."

It tilted its head, blinking. Then it crooned at him, the sound an exact match to his own. He made

another soft sound. It was repeated, the creature moving toward him.

He changed the noise he made slightly, singing-songing a word. "He-llo."

"He-llo." The word was followed by a soft giggle, the creature coming almost close enough to touch.

A sharp knock came at the door, making him jump, so intent had his focus been on the magical creature. The creature squeaked, barreling towards its box, and hiding in the shadows.

He glared at the door. "Come."

It was Consta, as he knew it would be. She came in, trying to look surreptitiously into the box.

"What do you want?" he asked, refusing to enlighten her, wanting her to go so that the creature would come out again.

"I merely wished to know if you required food."

He nodded, wondering what the creature ate -- that wasn't on his father's note either.

"I want some salad," he told her, remembering his new companion trying to eat the flowers. "And some pineapple."

Consta arched an eyebrow but didn't give voice to her thoughts. She merely bowed her head and retreated.

The soft trills and coos didn't take long to start again, the curious creature peering out of the box, looking towards him. It rubbed against the fur on the door of the box, watching him.

"He-llo," he sang again.

That bell chime laugh sounded. "He-llo."

He giggled and held out his hand. "Come here. It's okay, come here."

He was watched for a long moment and then the creature hurried out of the box, moving toward him with a happy sound. As soon as the creature was in reach, Gaston petted him gently, enjoying the glide of smooth, warm skin beneath his fingertips.

He murmured nonsense words as he pet.

The creature stretched and purred, twined around him. It would move to look, to touch some piece of cloth or furniture, but made sure to stay close enough for his hands to keep petting, whether it was a smooth shoulder or the thin, blue-banded ankle.

"Do you have a name?" he asked the creature.

Those big eyes blinked at him. "Na-ame?"

He nodded and pointed to himself. "Griziek. Well, everyone calls me Gaston, but Griziek is really my name."

"Griz... Griz... Griz-zie?" The creature's voice was musical, interesting.

He laughed. "I guess that's close enough."

He pointed to himself again. "Grizzie."

Then he pointed to his pet.

The creature frowned, then blinked, pointing to his own flat belly. "El-lem."

"Ellem. Wonderful!" His pet could talk! Ellem could talk!

The creature trilled at him, turning toward the window, nose wrinkling as it... as Ellem explored.

The knock came at the door again, it opening to let one of the kitchen boys in with a tray. Ellem stayed very still, silent, curled up in the shadows near the curtains, eyes watching. Still, his pet didn't run for the box.

Tokris left the tray on the table, giving him a shallow head nod. He was too excited about Ellem though to pay much attention.

He turned to his pet. "Food. Yum."

Another tilt, another blink, and then Ellem sniffed, eyes going wide. He chuckled when he heard his pet's belly growl, a sharp, needy sound filling the air.

"Come and eat," he said, taking a piece of pineapple and eating it. "It's good."

He picked up another piece and held it out to Ellem.

Ellem wandered over, sniffing. Then the bit was carefully nibbled, plucked out of his fingers and eaten.

"These leaves can be eaten," he told Ellem, pointing to the large salad bowl.

Ellem crawled up beside him on the big chair, nuzzling his hand, licking it with a warm, soft tongue. Then his pet took a few pieces of lettuce, nibbling. He petted Ellem, fingers sliding over the smooth, warm skin, petting the hairless skull and down along the long spine.

In a lot of ways, Ellem was very much like a Lizus, though he didn't have the wings, or even just the wing bones like Gaston himself. And no claws, and his eyes were that strange, beautiful deep blue. As if on cue, the mere thought of his wing bones made them ache, the constant dull throb flaring into sharp stabs.

Ellem made an odd noise -- a mixture of worried purr and curious trill -- then started rubbing one cheek along his chest, almost as if Ellem were searching for something.

Finally his pet found his aching wing bones and began rubbing them, purring softly, cheek sliding over the bumps.

Oh!

Oh....

The pain slowly subsided back into a dull, almost unnoticeable throb and tears began to flow down his cheeks. No one ever touched his deformity; no one ever cared to ease his pain, telling him it was all in his head, that there was no way there could be pain there.

Ellem kept purring, crawling over him to lap away his tears, then ease the other side, a warm solid weight in his arms. He finally curled up in the chair, Ellem in his lap, occasionally licking him, his own fingers slowly trailing over warm skin.

He wondered if his father had any idea, when he'd purchased Ellem, what a wonderful thing he was doing. It didn't matter; he finally had a companion who seemed to accept him just as he was.

He stayed until the Griz-zie slept, then He went exploring. This place smelled new, smelled like the Griz-zie and sweet-food.

The Before Place was smaller than this and there were more like him -- the Clutch was there, dreaming in a Big Pile. Still, his Alone Bed was good -- warm and soft and smelled of the Clutch. The Now Place with Griz-zie had Things and Light and yellowbrightsweetgoodfood.

Ellem nodded, pulling soft things off of hard things to see what was under. He would Stay.

The Griz-zie had Need Pains. Ellem could feel them inside. All Pinari could feel Need Pains and Touch them. The Griz-zie liked the Touching.

Yes.

Good.

He would Stay at the Now Place.

The Griz-zie made a Waking Noise.

Ellem climbed up on the Hard Thing that held many Small Things, perching, watching. Sometimes Masters woke up Grumpy and One of the Clutch should be wary.

The Griz-zie blinked and yawned, eyes going to his Alone Bed and then to the Hard Thing He sat on.

The Griz-zie smiled. "Ellem."

"Griz-zie." He nodded. So, the Griz-zie did not wake up Grumpy. This was of the Good.

The Griz-zie held out his hand. "Come, Ellem."

He nodded and jumped from Hard Thing to Sun Square to Floor to Griz-zie. "Griz-zie."

The Griz-zie Laughed and Stroked him, fingers gentle on him.

Oh. Good. The touch was Good. Ellem nuzzled in, Singing his happiness, Singing away the Need Pains.

The Griz-zie crooned, made Good Noises and was Happy.

The Big Sound came, making the Griz-zie jump and be Tense.

He Frowned and Growled at the Big Sound, making himself not Hide in the Alone Bed. The Griz-zie needed him. He would Protect the Griz-zie like a Good Pinari.

The Griz-zie's hands stuttered and stilled. "Come in."

He turned to See what the Griz-zie Saw, Growling low. Bad Sound. Scare the Griz-zie. Bad Sound.

It was the Big Mean one from before.

"Oh. Are you sure you should be letting that thing sit in your lap, Gaston?"

Big Mean Bad Sound Thing. He Rumbled and Puffed Up, trying to Protect the Griz-zie.

The Griz-zie's hands started moving again, Stroking, Smoothing.

"Yes."

"Mmm." He purred his pleasure, Stretching and Turning for the Griz-zie's hand.

"See? Father wouldn't send me anything dangerous."

"Well. Is there anything else at the moment, Sir?"

"No Consta. In fact I don't want to be disturbed."

"Very good."

The Big Mean Bad Sound Thing went out again and the Griz-zie sighed.

He Purred and Sang, nuzzling into those good hands. He Sang of the Big Mean Bad Sound Thing growing small and making the Griz-zie smile. He Sang of yellow sweetfood and good green food.

"Oh, Ellem, I am glad you're here."

The Griz-zie wrapped Arms around him and held him Close.

Oh, Good. He pushed in and licked the Griz-zie's jaw. The Griz-zie Laughed.

Very Good!

He licked again. The Griz-zie Taste was Good. Not Wrong or Sour or Bittermeanugly.

The Griz-zie Laughed again, Breath catching, Hands pulling him Closer. "That feels good, Ellem."

"Good Ellem." He nodded and kept licking, adding a Purr. Good. Good Ellem. Good Griz-zie.

"Oh. Ellem, that... You make me..." He could smell the Need on the Griz-zie. Different than the Need Pain. Sweeter. Warmer. He Purred against the long throat, Nuzzling. Touching.

"Oh!" The Griz-zie Gaspd and Touched him again, Hands warm and soft on his Skin.

Ellem Rippled, letting the Griz-zie know how Good it was. Touching was Good. The Griz-zie was Good.

The Griz-zie made a Good Moan and Pulled him Close.

He started exploring, licking here and there. He found the Need Pain Bones and nosed the Wrappings off, laved them. Sang quiet No Hurt songs to them.

The Griz-zie reached back, Stroking him and making Good Noises of Need.

Each Stroke, each Touch made an answering Need in him. He shivered, his Need sliding against the soft Wrappings on the Griz-zie's belly. Oh. Oh. The Clutch Rule about this was Firm. One did not Show Need, Not unless the Master Wanted.

"Oh! Ellem." One of the Griz-zie's Hands slid around his Need, Touching, Stroking, Exploring.

Oh. Oh. Oh.

He shook, soft sounds pushing from his throat. So Big. So Big.

"So hot, Ellem. I never..." The Griz-zie sounded Happy, kept Touching.

His breath pushed out of him, Hard and Hot, his Need sliding and sliding and sliding.

The Griz-zie made a Noise, like Pain but Not, and Trembled against him.

He Licked and Sang and moved and moved, rubbing them together, Easing the Griz-zie, Needing.

The Griz-zie Cried out, Hand going Tight around his Need. The Need burst inside him, outside him, Hot and Wet and Goodgoodgood.

The Griz-zie sank back, Hands Stroking Soft and Good. "Oh, Ellem. Oh, that was... wow."

"W...w...w...wow." The Griz-zie Sang hard Songs, but he would Learn. He was a smart One.

The Griz-zie Laughed -- such a Happy Sound. "Yes, Ellem. Wow."

He Licked the smile and then started to Clean himself. It was Good to be Clean.

"Oh, just a minute!" The Griz-zie leaned over and started Wiping at him with something Soft and White.

Oh! Tickled!

Tickled!

He Giggled and Twisted, Offering more skin and then Slipping Away.

The Griz-zie opened his Coverings and Wiped with the Soft and White as well.

He Smelled, curious to see what the Griz-zie was Hiding. He went to See, to Taste.

The Griz-zie Gasp and Laughed. "You'll make me hard again."

Oh, the Griz-zie Smell was Sharp here, rich with Need and Good. Ellem Licked, the saltsaltsharpsweet new on his tongue.

Another Gasp and the Griz-zie's Hands Slid over his Head, Gentle, Petting.

He Licked and Nuzzled until the Taste was Gone. Then Ellem rested his cheek on the Griz-zie's leg. Good.

"Thank you, Ellem. I've never... nobody has ever done that with me before."

Yes. The Griz-zie Sang Hard Songs. He Purred and Nuzzled, Licking the Griz-zie's hand.

The Griz-zie Smelled Very Happy. It was Good. He was Good to the Griz-zie.

He was Good for the Griz-zie.

Gaston continued to pet Ellem, eyes half closed as he watched his pet licking and nuzzling, rubbing against him.

He had never imagined that anything could feel so good. Oh, he wasn't stupid, he knew how mating worked, knew the mechanics. He even pleased himself when the need came upon him. However, he had never done such a thing with others.

He knew it was done, understood the mechanics, but had never expected to ever touch or be touched in such a manner.

He was still a little stunned that his father had sent such a marvelous gift. Not that his father didn't care, but usually the things were... not to his taste.

Ellem was.

They rested together, Ellem dozing, cheek on his thigh. Then the music changed, the loud percussion of the Hymn to the Gods of War crashing.

Ellem squealed, jumped, eyes wide, scrambling up onto his lap.

He wrapped his arms around Ellem, hands stroking the bony spine, soothing. "It's all right Ellem. Just music."

"Moo-zik?" Ellem cuddled close, wrapping around him.

He nodded. Ellem was so smart. He wondered how long it would take to teach him to speak properly. He rubbed his cheek against Ellem's. Of course, it might take longer with this kind of distraction.

Ellem trilled softly, the wide, dark eyes shining at him. He smiled and pressed their noses together, rubbing those as well. And their lips. Oh... oh, that was nice.

Ellem purred, nuzzling closer, lips rubbing together again.

He made a noise quite like Ellem's purr himself, wanting more of the sensation. It made him tingle. Those wide eyes twinkled and the soft purr sounded again, the brush of lips repeating.

"This is good," he whispered, smiling at Ellem, feeling as if they were sharing a secret. He pressed their lips together again, holding them there this time and moaning softly at the sensation.

Ellem giggled and licked his lips. "G...good. Good Griz-zie."

"Very good." He licked at Ellem's lips, moaning softly.

Ellem made a curious noise, lips parting for him, soft tongue touching his own.

Oh... that was better than nice.

He slid their tongues together again and again, licking at Ellem like he was a sweet ice. Ellem settled more comfortably, draping over him like a heated quilt, cuddling as they... tasted each other.

He licked Ellem's tongue and lips and, feeling daring, slid his tongue into Ellem's mouth. Oh, sweet! Soft. Hot. Ellem let him explore, purring softly, the sound vibrating his tongue.

His shaft was hard again, sliding from between the open folds of his breeches. Ellem's skin was hot and

soft against it, almost silken. He shifted his hips, following his instincts and rubbing. It felt so good.

Little trills and squeaks were pressed into his lips, Ellem's fingers petting his face.

"So good," he murmured, still licking at Ellem's mouth, taking the taste into himself, even as his hips slid his shaft against the sweet, warm skin.

One soft hand reached down, petting his shaft, stroking him.

"Oh!" He bucked up hard, almost dislodging Ellem from his lap. Ellem squeaked and went very, very still, eyes locked to his face. "Again. Please Ellem, do it again."

"Gan?" Ellem frowned, touching his shaft, petting him very carefully.

He gasped and nodded. "Again. Good. Please, Ellem. More."

"G...good." The touches continued, steady and sweet and so soft, Ellem purring low.

He moaned and moved, the touches making him feel so good, better than anything ever had. Ever.

Ellem settled in the crook of his arm, his pet's entire body vibrating against him as Ellem purred. Those fingers wrapped around him, pulling, exploring, making him so hard.

He touched Ellem back, fingers stuttering and sliding. The motions grew slower, stronger, and he could feel every motion, every flutter of Ellem's breath, every single touch.

It became huge, the touching between them, overwhelming everything. He called out, jerked hard, heat spilling from him. It was like flying, so beautiful, so real, and when he floated down, Ellem was still petting him.

"Ellem," he whispered. "My Ellem."

Ellem nodded, placing his hand over the smooth belly. "F... for the Griz-zie."

He smiled and leaned forward, pressing their lips together once more.

"Thank you, Ellem."

"kyoo Griz-zie."

Then the soft cheek rested against his own, the setting suns shining in dark eyes.

He rested with Ellem, peace and happiness filling him.

Still Waters

He felt the storm hours before it broke, the sea winds whispering and muttering and thick with rain.

He had spent the afternoon tying down the tomato and pepper plants, fastening the shutters, making sure the cats were indoors and the lantern was filled. By the time Bry was finished preparing, the storm clouds were building, huge black thunderheads that rolled and stampeded, flashes of lightning showing its power.

He closed the door and latched it as the first drops hit the tiny porch, fat and oily.

Portentous.

Cheyenne and Dakota rubbed his ankles, Dalton and Caddo blinking from their perches upon the bookshelves. He smiled at them, their soft purrs and concerned meows the only voices this house had heard in decades and he wondered often if he would have not lost his sanity without their bright eyes and warm bodies.

He put the kettle on and went to shower before the electricity failed, stripping his cotton clothing away and leaving his thick glasses on the windowsill before stepping beneath the hot water. The storm was building power, beautiful even to his sun-scarred eyes. By the time that he was clean, from his long feet to the few remaining curls in his butchered hair, the shore had disappeared under the deluge.

He wrapped himself in a dark robe, found his glasses and put the tea on to steep, managing to just light the lantern before the lights popped out.

Cheyenne was curled in the wing backed chair, white body bright against the deep blue as she waited for him. He poured the tea and then allowed Caddo's thin tail to suggest tonight's reading. Soon he was curled with his family, book open as they read and listened to the storm rage.

The story was a familiar one -- travelers and lost souls, broken hearts and shattered promises, new lands and forgotten homes. The words were comforts to his soul -- rich and warm, sure and unchanging.

The first frisson of confusion and worry hit him as he poured his third cup of tea, an electric hum in the wind that was not lightning, not ozone.

Dakota began prowling, orange fur ruffled, and even Dalton, with her steel-gray sensibilities, climbed into the window and hissed.

Bry opened the kitchen window, knocking down a dozen stones and a few dozen more shells, as he reached his hand out, watching the raindrops glisten and shiver in his palm.

Quicksilver. They moved like quicksilver.

He touched his tongue to a drop, shivering and allowing the remaining liquid to stain the dry sink. Tears.

He knew the taste intimately.

A flash of lightning blinded him and he jumped, heart skipping a beat. The book slammed onto the floor and Cheyenne growled, claws sliding deep into the velvet.

He shook his head, hands reaching up for hair that was long made ash. No. No more insanity. No more empty wishes. So long, so many years he had fought to find a calm center -- he would not allow a simple storm to drive him into the whirlwinds and agony again.

He had almost made it across the room to comfort his children when the knock came to the door, almost lost in the thunder.

Trembling, the house groaning wildly with the winds that screamed their warnings and wonders, his hand turned the knob, mouth dry with the salt of tears.

He opened the door to what surely had to be an apparition.

A wet, bedraggled, miserable looking apparition who bore an uncanny resemblance to his very own Val'nia.

He blinked, tore off his glasses and hit his knees as the shining light he was been longing for over two hundred years filled his sight.

Blue. The raindrops were blue.

"Please," whispered Val in a language older even than either of them.

He opened his mouth, but nothing came out. Not a single sound, so he nodded, hand reaching up towards the bright beauty. Yes. Yes, please. Val. Yes.

Val's hand came to rest near his, pressing their energies together, but not their flesh.

"I think you need to invite me in."

Oh. Yes.

From beside him, a white dissenter sounded. Cheyenne's growl was low, unfriendly. Furious. The others just looked, blinked in silent shock, but the grande dame was unhappy, the risk to heart and home too great.

Still, as much as he loved her, he could deny those eyes nothing. It was beyond thought, beyond comprehension. His lips formed the words his throat had forgotten, the language written into his bones.

Their hands slid together, lightning flashing as they touched.

The slender form collapsed against him, Val soaked to the skin, cold. He was graced with a soft smile, Val's eyes full of emotions long ago forgotten as they slowly closed.

Bry brought Val in, carrying him easily into the tiny bedroom. The shirt and pants were removed easily, a towel wrapped around the length of long hair. Another towel dried the thin body, Bry working in a silent fog.

Then he placed Val into the bed and pulled the covers over his... his...

Over Val.

He watched the sleeper for a long time, until the storm had passed and the dawn had come and the electricity was restored. Then, finally, he turned and went to turn off the lantern and go soothe Cheyenne, curling with her in the wing-backed chair to sleep, shocked, in the sun.

The bed smelled familiar, like his lover. It felt familiar, too, soft and sensuous against his skin. Oh, he liked this dream -- it was his favorite.

In a moment Bry would come to him and they would make love and then he would wake up in tears, shattered and heartbroken all over again. Still, it was his favorite dream.

It felt different this time, the sheets more solid beneath his skin, the air carrying his long-lost lover's scent brushing against his cheeks.

He opened his eyes, gasping as he realized it was no dream.

Oh... yes. He'd found his way home again. After all these years.

But where was Bry?

He slipped out of bed, the towel in his hair falling off as he stood. The storm. He'd barely made it to the door, terrified the entire time that if he gave up, the little house would disappear from his sight when the storm abated.

He padded out to the main room, searching out Bry. He could feel his lover on the air, feel Bry in the weight of it.

His eyes fell on his lover, curled upon a midnight chair the color of Bry'una's eyes. Bry looked different, foreign with the beautiful black curls hacked away as if in mourning and the heavy dark-lensed glasses hiding the lovely eyes.

Four felines were draped around him, protecting and defending their own -- black and orange, gray and white, all with gold-green eyes.

"I don't suppose you'll move so I can wake him?" he said quietly, unsurprised when the white beauty hissed at him.

Bry's long thin hand came up, gentling the cat, lips moving silently.

"Bry?" he said softly, a shiver going through him.

Those lips parted, Bry'una's body sitting up with a jerk, cats tumbling pell-mell onto the hardwood floor.

They upbraided him soundly with their meows. Stupid beasts, they'd been one of the reasons he'd left, to be free of them if only for an hour. Only he'd gotten lost and an hour to clear his head had somehow become centuries.

"Bry," he said again, almost unconsciously slinking closer.

A single tear slipped from beneath the glasses, sparkling in the sun.

He reached out, fingertip brushing it away as he fought his own tears. If he thought the pain of being away would hurt less than this he would never have come back.

Bry pressed into the touch, lips turning to rest against his palm, cool, thin hands holding his. A shudder went through him. There was so much to say, so much he wanted to say, but all that came out was "don't make me go," the words whispered and scared.

"Val." The word was harsh and raw and barely there, but he heard it, felt the grip of Bry'una's fingers. "Ssssssstay."

He sank to his knees, burying his face in their hands. "I won't ever leave again."

A soft keening sounded, a smooth cheek brushing his hair, Bry inhaling his scent.

His own tears started then. Home. He was home. With the other half, the better half, of his soul.

Bry pulled him up into the chair, into that still-familiar lap, into those arms. He was held tight, rocked slowly as the sun poured over them.

His tears slowed, dried, and his arms crept around Bry'una's waist. He could stay like this for an eternity.

Perhaps they would.

Bus Story ☼2

He was going to kick Benny's ass.

Kick it hard and brutal until that thieving, lying, lazy, ungrateful, selfish little son of a bitch landed into next week. Maybe next month. Maybe next fucking...

Benny sniffled again and he made the mistake of looking down.

Damn it.

"Stop it, Benny. Right fucking now." Goddamn kid knew fucking better than to get caught panhandling at the fucking mall. Uncle Ron was the fucking daytime security chief for fuck's sake and the last thing he goddamned needed was a motherfucking phone call at work to come get his 'little piece of ass'.

Jerry was so pissed he wouldn't even let him use the fricking car.

He was going to fucking turn the boy inside out.

Another tear slipped from one of the large, wide eyes. "I was hungry and I didn't have any money."

"And did you ask me for cash?" He yanked the cord, not even caring what stop they were at. "We're getting off. Now."

When Benny didn't move he snarled, "Move it, Ben. Don't fuck with me."

A couple more tears slipped down Benny's cheeks, but he hustled down to the door, shoulders hunched miserably.

He looked around, figuring out where the hell they were. One of the smaller transfer stops, four or five little buildings and then nothing but empty buildings for a couple blocks. Fucking fabulous. He rolled his eyes and turned on Benny.

"How many times are we gonna do this, Ben? How many fucking times are you gonna get your stupid ass into trouble?" He slammed his fist into the wall. One day he was gonna just not save the kid. He was just not going to pull his ass out of the fucking fire.

Benny sniffed loudly and wiped his nose with the back of his hand. "'m sorry, Jonathon."

"You are not supposed to be fucking panhandling! You need food, you tell me!" He turned on Benny, raging. "Have I ever told you no when you needed food, Ben? Have I ever one fucking time made you go hungry?"

"I knew money was tight and I didn't want to bug you, J -- not after you had to sell the car." Benny gave a little shrug, eyes full of tears. "Redmon figured we'd have enough for some McDonalds in about ten minutes. Wasn't supposed to get caught."

"But you did and I lost a half day of work and, if it hadn't been family that found you..." He growled and shook his head. "You end up in juvvie again, Benny, and they'll put you away."

The thought of his Benny, his lover. His, goddamn it, locked up with a bunch of hard asses... Benny'd be

eaten alive.

"I will beat your ass, Benny, I catch you panhandling." He grabbed Benny's thin shoulder, started walking him back behind the brick buildings, out of the lights. "You want to go to jail, shave those multi-colored spikes you're so proud of? You tired of loving me, want to go get gang-banged by a bunch of hard motherfuckers? Do you?"

"No, J! I love you. I'm sorry, J. I'm sorry." The tears started rolling down Benny's cheeks.

"Sorry's not good enough, Benny." He pushed Benny's face up, ignoring the colors and piercings and all that fake bullshit to look into those tear-filled eyes. "You have to stop, Benny. No more fucking up or you're on your own and..."

and it would kill me to lose you, sweet boy. Fucking kill me.

He couldn't say it, so he bent his head, took Benny's mouth in a hot, fierce kiss, forcing those lips open so his tongue could push inside. The sound of Benny's board hitting the ground was loud, the boy's arms wrapping around his neck. One hand cupped Benny's head, the other on his thin little ass pulling their cocks together and fuck, J could taste tears and sorrow, but beneath that was Ben.

He pressed harder, needing more.

Benny's mouth was open wide to him, the kid rubbing up against him. He pushed them back into the shadows, shoving Benny against the wall and deepening the kiss.

Benny's hands were rubbing over his head, fingers sliding and holding. He began to thrust, hard, quick, pushing against Benny, feeding harsh, hungry noises into Benny's mouth.

One of Benny's legs came up, wrapping around the back of his thigh, pulling him closer. He bent his knees and lifted Benny up until both legs were wrapped around him and they were moving together, fucking hot and hard and Benny was his, he wasn't going to lose him. Benny's fingers were dancing over his skin, tracing the scars on his face, his neck.

He pushed hard, lifted his hand and pressed against the tattoo on Benny's neck, the dark mark that matched the wound that damned near killed him, the mark that brought them together. He looked at Benny, "Mine, Benny. You hear me? Mine."

Benny's eyes were huge, pupils dark, swallowing the green. "Yeah, J. I know. I know."

He nodded, licking along Benny's lips, teeth playing with the ring in the swollen bottom lip. "Good. Good."

Benny whimpered, hips jerking against him.

"Tell me you love me, my sweet boy." He pulled again, not hurting, making his boy shudder. "Tell me you want this. 'Cause we can stop."

"No J, don't stop!" Benny's hands wrapped tight around his neck again, the boy's legs holding on tight. "I love you, J. Please, I love you, I love you -- don't stop."

"Love you, Benny." His lips crashed back down onto his boy's, hips and tongue thrusting deep and strong.

More whimpers poured from Benny's mouth to his, the boy's arms and legs tightening around him. He could feel Benny starting to shake, to jerk and writhe every time their groins met.

J shuddered, groaned, hips slamming as his balls tightened.

"J!" Benny called out to him, body freezing, going hard as Benny came.

He groaned, toes curling as he lost it, creaming his jeans.

Benny clung to him, breathing hard. "Won't do it again, J. Promise. I promise, J."

"Good, Benny. I can't lose you." He hugged Benny tight. "Wanna go home? Get a shower before we order a pizza?"

"Can we have it vegetarian?"

He took another hard kiss and then stepped back, straightening his clothes. "Your half, yeah. C'mon Benny, there's a bus. Let's go home."

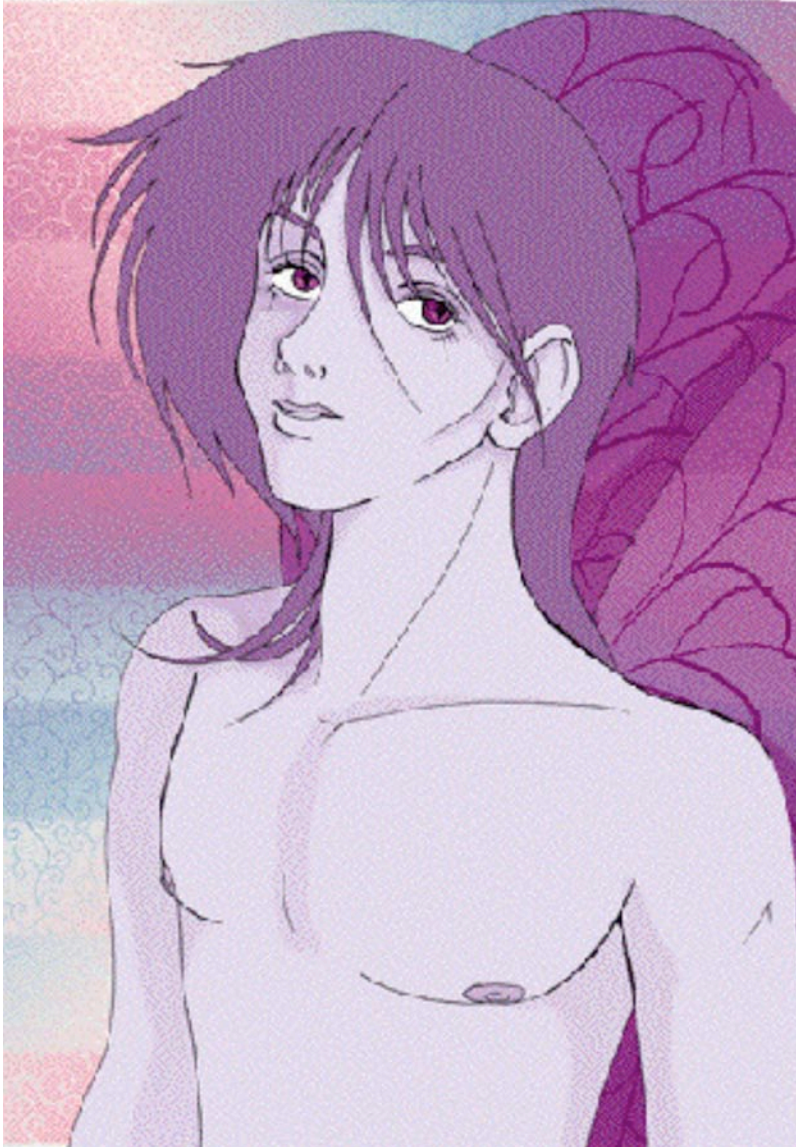
"Okay, J."

Benny picked up his board and trotted alongside him, back to the bus stop.

Okay, he wasn't going to kick Benny's ass.

Not today.

Winter's Gift



Winter was coming. There was no doubt about it, not with the smell of snow and the taste of frost weighing heavy on the air. Just yesterday the woods were still full of the dust and color and crackle of falling leaves. Tomorrow night, the day after at the latest, and the touch of Father Winter would come, silencing the song of Spring and forcing all to sleep.

He sighed and settled the pheasants on his shoulders. There was enough food to last him through the hard freeze -- he'd taken a bear only a week ago and two bucks the week before that. If luck was with him, he'd find a wild pig before hunting became problematic and then he and Wolf could be well settled, even for a long winter.

The pheasants had led Geoff on a merry chase, pulling him farther from his territory than he liked, but, as always, the trees and the sun guided him home.

They were close, he could hear the creek, smell the vague whispers of smoked meat and stored grain and fermenting apples overlaid with sap and pine and ancient soil.

Wolf was searching, sniffing the ground and the air, silver brow furrowing. Geoff stopped, sniffing himself, eyes sharp as his eyes hunted for something off, something not right, something invading their space.

Wolf found it first, barking sharply beside the bank of the creek, a low, confused growl calling him to come and look, come see. Something rested, crumpled and still along the steep bank, fallen and somehow caught in the newly exposed roots.

They watched it for a moment -- it was purple, lots of purples, as if formed from cloth dyed by a newly and baldy trained apprentice weaver. Geoff thought maybe it was a tree sprite, perhaps one of the Summer children lost from the deep forests where men with sense knew not to go.

He really hoped it was dead, otherwise he'd have to go rescue it and he'd heard they bit.

Of course, if they really were poisonous, he couldn't just leave it near the creek. What if it turned the water foul?

Geoff looked at Wolf, who looked back with a vaguely disgusted sneer. One of them was going to have to walk down, he supposed, and look. He set the pheasants on the ground, glaring at Wolf. "Don't touch them. I'll be right back."

Then he slid down the sandy bank to investigate, axe in hand.

It made no movement as he approached. Closer up he could see that it was shaped like a man, lying on its side, the purples were its skin; there wasn't a stitch of clothing on it.

Diaphanous, gauzy wings grew from it's back; they looked like they would break with a good wind; they did not look like they could hold a man sized being aloft. And clearly, one of them was badly mangled, gauzy feathers broken, oozing gray liquid.

He frowned, shaking his head when the thin chest moved, taking a shaky breath. Alive, then, and hurt.

"Can you hear me? If you can, I'm gonna take you in. It'll hurt some, so bear up." He slid his arms beneath the slender frame and lifted gently, jostling the broken wing as little as possible.

It was slow going to reach home, with Wolf curiously sniffing and Geoff trying to carrying a really rather slippery skinned, wounded woodland spirit, four big dead birds, his bow and his axe. By the time he backed into the huge, hollow series of tree trunks that made up home and hearth, darkness was falling.

He set the creature down by the hearth as gently as he could; nonetheless it made a whimpering, wounded sound and curled into a ball.

It didn't take long to build the fire enough that the room was warm and filled with light. Geoff gathered blankets and bandages and straight sticks for splints, some herbs for healing and some for pain and some for sleep. The pile was finished off by a nice full bottle of hard cider to clean the wound and strengthen his nerve.

Wolf paced restlessly, whimpering in answer with each noise the creature made.

"Well, I couldn't leave it out there, could I? I brought you in, didn't I? What five, six winters ago, broken leg and left for the coyotes to feed on? No, the woods care for us and we care for the needy it brings us." He made up a strong concoction of herbs and found a carved spoon. "Okay, now how to get it to drink...

no biting you, I mean it."

He tilted the creature's head spooning a bit of the foul-tasted medicine in between dark violet lips. The first mouthful got spit right back out, but the second went easier and then the rest of the dose just slid in. In moments, the little man-butterfly was relaxed and dead to the world.

He washed the wound and, carefully comparing the whole wing to the broken, set it to rights, splinting the broken spot and wrapping it well. Once he was finished, he warmed a basin of water and washed the dirt and blood from the soft, odd skin.

The being's back was dark purple, darkest on the upper back where the wings joined his body and growing almost imperceptibly lighter. The lightening continued on its front, going from dark to quite light along the inner arms, palms, belly and genitals. It was a slender, thin being; light if awkward to carry.

He wasn't sure it was breathing quite right; its chest only seemed to rise once for every five of his own breaths.

Well, at least it wasn't moaning anymore. It was either sleeping or dying, and he'd helped the best he could. Geoff wrapped it carefully in a few blankets and then shrugged to Wolf. "Either way, it's clean and warm and hopefully more comfortable. Come on, Wolf, let's go clean those birds. We'll smoke two and throw the other on a spit. Maybe the little purple bird will be hungry when he wakes."

Wolf's tongue lolled out, huffing with his odd canine laugh. He padded up to Geoff's bundled patient and sniffed, then rubbed his muzzle against the still face. Then Wolf loped outside, easy and carefree.

Geoff nodded. If the creature was okay with Wolf, it must be harmless. He tucked in one edge of the worn quilt and grabbed a long, sharp carving knife on his way out the door. With a little luck and some nice boiling water in the pot, there would be pheasant stew tomorrow.

Chapter Two

It was warm and dark and he couldn't move.

Something soft but heavy and confining was hold him down and Mauve panicked, trying to free his arms.

That was a mistake.

Pure agony flared through him as he moved, centered on his left wing, radiating out from there and he froze, breath coming in short, dismayed gasps. He tried to stop his whimpers of pain, he was trapped, hurt and making far too much noise, but he couldn't quite stop making the soft sounds.

He heard a sharp bark and heavy footsteps and then the weight above him lifted away. The light from the fire was bright, forming a halo around the dark figure hulking above him.

"Oh, you're awake. Don't move around much, it'll hurt. I'll grab the medicine."

The dark shadow moved away, leaving Mauve face to face with a silver wolf, blue eyes watching him intently, chin resting on its crossed forepaws.

He blinked, the pain easing as he stayed still. He watched the wolf carefully as he tried to figure out where he was, what had happened. He could remember flying through the trees, something catching his eyes and then an awful pain. He must have hit a tree while he wasn't paying attention.

The question was, who was his rescuer. Too large to be a fairy, Mauve surmised he must be a human. Except for the wolf. Humans didn't usually keep wild animals; neither did they rescue fairies.

His rescuer wandered over and sat. Mauve blinked, it was a human, at least he thought so. One of the man's cheeks and jaw was terribly scarred, dips and valleys and long, broken lines. The other was clear, if wrinkled and tanned, framing the dark green eyes.

Huge, rough hands held out a wooden spoon, filled with some vile-smelling potion. "This will kill the pain, let you rest and heal. The first taste is the worst."

He sniffed delicately and curled his lips. He would have moved away, but had learned his lesson.

"Come now. Open up and take it. Can you understand me? I'll get you some sweet water after, to wash the taste down." The man looked down at the wolf. "You think he can understand me, Wolf?"

To his amazement, the wolf seemed to nod, large head bobbing for just a moment.

He opened his mouth to protest, but before he could say a word, the spoon went into his mouth. Half the vile liquid went down his throat, the other half spat back out and he began to spit vigorously, trying to get rid of the taste. "You're poisoning me!"

"Nah, just healing you." Another spoonful went into his mouth and the big hand kept his mouth closed until he swallowed. "There, only two left and then you can have some water."

He glared for a long moment, letting this *human* know exactly how he felt about being manhandled like that. Then he realized that the foul potion was already working, taking the edge off the throbbing pain.

With a baleful glare, he opened his mouth again.

"Thank you." The last two mouthfuls were easier and then a ladle full of the promised cold, clean water was pressed to his lips.

He was grateful enough for the water that he decided to forego biting the hand that fed him.

He drank two ladles full of the water, washing away the worst of the taste. The pain was disappearing quickly and he could feel sleep tugging at him; it was hard to keep his eyelashes open.

"Where am I?" he demanded, or at least tried to, to his drugged ears the words sounded whiny and scared.

"My home. Wolf and I found you outside by the creek two evenings past." The human's voice was gruff, but it didn't sound threatening or dangerous, really. Just coarse. "Winter's brewing. I thought you would be more comfortable with some medicine and the fire."

The human stood, wandering over to stoke the fire. "There's broth, if you're hungry."

The thought of food made his stomach roll and he moaned quietly, closing his eyes as everything began to grow fuzzy.

Chapter Three

It was light when he woke again, sun shinning in from some hidden window. The silver-eyed wolf was staring at him, tongue lolling out.

He shifted experimentally; the pain wasn't as bad as it had been the last time he woke.

Mauve looked around, curious. The room was plain and simple, the furniture and walls blending together into something warm and natural. The fire was banked, a covered pot hanging on an iron hook. Beside him was a cup of milk and a covered plate holding a hunk of dark bread and some cheese.

He sat up carefully, keeping the wounded wing close to his back, and his left arm immobile, tucked close to his chest. He had to admit, the food looked good.

Picking up the cheese, he nibbled delicately at it, looking around warily for his host; much as he loved watching the humans he was terribly disconcerted by waking, wounded, inside one of their lairs.

He had to admit the lair smelled clean, if a bit smoky. Interesting, most of the humans he'd seen ran in little packs and all the forest dwellers knew to avoid them. But this one... Mauve hadn't heard a whisper of one so deep, not for years.

Not to mention the wolf obviously trusted the man. Mauve himself was more inclined to trust a wolf than a man.

The real test of course, would come when he tried to leave.

He tried to stand, but he soon became dizzy, and he jolted his wing as he sat back down heavily.

The wolf whined and stood, beginning to pace from Mauve to the moss-covered doorway where he gave a few short, sharp barks and then back.

In no time, the big human shouldered through the door, the smell of sap surrounding him. "You're awake. Good day to you. How's the wing?"

His host was covered head to toe in leather, a pile of firewood in his arms.

"Better," he answered softly, watching the man move, the leather hugging lean legs and broad shoulders. He felt himself react to the sight and he crossed his legs casually, letting his good arm drop to hide his reaction.

"Good to hear it. Name's Geoff, by the way. Haven't really had a chance to introduce ourselves properly." Geoff bent to deposit the wood in its box, giving Mauve a good long look at muscled thighs and buttocks.

"Geoff." The name sounded good on his tongue, almost soft. "I'm Mauve."

As long as he wasn't a prisoner here, he liked this man. As much as any man he'd watched from the tops of the trees.

He wondered suddenly if they were all this fascinating up close.

A warm chuckle filled the air. "Well, some of you is, yes. Although you do have some violet and lavender on you."

His eyes flashed and he stared. No one had told him humans had a sense of humor.

"Are you hungry? I left some cheese and bread, I wasn't sure what you'd eat." Geoff turned and settled against the wall, scratching his back like a big bear.

"I prefer greens, but I did nibble. Won't drink the milk though," he made a face. "You do realize that milk is what mother beasts feed their young, right?"

One dark eyebrow arched, pulling the scarred flesh taut. "Yes. I figure if it's good enough for a baby, it's good enough for us. I suppose you don't eat meat, either?"

He grinned. "Only if it's green."

He laughed at Geoff's face and it felt good, he could feel the laugh spreading healing out through to his wings.

Geoff recovered quickly, shock melting into a grin. "Oh, I'm sure given time I could make you a nice green roast. Of course, Wolf and I would make you eat it outside so the scavengers wouldn't come hunting us. Would you prefer wild pig or goat?"

"What, no venison?"

He looked at Geoff from beneath half-lowered lids, admiring the wide muscles of the man's chest. He offered a softer, more intimate smile.

"Ah, but the buck's are well-smoked and stored. They'll keep 'til the winter's done." Mauve decided that perhaps he quite liked the rough, husky voice. "Speaking of our Father Winter, Mauve, he's coming with a vengeance. I'm afraid you'll have a time traveling for a bit, unless you live only a stone's throw."

He frowned. "I can't fly," he admitted, stroking along his left arm with his right hand. "The pain's gone if I don't move it, but even when the pain is gone the broken feathers will need time to repair. I'm quite a way from home, or at least I was when I hit that tree." He gave Geoff another half smile and a glance from behind thick, violet lashes. "I have no idea where I am, actually."

"You're a day's walk from the foot of the grandfather mountain and two days walk from the blue lake." Geoff nodded, as if he'd made a decision. "If you'd like, you can stay and heal. The forest brought you here for a reason, I'm guessing. Although I'm not sure what we'll feed you."

"I am far away from the shelter of my own kind. I will accept your offer. And I can live off bark if I have to."

A yawn stole his ability to say anything further and he blinked slowly. Lying back down, he curled up into a ball, gaze focused on the man who had helped him, who was offering to share the winter with him. A whole winter to explore this human up close.

There was a smile on his lips as he felt slumber steal him again into the world of dreams.

Chapter Four

Geoff twisted in his furs, the smallish trunk containing only the piles of furs and blankets that padded his sleep. The wind was howling, sounding oddly like Wolf baying at the moon. The big room would be warm -- Wolf and Mauve curled together beside the fire while he shivered and trembled in his little room.

Come spring, he was definitely adding a fireplace in here.

There was a sound, soft and maybe more of a hint of movement on the breeze than an actual noise, and he looked up to find Mauve staring down at him, arms wrapped around his naked form. "It's cold back here."

"I keep telling you you'll stay warmer if you wear some clothes, Mauve." Geoff grinned and shook his head. "Is there a problem with the fire in the main room?"

Geoff couldn't help but admire the long, lean lines of Mauve's form, so lovely, so...

He shook his head, the fire. Find out if Mauve needed him to stoke the fire. "Do you need me to come warm you up?"

A smile quirked Mauve's lips. "I was thinking actually, that you might come and let me warm you up." Mauve tilted his head. "Did you know that I can hear your teeth chattering from the other room?"

Mauve's right wing spread slightly, curling around his shoulder. "Am I that horrible to look upon that you will not sleep with me?"

"Horrible? You?" Geoff blinked, utterly and completely taken aback. "Mauve, be serious! I mean, look at you! You're lovely."

His hand moved to stroke over his scarred cheek. He knew all about being horrible to look upon, knew it all too well.

The good wing fluttered and Mauve's cheeks darkened in the moonlight. "Well then!" Mauve held out his right hand. "Come and lie with me by the fire."

"But..." Geoff shuddered again, then noticed the shivering of the feathers surrounding the beautiful body. Then he took the cool hand and stood, grabbing a fur and wrapping it around his own, equally naked and considerably less lovely form.

"Let's go before you fade to blue."

Mauve laughed, the sound like a deep bell ringing. Mauve laughed a lot, seeming to take great joy in the things around him.

The hand he held didn't let go, Mauve leading him back to the fire.

The main room was warm, Wolf's tail bouncing against the floor in greeting. Geoff settled down on the floor, keeping his fur close. "Come on then, Mauve. Get warm and sleep."

Mauve was frowning at him. "Skin to skin is warmer, Geoff." The fairy knelt gracefully and tugged at his fur. "Please?"

"But I don't have any clothes on, Mauve. Neither do you. We're naked. We just... it's just not done." It was funny, his mouth was protesting, but his hands lifted the fur and invited Mauve in.

Mauve slid in, facing him, lying on his uninjured side; he looked fairly scandalized. "Human's don't lie naked together?"

"Uh... well, yes. Oh, I mean, no. I mean, I don't know, but I don't think so." Geoff shut his mouth with a snap.

He looked around for the other furs and blankets and pulled them around, trying to gather his thoughts and calm himself. There was something about Mauve's bright, energetic intensity that made him act oddly young and unsettled.

Mauve's head rested on his shoulder and he pressed close. "I guess it's a good thing then, that I'm not human."

He could feel the muscles of Mauve's cheek pull up into a smile. "I can understand wearing clothing when it's cold, but I don't understand you humans' constant need to keep yourselves covered and hidden away from one another."

"It... it's just not proper." Geoff sighed, the touch of Mauve's skin was wonderful, almost unreal as his bed partner -- no, his companion, no, his... Mauve warmed.

"I'm afraid I don't understand."

"I..." Geoff blinked, the warmth of Mauve and the fire distracting him. "I don't either. I didn't make the rules of humans, Mauve. I'm just a man, not a priest or a king."

"I'm glad of that, Geoff. If you were a priest or a king you would not have saved me and I would not have had a chance to get to know a real man from up close." He could feel Mauve's grin widen against his shoulder and the sleek body rubbed against him. "And I find I rather like you, up close."

"Oh. I, uh..." His body was hardening, cock filling at the silky touch of skin. He pulled his hips back, covering himself with his hand. "I should... I have to... Outside. I'll be right back."

He began to back out of the furs. Two minutes outside in the snow and his body should stop overreacting to the touch of the very silky, very lovely, very male fairy.

Mauve made a soft noise of distress, his hand coming out and lying against Geoff's belly. "Please, don't go. I've offended you. Tell me what I've done and let me make amends."

Geoff gasped, looking down at the violet-hued flesh on his skin. "You didn't offend me. I just, I've been alone a long time and haven't touched another." He motioned to his cheek, his shoulder. "Look at me. No one touches me, and my body betrays me."

"I don't understand." Mauve raised his hand, fingers settling on his scarred cheek, fluttering over them. "I would like to touch you, to explore your differences. How is that a betrayal?"

"I..." His hand uncovered his hard, swollen flesh. "This is the betrayal, Mauve. I desire you."

"Oh..." Mauve shivered. "My kind are not so big."

The soft fingers left his cheek and moved to slide along his erection, stopping just before touching. The odd light gray eyes flew up to his. "May I?"

"Please." He blinked slowly, torn between wanting to watch that silk soft hand as it touched him and needing to watch the fascination and interest in those eyes.

Mauve's gaze held his for a moment longer and then moved away to watch as the lilac fingers slid along

his length.

"Oh! So hot and soft...." The touches became firmer, delicate fingers exploring.

Geoff whimpered, hips instinctively pushing up against the touch. He'd never been touched like this, only a few times with paid women, but this, this was something else.

Something amazing.

"This is all right?" Mauve asked as he continued to trace veins and bumps, fingers moving with more confidence.

"Yes. Please." The fire was so bright, it matched the burn in his belly.

He reached out, fingers trailing against Mauve's cheek, along the temple.

Mauve nuzzled against his touch and the bright eyes returned to his as Mauve's hand closed over his erection. "I don't understand why you would wish to hide such heat."

Pressing close, Mauve rubbed his own erection against Geoff's hip.

"Oh, good." Geoff moved close, one hand sliding down Mauve's back to cup smoothly rounded buttocks. He bent and kissed a thin shoulder, purring softly, giving himself over to sensation.

"Oh. Yes. Good." Mauve's voice had grown deep, his hand tightening as it stroked along Geoff's cock. The fingers of his other hand curled through Geoff's beard.

Mauve tasted like spring, like thaw and growth and sprouting green warmth. He licked along sweet violet skin, the cold of winter fading with each taste, each moan.

"Oh, so humans do this as well. I had wondered." Mauve's fingers slid over his cheek and then back into his beard. "Hoped."

"Did what, Mauve? Kissed? Touched? I have never heard of two men touching like this, but it feels so good. Perhaps it is magic." He rubbed his chin against Mauve's palm, smiling as he tickled. "I am not experienced in these matters -- human or fairy."

"Fairies touch for pleasure, for joy, male, female, it matters not. I had never seen humans touch for joy." Mauve stopped talking as his lips pressed against Geoff's, a soft breath sliding into Geoff's mouth, followed seconds later by a warm, wet tongue.

There was more springtime here, the taste wild and fresh and joyful. It sent hunger and pleasure winging through him in equal amounts and he drank deeply, lips opening as they kissed.

Mauve pushed him onto his back, settling the light body atop his own, never once breaking their kiss. Gentle hands moved over his face, exploring as carefully here as Mauve had explored his cock. Something light and soft tickled his left side.

Geoff wriggled, half chuckling, half moaning as Mauve touched him. He traced over the smooth skin beneath the soft wings, forced his touch to be gentle, his callused hands rough and coarse.

Making a soft noise, Mauve undulated against him, wing fluttering.

His hands stroked over the whole wing, touching it gently, stroking over perfect feathers atop the paper-thin skin. "So beautiful."

"Feels good," Mauve whispered.

Mauve continued to move against Geoff, their flesh sliding together. The skin surrounding his cock was smooth, hairless, soft as silk.

"Yes. You feel so good." His fingers slid down through the long feathers at the tips of delicate wings. "You're so smooth, Mauve. Does my skin not hurt you?"

"Hurt me? No." A gasp and Mauve's hips moved more quickly, pressing against him. "It is different from that of my kind, but good, so good."

Mauve began to lick at his cheeks, tongue sliding softly first along his unmarred skin and then along the scars. "So many textures..."

"Oh. Mauve." His hips thrust up, rocking steadily against Mauve with a sob. For the first time in his life, someone wasn't horrified by his face, someone was touching his face.

"I can't wait, Geoff, it's been too long..." Mauve's soft words were his only warning and then the winged creature in his arms threw back his head and keened as heat spilled between them.

Geoff's body responded to the feel and scent and sound, hips jerking gracelessly as he came, eyes fastened upon Mauve's face.

The pale eyes gleamed down at him, hands stroking along his cheeks. "Thank you for sharing your body with me, Geoff."

Soft lips closed over his once more.

The kiss was long and slow and sweet, making his toes curl and his breath catch. "Oh, thank you, Mauve. Thank you."

Mauve settled against him, his wing curling around them both, half-wrapping them in a private world of purple haze.

"Oh, so lovely." He stroked Mauve's cheek, eyes falling closed. "You warm enough?"

"Oh yes, Geoff, you share your heat so generously."

The light body curled against him, Mauve's head nuzzled in his neck, the slender and smooth sex pressed against his own.

He sighed happily, finding the best places for his hands upon Mauve's body. He wouldn't have thought that they could fit together, but they did. Perfectly.

Chapter Five

Mauve woke slowly, his bed softer and warmer than it had been since he'd become a guest at Geoff's.

He stretched slightly, murmuring happily as he realized it was Geoff he lay upon and the events of the night before came flooding back.

Today he would explore all that lovely skin and those muscles, the hair in strange places and the interesting smells. As long as humans didn't have some strange rule about pleasure during daylight.

He stretched again, letting his body slide along Geoff's, his hardness meeting matching flesh.

Geoff murmured, hands stroking over his back in a random, patternless way. The heavy curtain of eyelashes covered the interesting green eyes, casting fascinating shadows over the textured skin. "Mmm... Mauve. Soft."

"You like that?" he asked, fingers moving to stroke through the untidy hair. It was coarse but clean against his skin.

"Like you. So smooth, so warm." Soft, warm lips surrounded by a thick beard found his shoulder, nibbling and tasting.

He murmured happily. This was far more than he'd hoped for, to explore a human like this, to share bodies and sensation, to learn how they liked to be touched, how Geoff liked to be touched.

He let his fingers continue to explore, mapping eyebrows and eyelashes, ears, nose. Warmth was spreading through his belly and he wriggled restlessly against Geoff's hips.

"I like the way your skin tastes." Geoff's tongue lapped along his breastbone, mapping his chest. Geoff's cock was hard and hot against him, sliding alongside his own swollen flesh.

"You like purple." Mauve laughed happily and pressed tightly against Geoff, sharing his happiness and joy at what they were doing. "You taste like nothing I have ever tried before, part wood, part earth, unique."

"I do like purple." Geoff chuckled against one of his nipples. "I like Mauve. I like Mauve a lot."

"Oh!" He arched against Geoff's mouth. "Your laughter feels good."

"Against your skin?" Geoff's tongue slid over his nipple, eyes twinkling up at him.

He moaned and pressed closer. "And inside me."

"Inside you?" Geoff chuckled again, lips fastening over his skin and suckling softly for a brief moment. "You taste like springtime, like joy."

"Don't you feel the laughter inside you?" Mauve closed his eyes, humming at the pleasure Geoff was giving him. "I cannot experience pleasure without laughter inside me."

"And do you feel pleasure now? Do you feel laughter inside you?" Geoff's lips found his other nipple and kissed it again and again.

"Oh yes, Geoff, yes. You make me feel joy." He slid his hands over broad shoulders, reveling in the play of muscles beneath his fingers. "I want to feel you inside me, Geoff."

"Inside you?" Geoff lifted his head with wide eyes. "But how?"

A shudder went through Mauve, excitement and sorrow mingling. What was wrong with these humans that a man of Geoff's age would not know of such pleasures? And yet, he was happy to be the one to teach him.

He straddled the big man's hips and brought one of Geoff's hands down to his buttocks, guiding the blunt fingers to his opening. "This is one way."

"I have no wish to hurt you, Mauve." Geoff's eyebrows met as he frowned.

"Oh, sweet man, I would not ask you to do it if it hurt me." He laughed again. "I am not one who enjoys pain as his pleasure. We only need some oil. You are bigger than my kind, but I trust I shall get used to your size quickly enough."

"Oil? You are sure I can give you pleasure?" Geoff's hands slid over his erection, moving slowly and gently. "I want to feel your pleasure, Mauve."

He moaned at the sensation and bent to kiss Geoff, the beard tickling along his skin, making him laugh into the kiss. "Yes, Geoff. Such pleasure, I promise you."

"So sweet." Geoff leaned up, nuzzling his throat with the soft beard until he laughed again. "Show me how to give you this pleasure, Mauve."

His wing flared open and closed slowly, feathers trembling. "The oil?"

"In the little nook beside the hearth, in the painted can." Geoff's eyes were sparkling. "You are so lovely. Does your wing still hurt?"

"No, but I can't use it. If I could I would shroud us both in a canopy made from my wings as we made love." He leaned down and gave Geoff another kiss before standing gracefully and retrieving the can with the oil.

He set it down beside Geoff and resumed his position astride the human. "Dip one of your fingers into the oil, Geoff."

"As you wish." Geoff slid one of those blunt, thick fingers into the golden oil, eyes bright and warm upon his face.

"Now..." Mauve took Geoff's hand and guided it back to his entrance. "And now you slide your finger in."

"Are you sure?" Geoff's eyes were dark and flashing. His fingers teased against his opening, the tip of one sliding just inside.

"Yes." He moaned softly and pushed back, body swallowing the thick finger.

"Oh, you're so soft, so hot." Geoff licked his lips, whimpering softly.

He watched Geoff's face, fascinated by the pleasure playing over the human's features. He tightened his body, squeezing around the penetrating finger, laughing with pure joy and delight at the look of wonder on Geoff's face.

"Now two, Geoff, and then spread the oil over your shaft."

Geoff shuddered, the second finger spread Mauve, moving slow and gentle. The in and out slide was

careful, easy, Geoff focused on his pleasure. "Does it feel good?"

"Yes... oh yes." Mauve let his head fall back as he picked up the slow rhythm, rocking back and forth. "Slow and sweet, oh, it feels very good, Geoff."

"You're so lovely." Geoff's free hand reached up, stroking a soft line down his body, curling hot around his cock. "So very beautiful..."

Mauve moaned, body tightening around the invading fingers. He let his own hands slid along Geoff's chest, marveling at the sprinkling of hair that covered the wide expanse. He shivered as he realized that the hair around Geoff's erection would rub against his most sensitive skin.

Geoff arched beneath his fingers, nipples tightening, stomach muscles rippling. The fingers within him slid deep, shooting pleasure up through his spine.

He cried out, shuddering.

Geoff gasped, body stilling, watching Mauve intently. The thick fingers pulled away and then slid deep again, searching for his pleasure. He arched, impaling himself further, sweet shivers passing through him. "Oh, Geoff..."

"Is it good? Is this right?" Geoff was panting, skin shimmering like bronze in the firelight, moisture beading along the hollow of his throat.

"Yes." Mauve rocked again and again, each movement sparking pleasure along his spine. His good wing spread out each feather trembling, sending delightful tremors along his spine.

"Are you sure you've never done this before?" He meant to tease, but his voice was breathless, needy.

"I think I would remember something as good as this." Geoff smiled at him, joy and need shining up at him, intense and strong. Geoff's fingers moved within him, over him -- touching and stroking and giving.

Mauve laughed, the sound shivering through him. "Stop now, before I come. I don't want to do that before you're shaft is in me."

He reached back and fingered the thick cock. "So lovely."

"Mauve." Geoff gasped. "Please. I... I need."

"Yes." He knew what Geoff needed. Geoff needed to be inside him, almost as badly as he needed to take Geoff into him. Mauve shifted, moaning softly as Geoff's fingers slid from his body, but he wouldn't be empty for long. He guided Geoff's cock to his opening and, pushing out his breath, pushed back, the thick cock stretching him.

"Oh!" A series of shudders rocked Geoff, his eyes wide and surprised, hands clenching and releasing at his sides. "Mauve!"

Mauve laughed again, happy and feeling good, more stretched than he'd ever been, but good. The laughter brought more shudders from Geoff as his body moved around the thick cock. "Wait until I start moving."

"M...moving?" Geoff stared up, his face stunned and tight, bottom lip caught firmly in his teeth.

Reaching out, Mauve slid his hands over the interesting face, fingers fascinated by all the shifting textures: surprisingly soft beard, smooth skin and the scars. "Give me a minute to get used to you," he whispered, tightening around Geoff's cock.

Geoff nuzzled into the touches, a soft sound echoing through the large chest. Hands trailed up his arms, over his shoulders. "So soft."

"I like all your different textures, and your hair." He shifted, loving the feel of Geoff's cock inside him and the usual sensation of hair against his skin where they were joined.

"Oh..." Geoff turned his head with a whimper and nibbled against Mauve's fingers, lips and teeth scraping lightly. The slow shudders began moving through Geoff again, the heavy muscles rippling and shifting. "Taste like spring."

"Mm... you're a very sensuous man, Geoff. You should have been a fairy." He pushed up a bit, and then sat back down, shuddering. "Oh. Except then there wouldn't be all these amazing differences."

"Not beautiful like you." The words were whispered, Geoff's body writhing and shaking, "Please, Mauve. Do that again."

"Skin is only as deep as skin is, Geoff. Even the stinkweed has beauty." Then he raised himself again, moving until only the tip of Geoff's cock was inside him, and sat back down again, slowly. He groaned and did it again, just as slowly, savoring each sensation.

Geoff was making the most fascinating little noises beneath him, hungry and sweet and needy and happy. Each one fed his own pleasure like laughter and sun and flight.

It was wonderful and beautiful and joyful. He shifted slightly, finding just the right angle and suddenly it was even better and Mauve let his eyes drift almost closed, watching Geoff's face through barely open eyes as he rose and fell, sharp spikes of pleasure making him shudder each time Geoff's erection pushed inside him.

Geoff's hips and hands began working with him towards their mutual sensation -- hands slid over his belly, his cock, hips met each downward motion with an easy thrust.

And still those sweet noises sounded, filling the air with passion's song.

Mauve wanted to say something, wanted to tell Geoff how good it felt, how much pleasure Geoff was giving him, but he didn't know how to make his mouth work except for making soft moaning noises of his own, so he just let it go and felt how good it was.

Bracing his hands on Geoff's chest, he moved faster, body searching, reaching for the release that was immanent.

The sounds they made became sharper, less sweet and more wild, and Mauve saw the tension peak in the strong, scarred face below him. Geoff's hips pressed harder, cock sliding deep, the rhythm shattering into graceless jerking.

He suddenly, desperately wanted to see how orgasm changed Geoff's face and he moved for both of them, squeezing his muscles around Geoff's shaft, his fingers stretching out to flick across peaked nipples.

"Mauve." Heat filled him as Geoff's face flushed dark, eyes wide open and filled with a stunned pleasure. Open and honest and almost unbearable in his joy, Geoff freely shared all of himself with Mauve, bliss ringing in the air.

He held on, watching for as long as he could before his own climax pushed everything else from his mind. He called out, arching as sweet orgasm rolled through him.

Geoff's arms came around him, holding him warm and close. "So beautiful."

"Yes, you are," Mauve agreed, the look on Geoff's face as he climaxed stuck in his mind. "You made me feel so good, Geoff." He placed a soft kiss on the human's chest, over his heart. "Thank you."

"Oh, thank you, Mauve. I didn't... I never thought." A soft kiss brushed over the top of his head. "Thank you."

He shifted, letting Geoff slip from his body and then snuggled against the warm chest. "It was nice, wasn't it?"

"Mm... yes. So much better than nice." Hands slid over his spine, warm and heavy and comfortable.

"My kind believe that any day that starts this way holds the promise of great joy."

"I believe this day has already held great joy." A kiss brushed over his cheek.

Smiling, Mauve tilted his head and giggled into their kiss as Geoff's beard tickled. He brought his good wing up, covering them both within the gauzy feathers.

Geoff reached out and stroked his feathers softly. "Does it feel good when I touch you here?"

He shivered slightly. "Yes. The closer they are to the stem, the more sensitive they are," he added suggestively.

"Oh." Geoff smiled and his fingers moved, sliding over him with a whisper-soft touch. "Here?"

Shuddering this time, he pressed into Geoff. "Right there. I could come from that, you know."

The touches continued, soft and gentle and so very focused. Geoff's lips found his ear, his jaw, his throat - kisses and careful nips adding to the blanket of sheer pleasure he was wrapped in.

"I can't... I can't do anything for you," he warned. He couldn't focus on anything but the pleasure Geoff was giving him, the bundles of nerves at the base of his wings absorbed each touch, leaving explosions along his spine and in his cock.

He couldn't have made his hands work if he'd wanted to.

"Love watching your pleasure." The whisper floated over his skin like falling leaves. "It's like magic, like the dawn."

"Then don't stop." He arched his back toward the gentle fingers, more shivers working their way through him.

"Why would I stop?" Geoff chuckled, the thick fingers moving over his wing with more confidence, courage fed by his need.

His answer was lost to a gasp, his body shivering and undulating against Geoff's warmth.

"Lovely." Kisses became licks, the rhythm of caresses become steady, undeniable, engrossing.

He'd been loved this way before, it was a gift among his kind to do it for one another, but it had always been in exchange for doing it back. This was different. Geoff didn't expect anything from him, wasn't doing it because Geoff wanted anything other than to witness his pleasure.

His breath was a sob; he was close, so close. Geoff's lips found his own, tongue sliding deep as pleasure washed over him. He was pure pleasure, his body rocking against warmth, his mouth full of the taste of

Geoff, the feathers of his wings trembling with his orgasm.

The kiss continued, Geoff slowly lapping at his lips as his mind fluttered back into his body. He let his own tongue slide along Geoff's and then murmured his thanks, the odd soft shiver shaking him.

"That was beautiful. Thank you for sharing it with me." Geoff was dropping sweet kisses upon his face, his shoulder.

He shook his head. "Thank you for the pleasure."

Another kiss silenced him and then Geoff pulled the furs around them both, offering Mauve the warm hollow of his shoulder. "Rest with me awhile. Share your heat?"

"That too would be my pleasure." He snuggled into the space Geoff made for him, enjoying the scent of sex and the sweat of the human.

The furs and Geoff's arms held him loosely, keeping him warm but unfettered. The wind and snow blew violently outside, but here within the circle of firelight, next to this human, all was warm and right.

All in all, not a bad way to spend the winter.

Chapter Six

Mauve healed over the next few weeks, his wing growing stronger as one early winter storm followed another, leaving the world outside of Geoff's home piled high with snow.

Geoff himself proved as endlessly fascinating as Mauve could have hoped. The human shared his home, his food, his stories and his body, in equally generous proportions.

They made love every night and every morning, though Mauve had yet to entice the man to make love during the day. "It's not time to be abed," Geoff would protest and Mauve would lower his lashes and plan -- soon he would show Geoff that one didn't need a bed, or even to be horizontal at all.

Soon he would show Geoff what mouths could do and, maybe before the winter was out, he would have had enough of that thick cock inside him and suggest that he allow Geoff to learn that pleasure as well.

Today Geoff was reading to him, a book of tales that had princesses and princes with curses on them that turned them into frogs. Geoff had said they were called fairy tales and as he'd read, the low, husky voice flowing over Mauve like a warm summer breeze, Mauve had asked if Geoff was sure they were fairy tales, for they were like no tales he knew. Geoff has insisted that was what his people called them and when he'd come to a story with a girl and her grandmother and a wolf that wanted to eat them both, Mauve had laughed and laughed at what the humans called fairy tales.

No wonder humans were wary of his kind and his kind of them.

He sat on the floor next to Wolf, both of them at Geoff's feet. Mauve's head rested against a sturdy leg, his wings wrapped around his shoulders as Geoff read.

Now and then Geoff would stroke his hair, the large hand so gentle.

As they were sitting there, the wind began to pick up, howling around Geoff's home in the tree trunks, making Mauve shiver despite the fire and warm leg he was curled against.

Geoff's callused hand smoothed over his wings, soft and careful. "Are you chilled? Shall I find you a fur?"

He looked up into the scarred, bearded face, warmed by the look in Geoff's eyes. "I was thinking of another way of warming -- one we could share."

"Would you like to come sit here with me? There is room, if I move over." One finger trailed along the line of his jaw, stroking slowly, leaving tingles behind.

He nuzzled into the touch; eyes closing a moment, letting Geoff's scent and touch fill him. "Actually, I was thinking between your legs."

He opened his eyes again, smiling up at Geoff as he rose to his knees.

One of Geoff's eyebrows rose, pulling the scarred skin, making the light catch and draw fascinating shadows across it. "What are you brewing in that head of yours, wicked Mauve? That smile holds secrets inside."

"I want to show you something new." He put his hands on Geoff's knees, encouraging them to part and then slipped into the space between them, pressing close.

Geoff leaned down with a smile, soft beard tickling at his cheek, his chin. Forehead to forehead, green eyes glittered into his own, warm and full of laughter. "Is this something I will not learn in my fairytale book, Mauve?"

"Not in *your* fairytale book, but perhaps in my fairy *tail* book."

He let his hands slowly move from Geoff's knees up along muscular thighs, rubbing in small, gentle circles.

Wolf whined from his place on the floor and Mauve spared the beast a glance. "Go sit by the fire and sleep, give us our privacy."

Wolf harrumphed and snorted, slinking over to curl upon a bearskin and rest his muzzle upon his paws, eyes closing in utter disgust.

Geoff chuckled, "He's jealous. He's not used to sharing my affections."

Mauve laughed happily, Geoff's chuckle sliding through him like a caress that went deeper than skin. "I hope you do not usually let him do this," he teased as his fingers untied the laces of Geoff's breeches, pulling them open.

"No, his nails are sharp." He was given a quick wink and a kiss and then Geoff sat up. "Mauve, it is daylight, yet. I have chores to finish, late meal to prepare. Should we not wait until the moon is high?"

He smiled gently, having expected the evasion, but the scent of Geoff's cock had settled in his nose and his own was responding; he had no wish to spend the day in frustration. "I will help you with your chores, late meal. But I am hungry now for your taste." Leaning forward he licked along the top of Geoff's cock. "I have not yet tasted you directly from the source."

"Oh." The sound was full of wonder. "Your tongue is hot, Mauve. Hot and wet."

He gave Geoff a wicked, teasing smile. "Imagine how my whole mouth will feel..."

That earned him a shudder and a fascinating needy sound. "This is something that will please you? Give you pleasure?"

"Your pleasure tastes so sweet in my mouth, Geoff. Your body straining beneath me will only make the experience headier." He licked again at the soft flesh, teasing it into hardening.

Geoff's fingers stroked over his head, caressing so gently. "So soft."

Geoff's cock began to fill slowly, warming and responding to his touches. He hummed happily and took the head into his mouth, sucking gently. His hands pushed more of Geoff's breeches aside, finding hair and smooth flesh to dance upon. Muscles bunching and moving beneath his hands, soft, stunned, so-hungry noises falling around him, Geoff's pleasure was a tangible thing, sweet and focused.

He sucked strongly, taking more of the hard flesh into his mouth, head beginning to bob up and down over Geoff's lap.

"Mauve... oh..." The hands left his head, clutching tightly enough upon the arms of the chair for the wood to protest, the flesh in his mouth throbbing.

He hummed happily, head moving faster. He slid one hand over the jumping muscles of Geoff's belly, the other pushing deeper into the breeches to fondle the heavy sacs. A short sharp barking noise sounded and Geoff thrust up deep, body lifting from the chair. Choking only for a moment, Mauve soon encouraged Geoff to thrust again. When Geoff did, he let a single finger slide down past the velvet-soft skin to push into Geoff's body.

A wail sounded, Geoff's body stiffening for a heartbeat and then pushing onto his finger, passage tight and

throbbing as Geoff came, seed spilling hot upon his tongue.

He swallowed eagerly, filling himself with the earthy taste of Geoff's come. He let his finger slide free of Geoff's body, but continued to suckle long after the sweet shudders had faded.

The hands that found his hair were unsteady, but so soft and warm, stroking with long motions. "Oh... I... So good, Mauve. So good."

Raising his head, he smiled up at his human lover, the pleasure of teaching this man where to find his pleasure blooming through him. "Kiss me and discover the taste of joy."

Geoff leaned forward, their lips meeting in a soft, deep kiss that was sweet and tender and woven with happiness.

Winter had never tasted so fine.

Chapter Seven

Geoff grinned as he opened the door to bright blue skies, looking out at the blinding white snow that had fallen overnight. Mauve had been growing grumpy, unused to being trapped indoors during the winter storms. Fairly easily amused and distracted, Mauve was neither miserable, nor making him feel that way, but it would do them both good to go outside, stretch their muscles.

"The storms have ended, it seems." He opened the door wider, smiling over at Mauve who was cuddled near the fire, cup of steaming cider in his hands. "Would you like to go for a walk?"

The fairy's wings spread and folded again, and Mauve stood gracefully. "I would like to stretch my wings, see if I can remember how to fly."

Mauve came to stand next to him and shivered lightly as he peered out at the snow. "For a short while."

"Do you need some furs, Mauve?" He tugged on his boots and wrapped himself well, grinning as Wolf bounded outside, rolling in the snow like a puppy. "Something to keep you warm?"

"I'll be all right." Mauve gave him a quick smile. "For a short while."

Geoff nodded and followed Wolf's footsteps, laughing aloud as a snow-covered beast plummeted at him, knocking him to the ground. Wolf looked down on him, laughing and shaking snow into his face before jumping away a few steps, waiting patiently to be chased and tackled back.

Geoff, of course, answered that patience with a false growl and a leap of his own, pushing Wolf over into a low drift.

Mauve's laughter joined their noise and Geoff looked over, gasping at the sight.

The fairy was a scant foot above the snow, vibrating wings spread out behind him, spanning six feet to either side.

"Mauve." Geoff couldn't catch his breath, his eyes dazzled by the utter grace and perfection above him. "So beautiful. Oh, Mauve, you can fly..."

Mauve laughed again, the sound like bright crystals. "So I can."

The fairy flew up a few feet, coming to hover over Geoff where he lay in the snow.

"Does it hurt? Your wing?" He smiled up, feeling the scars in his face pull. "Such magic you have."

"No pain." Mauve slowly lowered himself on Geoff, lying against him in the snow, slightly out of breath. "I'm unused to it though -- it's been weeks since I last flew!"

Geoff leaned up, kissing him softly. "It was amazing to watch and I am glad you have healed well."

He reached up, stroking the soft, gauzy feathers gently, enjoying the warm flush of pleasure it caused.

Mauve nuzzled against his neck, breath warm. The wings stretched out for him, almost stroking him in return.

"I should fly a little every day that I can, or I will not be able to fly at all when spring returns."

A pang was felt in his stomach at the thought of his friend leaving, but it faded quickly. The woods gave him Mauve's company for a winter; he would not cheapen that gift by wishing it were something else. He

nodded, fingers continuing to move. "It would be a shame to lose such a great gift, Mauve. You must get well and strong."

The bright wings closed around them both, the sun shining through the feathers, making rainbows dance about their faces. "I do not believe I have ever said thank you."

Mauve's lips covered his, cool and soft and hinting of the heat beyond. The kiss was slow, lazy, almost chaste. Pulling away, Mauve smiled. "Thank you."

"I should thank you. There has never been such a good winter, so full." He cupped Mauve's jaw. "I do enjoy your company."

Mauve nuzzled into the touch, eyes half-closing. "I can't imagine being cooped up here every year, all alone with no one but a wolf to keep me company."

"It is my life, Mauve. I am not welcome in the town and no one would have me as mate." He shrugged. "There are many blessings in my life, you and Wolf most of all."

"Then I am doubly glad that I was hurt and you the one that rescued me." Mauve smiled at him, wings slowly stretching out to their full wingspan and cutting gently through the air before closing down against Mauve's back. The fairy shivered atop him. "Will we lie in the snow all day?"

"I think that you are altogether too naked for that." Geoff grinned, sliding his hand over Mauve's cold hip. "Come inside, Mauve. I will heat some cider to warm our bones."

Mauve grinned down at him, wicked twinkle in his eyes. "I can think of other things that would heat my bones far more effectively."

"Hot mush?" He cackled as Mauve's fingers slid some snow along his neck, twisting as it melted. "Okay, okay, venison stew?"

"Now you are talking -- I have just the buck in mind, too." Mauve's lips slid over the skin of his neck, catching the cool water on the purple tongue.

He moaned softly, stretching into the caress until he heard Mauve's chuckle. Then he reached up in retaliation, stroking the sensitive feathers at the crest of the soft wing.

Mauve's laughter morphed into moan, the fairy's body shuddering atop him. "Oh, Geoff, you learn quickly."

"I have good reason." He watched the finely boned face shiver, lost in pleasure and need. He continued the touches, using both hands, stroking each feather with a gentle, focused care.

The first times he had done this, Mauve had been reticent, inability to return the pleasure making him shy to take it, but Geoff had impressed upon him how much he enjoyed doing it and now Mauve just closed his eyes, shivering with unadulterated pleasure.

His fingers played over the feathers, chuckling soft as the winds joined in the tease, rustling and chill. His thumbs began to move along the delicate skin beneath the gossamer feathers, watching Mauve's bliss, feeding off each gasp, each shudder.

Mauve began to move against him, hips sliding, pushing. Even through the thick layer of his winter leggings he could feel the heat and hardness of the fairy's shaft.

"So beautiful." He pressed his hips up into Mauve, giving something firm to rock against, to feel.

"Oh!" Mauve undulated against him, body fluid and graceful, face soft with pleasure.

Geoff leaned up, licking at the cold, smooth skin, taking the flavor of Mauve within him.

"You're so warm," Mauve murmured, body still moving, wings fluttering, trembling against his hands.

"And you are growing chilled." His hands found the rhythm that would bring Mauve the most pleasure, lips and tongue trailing over Mauve's nipple.

Mauve gasped and shook his head, body moving with more purpose against him. "Growing hot."

His lips fastened over Mauve's tight flesh, pulling strongly. Yes, Mauve was hot, almost melting the snow around them, threatening spring.

Throwing back his head, Mauve called Geoff's name out to the skies, body shuddering as he came.

Geoff gentled his touches, his kiss, enjoying the sensations of wind and snow and pleasure. He waited, holding until he felt Mauve shiver, then nuzzled close. "Inside, before your heat fades."

Mauve pressed a soft kiss upon him, lips already cold. "Thank you, Geoff. Not just for this but for all the pleasures you offer me, both small and large."

"It has been my pleasure, Mauve." He smiled, nudging the fairy up. "Come, my tail end is blue with frost and cider awaits us."

He stood, taking Mauve's hand. The grass, brown but with a hint of green, peeked up from where they had lain.

Chapter Eight

The snow glinted, bright even through the gauze cloth he wrapped over his eyes. The drifts creaked and broke as he walked with the odd, shuffling gait the wide snowshoes gave him. Mauve had laughed, accused him of wearing beavers' tails on his boots, but not struggling, wet and frozen along the path where the traps had been placed, was worth being laughed at.

Geoff grinned, shifting the hare from one shoulder to another, if Mauve wasn't careful, the fairy would be flying about out here checking the damned traps himself, and turning that lovely skin from violet to blue.

They were reaching the end of the line, not far from the house, the metal traps created a large circle, assuring enough food for the winter and a reason to avoid cabin fever and walk among the frost-kissed trees.

Wolf was standing quiet, head tilted, nostrils flaring. He stepped forward, curious what his companion had found. Suddenly, an odd, snarling growl filled the air, Wolf's fur standing on end, teeth bared. Geoff frowned -- perhaps another predator was caught in the trap -- a cliff lion or a small bear.

Not a bear at all, but a man had been caught in his trap. The man had a pinched face, eyes close set, a narrow, pointed nose and matching pointed chin. He was bundled tight in heavy black fur and one leg was caught in the trap, the snow around it red.

He stepped forward, axe in hand, brow furrowed. "Halloo. You awake?"

The man made a sound that Geoff had previously only heard in wounded animals and raised his head. His eyes were bloodshot, glazed with pain and he reached out with one hand, arm trembling. "Help," the man rasped.

He nodded, hurrying forward to loosen the jaws of the trap. Without thought, he tore the man's pant leg open, gingerly testing the bruised, bloody flesh. The man moaned, Wolf whining in concert, and Geoff looked up with a half grin. "Not broken, just bruised. Come, my cabin's close and there's brandy and bandages and broth."

The man nodded tightly and he tried to stand, falling against Geoff as his leg refused to hold him.

He caught the man up without a word, wrapping one of the man's arms around his shoulders and steadying them both. Slowly, painfully, they began their trip towards the cabin.

It was rare that another man found his way this far into the woods; the wolf pack must be wintering elsewhere. Even the farmers on the outskirts of the big town that was four days walk knew to avoid the deep forest and its huge trees. Perhaps this man was not from the big town. Perhaps he was a changeling, lost and wounded. Or perhaps the gods had simply decided it was his season for visitors.

Of course, he could be a demon in disguise. Or a really small, man-shaped troll. Or a werewolf -- he still wasn't sure he believed Mauve who insisted those didn't exist.

Geoff sighed, continuing the agonizingly slow pace. No way to know. Still, it would have been easier had the man simply been frozen and still.

The man didn't speak, only grunted and moaned, the pained sounds coming with every step, making the journey seem that much longer.

Finally they came into view of the cabin, the smoke rising in a thin trail up into the fading sky. The color reminded him of the skin beneath Mauve's jaw.

Wolf had gone ahead and his barks brought Mauve to the door, a frown marring the soft lines of the fine face.

"You were gone so long, I was beginning to wo -- oh my! Who's this? What's happened?" The fairy's wings were fluttering in agitation.

"He found one of the traps with his leg." Geoff looked over and rolled his eyes. "I could not leave him to the snows."

Mauve chuckled, relief obvious. "Well that makes two of us who are glad of your heart."

He found a warm smile for his lover, helping the man stumble inside. With Mauve's enthusiastic, if somewhat dubious, help, Geoff settled him by the fire, pressing a glass of brandy into the shaking hand and fetching some bandages.

The fairy proceeded to hover, offering unhelpful advice and making soft sounds of disgust over the wound.

Geoff was fighting the urge to laugh, to turn and take Mauve in his arms and kiss the silly thing until they were both warm and happy. He finished binding the wound while managing to keep his face straight. "It'll ache for a day or four, but you'll be on your way by the full moon. You hungry? There's broth."

"Aren't you going to feed him any of that absolutely foul concoction?" Mauve asked. "It had me better in no time, despite the poisonous taste."

The man was looking at Mauve with a rather stunned expression. Of course, he also looked as if he were going to keel over in a faint at any moment.

Geoff frowned. Giving it to Mauve was one thing -- Mauve had promised to be interesting. This was a man -- just another man to look upon him fear and loathing. He opened his mouth, intending to refuse and then sighed, nodding at the look on Mauve's face. "I will fetch the potion. Watch over our guest."

He came back to find the man and Mauve eyeing each other, not exactly suspiciously, but not exactly happily either. One of Mauve's wings was curled rather protectively around one shoulder.

He walked over, letting his hand brush Mauve's soft hair in a bare, comforting caress. He poured a healthy dose of the medicine into a wooden spoon and offered it to the pale man. "It tastes bad, but it helps. Open up."

The man gave him a suspicious look, eyes tracking back to Mauve for just a moment before returning back to his face. Then the draught was taken, swallowed down in a single gulp.

Geoff nodded and found some extra furs for the wounded man to sleep on. He and Mauve and Wolf could share warmth in the other room, leave the stranger his privacy.

Mauve was smiling at him again, the violet eyes full of suggestions as to how they could while away their time until their guest woke up again. The stranger wasn't the only one who needed privacy.

Chapter Nine

Mauve giggled as the door closed to the tiny room. There was only a bench with furs in here. He giggled all the harder as Geoff arched an eyebrow at him.

"It's early evening -- the sun is only just abed and you just voluntarily closed us both in a room with no heating and nothing but a bed." Mauve giggled again and fluttered his wings slightly, just moving them without opening them. "Whatever shall we do to keep warm and while away the time, my dear Geoff?"

"Dice? Cards?" Geoff winked, sitting on the bench and pulling off his wet boots with a shiver. "You could tell me a real fairy tale."

"Oh, I could. This one requires participation from the audience though." He wrapped his wings around his shoulders and gave Geoff a wicked look from beneath his lashes. "And as it's so cold in here, we should definitely start out under the furs, sharing body heat and all that."

That brown eyebrow arched higher, lips quirking in a grin. "Skin to skin, I suppose -- simply to keep you warm."

"But of course! The story doesn't play so well with a frozen narrator." He giggled again and started to help Geoff take off his clothes. "How was it that wolf put it... oh yes! All the better to ravish you, my dear."

Geoff stopped, looking at him for a moment. Then the laughter started. Full and warm, it filled the room, sank deep into his bones and made him shiver with happy anticipation. Between bursts of snorts and giggles, Mauve managed to remove both tunic and pants, pushing Geoff down almost the furs and following. Finally Geoff's chuckles died down, hands sliding around his waist and pulling him close.

He kissed Geoff, tasting the earthy, green flavor of the woodsman. He didn't have to coax very long before Geoff's tongue began to play chase with his, moving through both their mouths.

The furs were tugged over their head, hiding them both in a dark, warm, fuzzy cave which smelled of Geoff's musk. Hands slid teasingly over his hips, down his thighs.

His own hands were busy exploring, fingers finding the scarred cheek and tracing it, relearning the now familiar patterns that lived there. He let Geoff's beard tickle his palm and searched out the other places where Geoff had hair -- his underarms, his chest, around his cock.

Good and warm -- Geoff relaxed as they touched one another, tension fading from the heavy muscles. Their legs tangled together, Mauve cuddling into the heat and secret softness between Geoff's thighs.

The thick cock was already hard, a band of heat across his hips. His own slender shaft was also hard and hot, trapped between their bodies.

Geoff nibbled lazily on his bottom lip, wiggling gently, rubbing their bodies together. Hands slid teasingly over his buttocks. "This *tale* of yours is quite interesting, Mauve -- so very well... told."

He chuckled, happiness and joy filling him, trebling his pleasure. "I thought you might like it. Shall I tell you more?"

"I would hear it until the end, Mauve. Every part."

"Wonderful!" He stopped to give Geoff another kiss. "You are wonderful, Geoff."

Geoff's cheek grew hot; he could feel the dark lashes against his own skin. "You say this when you are so

lovely, so stunning? Mauve, you can *fly*! I... I am not even welcome in the towns of man."

"Then your towns and your men are fools. I find endless fascination and pleasures in your arms, Geoff." He laughed softly. "And your company is nothing less than enjoyable and I should know, having enjoyed it for weeks on end."

Geoff chuckled, nuzzling against his skin, beard tickling. "And all this time I thought it was that you were trying to lure Wolf away to your bower."

Another laugh went through him, oh he loved Geoff best for this gift of laughter, for laughter always brought such pleasure deep inside. "I know I've admitted a fascination with all your hair, Geoff, but I think Wolf would be too hairy, even for me."

Geoff's laugh poured over his skin like spring rain, lips following fast behind to play upon his collarbones. The strong teeth teased him, nipping playfully at his jaw. "Not to mention too toothy."

"Oh, I think you have more than he does, but you know when to use yours and when not." His voice had grown husky, his words more breathless than teasing now.

"Mm..." Geoff murmured something against his lips, words lost inside their kiss.

"Would you like to hear a new chapter in my tale?"

"I would hear each word and keep the telling to warm me." The words were whispered soft against his ear.

"You know the sucking? You like that, right? Both being sucked and sucking?" He was undulating slowly against Geoff.

Geoff groaned, soft and low, shivering against him. "Yes, Mauve. Yes."

"We should do that again, both at the same time." He slid his tongue along Geoff's collarbone and up his neck, tickling the bundle of nerves behind Geoff's ear. "Would you like that?"

"Mmm... we would be a ring of pleasure, you and me." Geoff moaned, head tilting at the touch of Mauve's tongue. "I think we should hear this tale, together. Yes."

"Oh, I was hoping you'd say that." He licked once more at the tempting flesh and then shifted, turning so that he lay next to Geoff, his cock nudging at the soft lips, tickled by his lover's beard. He began his own exploration of the hard flesh in front of him, licking and sucking gently.

Geoff's lips explored, soft and damp, brushing over his skin in barely there caresses. The heavy hair fell over his thighs, Geoff's chin tickling over his belly.

He wanted to laugh at the tickle of beard and moan at the sweet touches and the sounds morphed together as they left his throat.

Geoff's answering moan vibrated over the head of his cock, the soft lips wrapping around to offer a gentle, sucking kiss.

"Oh!" Yes, this human was a fast learner, eager and generous. He surrounded the tip of Geoff's cock with his own lips, sucking gently, the green and earth flavor of Geoff's pre-cum filling his mouth.

The kisses continued, gentle and rhythmic, Geoff suckling one bit of his cock at a time. It was distracting and maddening and incredibly erotic, the soft exploration of his flesh.

It made him laugh happily -- he was being undone by an amateur, by a human who had only recently

been introduced to the pleasures of the flesh. He could only hope his own sucking kisses were bringing Geoff as much pleasure as he was being afforded.

Geoff tickled his belly again with the fuzzy chin, Geoff's hips straining towards the touch of his lips. The muscular legs moved, stretched, tensing and releasing with sensation.

Mauve slid his hands along the thick thighs, fingers caressing, pressing into the skin. He encouraged Geoff to open his legs and teased the soft skin of balls and the softer skin beyond, the skin hot and silky beneath his fingertips.

The sound that Geoff made was very interesting. The lips on his cock stuttered, the rhythm of the soft kisses lost to surprise and pleasure.

Letting his chuckle vibrate along Geoff's cock, he continued to suck, continued to play with the soft flesh between Geoff's legs, teasing and caressing.

Geoff shivered, hips jerking slightly, a soft moan falling over the head of his cock. "Oh... Mauve... I can't think when you do that..."

He laughed, letting Geoff's flesh slide from his mouth long enough to tease, "If you can think, I'm doing it wrong," before going back to sucking and fondling.

Hungry lips found his flesh again, no longer delivering teasing kisses, but suckling strongly, Geoff's hands sliding around his hips. His moan vibrated around Geoff's cock, and he increased the strength of his own suction, fingers sliding against Geoff's opening one after the other after the other.

Geoff jerked, tongue sliding over his flesh. He could feel Geoff's body clenching, twitching beneath his touch, the ring of muscle so responsive. He pushed one finger just in, teasing at the ring of muscles.

Jerking with a low sob, Geoff's hips pushed the hard cock further between his lips. The suction around his own cock was erratic, Geoff's focus shattered.

He sucked harder, pushing his finger deeper into Geoff's body, letting the grasping flesh pull him in. Rocking back against the finger, then forward, Geoff's entire body moved in short, hungry pulses. He teased a second finger along the edges of Geoff's opening. The shudders increased as did the soft, shocked cries, Geoff's open lips resting against his flesh, breath vibrating against him.

He shuddered as Geoff's breath almost tickled along his flesh and then focused back on the throbbing cock in his mouth and the tight muscles around his finger. He teased and pushed until the muscles loosened enough to admit the second finger, immediately curling them both, searching for the small point inside. It occurred to him for just a second, that perhaps humans were not exactly like fairies in this matter, but then Geoff reacted.

The man stiffened, gave a short, sharp, stunned cry, body clenching desperate and hot against his fingers. "Oh! Again! Please, Mauve. Do it again!"

He sucked on Geoff's cock until the muscles holding his fingers relaxed slightly and then he curled them again, rubbing against the pleasure point.

Geoff came with a shout, flooding his mouth with bittersweet seed, muscles gripping his fingers as if reluctant to set them free.

He continued to suck, searching out the last tremors and shivers hidden within Geoff's body.

"Oh, oh, Mauve..." Geoff began to lap at his cock, breath still coming quick and hard. "Oh, that was..."

Laughing gently as he let his fingers slide from Geoff's body, he placed a soft kiss to the tip of Geoff's cock. "Wonderful. Amazing. Unbelievably good. If past experience serves me right," he teased, voice as shivery as he felt.

"Oh! I'm sorry, Mauve. I... you... I got distracted." Geoff nuzzled his shaft, tongue licking long lines of heat over him. "Can I make it right between us?"

"As long as you stop apologizing for enjoying my touch, I would like nothing better than for you to complete the circle." He let his head rest against Geoff's thigh, hands kneading the solid buttocks.

Geoff didn't respond with words, but instead with hot lips sinking down over his flesh. Slow and steady, he was taken in, sucked, caressed.

Moaning out his pleasure, he let his hips move gently, trying not to overwhelm his lover.

Callused hands smoothed over his legs, cupped his sacs, and all the while that hungry mouth fed from him. Geoff's head bobbed in time with his thrusts, taking him in a little deeper each time, sucking a little harder.

He wrapped his hands around Geoff's thighs, holding tight as he increased his thrusts, pleasure beginning to blind him to everything but the sucking heat that surrounded his cock.

Vibrations surrounded his flesh as Geoff hummed, hands encouraging his motions.

Muffling his shout against Geoff's thighs, he came, spilling himself into his lover's throat.

Geoff was still licking and lapping at his flesh when he floated back into his body. It was so good, warmth and caring and so much sensation offered to him by this man.

He nuzzled gently at Geoff's genitals, murmuring happily, actual words still beyond him.

Snuggled together in their dark, warm cocoon, it was almost magical, this quiet time with Geoff. The scent of Geoff in the furs now included his own musk, lighter and different, but creating a sweet harmony of them together.

Still, he hoped the man with the pinched face would be gone soon, leaving him and Geoff alone again to explore their similarities and differences.

Chapter Ten

Mauve sat curled up by the fire, eyeing their visitor from beneath his lashes. The man was sitting in Geoff's chair, watching every move that Mauve made. Had been watching since he'd arrived really. It made Mauve twitch and he'd been unhappy as he watched Geoff and Wolf leave to check the traps this morning.

The man's leg seemed more than fine and Mauve wondered exactly how long these human's believed it was polite to stay in another man's home, uninvited and... Well, Geoff wasn't exactly friendly. Mauve had noticed the difference in the way the woodsman treated him compared to this interloper.

Perhaps it was the way the man had been unable to completely hide his grimace when he looked upon Geoff. Personally, Mauve found Geoff's scarred and bearded features far more fascinating than this man's ratty face.

He would tell Geoff tonight that the man was walking just fine now.

"Mauve? That's your name, right?" The rat-faced man smiled at him -- or at least Mauve thought it was a smile. It was toothy and odd and didn't make him feel good inside. "Aren't you bored stuck in here with the Woodsman? Don't you feel like a captive in this place?"

His wings fluttered and he curled them around his shoulders. "It is warm and quiet and there is interesting... conversation. I am hardly a captive."

"It is rare, to see one of your kind so near the forest's edge. What brought you out so far?"

"Curiosity. And I paid for my gazing upon the doings of men by injuring my wing. Luckily I was found by a man who has now twice-proven that he has a kind and generous heart."

The man nodded, leaning forward upon his knee, greasy dark hair sliding over his shoulders. "The Woodsman must have been lonely. I doubt he finds much company in town with his visage -- in truth, I heard that the fairfolk could not bear to look upon ugliness."

Before Mauve could protest, the man continued, oblivious to his insult. "Still, if you wish to see people, I could show you towns, villages. Many different things to fill your mind with beauty."

"And it is my understanding that fairy folk are not welcome to walk freely in your towns and villages." His wings were fluttering again; he didn't like this man at all. "Why do you think we watch your kind from afar? Aside from the fact that I have almost never seen anything of men to compare in beauty to us."

"Well, friend Mauve, that is because you stay here with the Woodsman -- I do not know whether it is acid or fire which ate his face, but everything has beauty when held up to those scars." The man stood, holding out his hand. "Come away with me. Come and learn about men."

He shrank away from the offered hand, quite astounded. Were men truly shallower than his own kind? Did this man truly believe his own small face, with its sneer would entice him to leave this comfortable, warm place where he was free and safe to explore the wonders of Geoff's differences?

"You have offered me no reason to go with you and I am happy where I am. You are obviously well enough to go. I believe you should."

"I mean no insult, Mauve. Relax yourself." The man gave him a sad look, hand falling. "I simply wished to be your friend. I will find my boots and coat and go."

The man stood, walking over to his boots and tugging them on. It was funny, Mauve thought. Not once

did anyone ask this man his name, not once did Wolf sit with him. A rank, stale smell hung around him, and his eyes were predatory, like the deep forest snakes that hid beneath the leaves to bite.

Of course the man had never offered his name either, and Mauve could not remember a thank you coming from between the thin lips to Geoff for his care and hospitality. Geoff had said more than once that he was not like other men. Mauve thought perhaps he would not like other men so much as he liked Geoff.

Boots on, the man walked over to the fire, picking up a log. "Let me build the fire for you before I go."

Mauve's wings fluttered, surprised at the unexpected gesture.

Mauve shook his head, intending to refuse -- he could add a log himself and then Geoff could fix the fire in the afternoon. Then, suddenly, the rat-man moved, quick as the snake his eyes resembled, and lights exploded all over, twinkling away and leaving only blackness behind.

Chapter Eleven

Something smelled wrong.

Geoff didn't know what it was -- perhaps it was just the stranger's sweat and grease affecting even the air in the woods near the cabin. Perhaps it was his nerves. Perhaps the men were coming closer and it would soon be time for him and Wolf to move deeper.

Wolf whimpered, soft and worried, the big gray body pushing them faster and faster through the snow.

Yes. Something smelled very wrong.

By the time he reached the house with its silent chimney and open door, one broken tipped feather sticking out of the snow, he knew what that wrongness was. Wolf snarled, snuffling at the ground, following the tracks already.

"Wait." He went indoors, threw the brandy and the potions and some furs into a sack. There were more feathers on the hearth, a few drops of drying purple-gray blood beside. He grabbed a sharpening stone from the mantle.

He could hone his blade as they tracked.

The tracks were easy to follow, the thief obviously weighed down by Mauve. His footsteps through the snows were close together and dragging slightly.

He and Wolf moved quickly, quietly, hunting this thief as easily as they hunted more palatable game. He should have known, when the trap caught the dead man in his jaws, that the woods had passed judgment.

The woods still loved her faithful son, however, leading him deeper and deeper into her heart where no man walked easily but him. Wolf growled once, sniffing out a fake trail and following the true. The thief would soon atone for his crimes.

The days never lasted long in winter and the sun was due west, heading down for the night when he caught sight of the man who'd taken Mauve. He was up to his knees in snow, bent over and breathing loudly. One of Geoff's blankets lay rolled up on the ground in front of the man and it was moving, something wriggling within its confines. Mauve.

They crept forward, neither man nor beast making a sound. When he was near enough to smell the foul scent that followed the thief like a cloud, he hefted his axe. They waited, breathing together until the man stood. With a deep breath and the accuracy of solitary decades of practice, he sent the axe flying. Both he and Wolf leapt forward when it hit, blade sinking deep between the man's shoulders.

The man screamed, the sound high-pitched, bouncing off the snow and ringing through the forest. He kicked the rolled up bundle in front of him as he turned, eyes wide with pain and surprise.

Wolf reached him first, launching off the snow with a snarl, teeth bared as the animal snapped. They went over, the thief landing hard in the snow. By the time Geoff reached him, skinning knife drawn, Wolf's jaw was fastened tight against the thief's throat.

Blood stained the snow as Geoff stood over the thief, looking down into dying eyes. "The woods protect her own. You have been judged unworthy."

The man's mouth opened but only a gurgling sound and blood poured out. The light in the close-set eyes slowly faded and the gurgling, struggling breath noises disappeared.

He nodded and then turned to the blanket, carefully unwrapping it, terrified of the damage he might find. "Mauve? Mauve, can you hear me?"

The fairy came out fighting, hands slapping at him, feet kicking. "Don't touch me you *human*!"

He stepped back, hands held up, giving Mauve his space. "It's alright, Mauve. You're free. Are you hurt? Did we hurt you?"

Mauve sprang to his haunches, looking around wildly, gasping as he saw the dead man, backing away until he hit a tree. The fine form was trembling slightly, and Mauve's hair was matted with grayish purple blood, his feathers in disarray, several remaining in the fur and more dropping as he scrambled back.

The violet eyes lighted upon him and Mauve blinked. "Geoff?"

"Yes, Mauve. You're free. He will never hurt anyone again." He nodded to Mauve's head. "You're bleeding and it's cold and getting dark. Would you like to come back to the fire? Have some cider and rest?"

He didn't step forward. Any wounded, scared thing that had been imprisoned -- animal or man or fairy -- deserved its space and ability to choose.

The amazing wings spread, curling around Mauve. "He's dead?"

He nodded. "He's dead."

Mauve's wings fluttered and settled again, still set protectively around the slim figure, and the fairy took a step toward Geoff. "You killed him?"

"Wolf and I did. Yes." Geoff wanted to hold Mauve, to touch the fairy and check the wounds and give comfort, but he stayed still, allowing Mauve to come as he would.

A fierce smile lit the fairy's face. "Good."

Mauve came slowly toward him, giving the body a wide berth. "Thank you, Wolf. Thank you, Geoff. For saving me."

Mauve stood close and rested his head against Geoff's shoulder.

"I could not allow that thing to keep you prisoner, my friend. All things deserve to be free." He stroked Mauve's back slowly. The wound on Mauve's head was shallow, already closing and the fairy seemed otherwise uninjured, barring some lost feathers and the occasional bruise. "Shall we find the fire and soft furs and perhaps a bit of a wash in warm water? That and a cup of warm broth will ease your heart and body."

"And a kiss? Do you still want to touch me, lie with me?"

Geoff smiled, leaning forward to brush a soft kiss over Mauve's forehead. "As many kisses as you will allow me. Besides," He leaned back so Mauve could see his face. "It is warmer skin to skin and it looks to be very cold over the next moon or so."

Mauve's arms slid around his neck and the fairy smiled back at him. "Take me home, Geoff, and make me warm again."

Chapter Twelve

It had been nearly a moon since Geoff had rescued him from the man Mauve thought of as The Interloper. The woodsman had been right -- it had indeed been very cold, but that just meant that they spent more time keeping each other warm.

Several days had even found them tarrying among the furs the whole day through. Not today though. Today Geoff had gone out to check the traps. Which now made Mauve nervous, waiting with the door shut tight for his human lover to return, worry that another Interloper would be with him, or that one would find his way on his own to Geoff's home.

He hadn't said anything to Geoff, but he always breathed a long sigh of relief whenever the woodsman returned.

He heard footsteps a moment before he heard the door to the barn open, Geoff's warm laugh sounding through the clearing. He opened the door a crack, Wolf was bounding through the snow, tongue lolling out. Three hares were tied and hung on a hook outside the barn, Geoff appearing in short order with a steaming bucket of goat's milk.

"Hello Mauve. I hope the evening finds you happy. The traps were full, the woods generous. And I found some dried berries on my travels, a pocket neither the birds or the beast or I found in the autumn." Geoff was grinning, stomping through the snow, cheeks and nose rosy. "So, when you add the dried berries to some flat cakes, we will have a feast."

"It sounds like a feast for more than two -- we'll have leftovers for days... Unless you've brought someone with you?" He asked the question casually, only the faint tremor of his wings betraying him.

"No, you'll have to just deal with leftovers." If Geoff noticed his worry, the human didn't mention it, just offered him a soft, snowy kiss, before herding them both indoors and closing the door, Wolf squeaking through at the last moment. "I think there will be no more visitors here this winter, Mauve. It will be just the three of us and our fire."

He fluttered his wings and stroked Geoff's face gently with the edge of one. "Good. There isn't really room for another."

Geoff made a soft, happy sound and leaned into the caress. "No. We all fit nicely. There is no need for a stranger."

He took the jug from Geoff's hands and began to undress the woodsman, fingers peeling layers away from skin which he then stroked with his feathers.

"Oh, Mauve... So soft..." Geoff shivered, exposed skin pebbling into gooseflesh.

He beamed. Why hadn't he thought of this before? He knelt to remove Geoff's breeches and let his wings stroke over the thick thighs, the solid hips, muscled belly and, finally, the filling cock.

"Do you like it?" he asked, gazing up at Geoff's face from beneath his lashes.

Geoff was blinking down at him, bottom lip caught tight between strong teeth. A soft, strangled noise found its way out of the thick throat and then Geoff nodded, dark eyes blazing.

"Oh, good." He smiled widely and leaned forward to kiss the very tip, tongue sliding out to pick up Geoff's taste, before sitting back slightly and letting his wings continue the feathery caresses.

That earned him more of those rough, needy sounds, Geoff's thighs parting, hips swaying slightly.

He brought his wings over his shoulders and let the side feathers brush along Geoff's thighs, as the tops stroked across the hard shaft.

He watched what he was doing closely, careful not to stroke too roughly. Geoff's cock was heavy, full and dark, beautiful against the gauzy softness of his wings. Shudders rocked Geoff's body, the muscles jumping and trembling beneath his caress. It made him smile, that this so soft touch could melt such strength.

He added his hands, just barely there touches along the insides of Geoff's legs. His wings were never still, stroking, caressing, sliding over Geoff's body. Geoff began to move, wave after wave of slow undulations. The dark eyes were closed now, lips open as the human gasped for air, pleasure written in every line of the scarred face.

Geoff had fascinated him from the start, but like this, lost in passion, Geoff was truly beautiful.

Mauve slid his wings around to tickle at the skin behind Geoff's legs, even his feathers picking up the way the smooth skin there felt different from the hairy skin up front.

Short, sharp cries began falling from those open lips, Geoff's need obvious and sweet. Geoff's cock -- rocking into the air, hips driving it instinctively -- was shining, dark and full, tip wet with clear drops. Mauve began to lick at the tip, drinking in each drop as it was gifted to him. His hands stroked the skin between Geoff's legs and behind, teasing the hot, wrinkled skin around Geoff's opening, while he concentrated the touch of his wings upon the sides of the weeping cock.

Geoff's hips slid the hot flesh along his tongue, jerking gracelessly. "Oh! Mauve! I'm going to... oh..."

Mauve caught the spray of seed in his face, eyes closing just in time. Fragrant and hot he began to lick at the seed around his mouth as he grinned up at the stunned woodsman.

"Oh... Oh, Mauve..." Geoff's eyes were dazed, tremors visible as they ran along arms and belly and thighs. Sinking to his knees, Geoff wiped the seed from his face with a shaking hand. "Oh."

"Did I bring you pleasure, sweet man?" Mauve asked, wrapping his arms around the thick neck, punctuating his words with soft kisses over Geoff's face.

"Oh, yes, Mauve. So much. I have never known such pleasure as you have brought to me." Geoff captured his lips in the softest kiss, gentle and caring and sweet as dark honey. "Thank you."

"Oh, Geoff -- it was my pleasure. It has all been my pleasure." He gazed into the dark green eyes. "I'm glad I flew into that tree and broke my wing and I'm glad you found me and brought me to your home."

"I am grateful that I have been given a chance to know you, to touch you." Geoff gave him another kiss, never breaking their gaze. "To care for you."

"And you take such good care of me, Geoff. Thank you."

Geoff nodded, arms wrapping around to hold him, fingers sliding over his skin.

Bringing up his wings, he wrapped them around both of them, enclosing them in soft purple gauze that colored the light of the fire to a gentle purple.

"So beautiful." Geoff nestled into him, head resting upon his shoulder, lips soft against his skin.

"When two of my kind make love, we often press our wings together, making a bower. I like this one better. It is closer, more intimate." He pressed a kiss against Geoff's forehead. "I find a lot of things better, more fun with you Geoff, than with others of my kind. For all our beauty, we can be a cynical

race."

"And people are cruel and greedy creatures who do not listen to the forest when she speaks." Another series of kisses brushed over him. "Perhaps the forest meant us to share the winter. I think, perhaps, you are a great gift."

He smiled with pleasure at the compliment, offering Geoff more kisses for his words. Geoff took them eagerly, one kiss following another, Geoff's tongue and lips gentle and soft against him. The beard tickled around his face and he let the laughter come to sprinkle their loving with joy.

Chapter Thirteen

He was sharpening his axe, listening to the storm blowing outside. They'd had a few days of bright, warm, almost spring days. The snows had begun to well and truly melt, Mauve had been happiness incarnate, flitting about like... well, like a fairy, he supposed, not that he'd seen other fairies flitting, at least not up close, but it seemed to make sense.

But the warmth hadn't lasted and as the day progressed, the sky faded to a cold, steel gray. He'd brought in a wealth of firewood, stuck Nanny in the barn and milked her, making sure she had enough bedding, and then pulled up some of the soon-to-be frozen, over-enthusiastic shoots to put into the stew.

Now he was happily settled, the scent of stew and smoke warm in the air, the wail of the wind outside. Mauve and Wolf in the house, Nanny in the barn -- all that he cared for warm and safe from the cold. Life was good.

Mauve wandered over and draped himself over Geoff's shoulders, leaning against his back as he sat and worked on the axe. "Do you think you'll be done soon?"

"I am just finishing. Why, Mauve? Do you need something?" He ran the stone along each side once more and then set the axe aside, leaning back and tilting his head to see Mauve. "All done."

"I do, Geoff. Great need." The fairy grinned down at him, rubbing against his back. The heat and hardness was unmistakable, even through his clothing.

He smiled back, hands reaching back to slide over smooth, warm legs. "A great need, eh? I would not be a good companion if I did not answer your call, Mauve."

"Oh, and you do answer it Geoff, so well, don't you?" murmured Mauve, hands sliding down to tease him through his leathers.

He groaned, thighs parting and hips pushing forward. "I could no more ignore it than to deny the sunrise, Mauve."

"We rise more often than the sun though, do we not?" He could hear the laughter in Mauve's voice, the fairy's joy and happiness suffusing everything he touched.

Geoff chuckled, tickling Mauve's knee. "Ah yes, but we do not stay so long in the sky."

"Like a thunderstorm, quickly spent?" Mauve laughed outright and took his mouth suddenly, putting an end to the teasing words with passion.

He moaned, lips opening to share in the heat and hunger of Mauve's kiss. The fairy's tongue pressed inside his mouth, licking and tasting and making him twist and arch in response.

Mauve slid around him, settling in his lap without breaking the kiss.

Geoff murmured happily as Mauve's slight weight pushed against him. He wrapped his arms around the thin waist, fingers rubbing random patterns over the fine skin of Mauve's lower back.

Mauve's wings spread and came around them both, enclosing them in what had become a familiar bower of gauzy purple feathers. "Your kisses are warmer than the sky," murmured the fairy against his lips.

He would have reminded Mauve that the sky was currently spitting out ice and snow and a dead trout's head would be warmer, but it didn't seem the place, with Mauve warm and close, tongue sliding back into his mouth.

The slender hands were sliding down his chest, fingers finding his fastenings and undoing them.

He let his hands slid up, caressing the gauzy feathers with a gentle touch.

A ripple moved through the body pressed against him and Mauve's hands stuttered as they slid into his tunic, fingertips searching out his nipples.

He arched up, humming into the kiss, lightning running from his nipples to his cock and back.

Mauve murmured happily, fingers playing over his skin, returning again and again to tweak and play with his nipples.

"Mauve..." He was so hot, the fire and the body on his lap and the flames that Mauve built within him merging to set him ablaze.

"Yes, Geoff?" Mauve's lips left his to seek out the scars on his cheek and the skin beneath his ears.

"You set me afire, with your touches." He shuddered beneath the touches -- so strong, so rare, so sweet.

"And I am a moth to your flame, sweet man." Mauve continued to explore, hands and fingers and lips and tongue eager and thorough.

He was burning and shivering all at once, caught in this beauty that Mauve created between them. His hands were fascinated by difference between long hair and sleek skin and gossamer feathers, lips revisiting the planes of cheek and throat and jaw.

Mauve slowly worked his tunic off, pressing close as the fairy's explorations moved to his back, fingers and feathers teasing their way down his spine.

It tickled, making him shift and twist slightly beneath the touches. The movement brought their torsos together, that touch making him gasp. "You make me feel so much."

"I would make you feel everything, Geoff, every pleasure known to man and fairy alike."

He lifted his chin for a kiss, heart full. To be friended by this lovely, caring, embodiment of joy and desire and laughter was the most precious of things.

Mauve's lips closed over his own, eager and hungry, as the fairy pushed him down onto his back.

He went happily, tongue sliding against Mauve's, hands playing over the curve of shoulder and spine and buttock. He was hard, full, shaft throbbing within his leathers, wanting the smooth touch of skin.

Mauve was rubbing against him, fingers working slowly, so very slowly, at the ties that held his cock within his clothes.

"Oh..." His shivers intensified and he fought to slow his breath, looking to match Mauve's rhythms.

Mauve broke the kiss and made a soft noise of triumph as he succeeded in undoing the stubborn ties. "You humans wear so many clothes!"

He chuckled, leaning up to place a soft kiss on Mauve's throat. "Some of us have sense enough to dress for the cold."

Mauve laughed. "Funny -- I'm not cold and you don't feel cold either."

Wrapping one slender hand around his length, Mauve began to stroke his cock in a gentle, teasing rhythm.

"No, not cold at all." His thighs parted as far as they could before they caught in the leather. Rocking into the touches, he stroked Mauve's stomach, fingers dancing and playing, returning the sweet pleasure he was receiving.

Mauve began to kiss his way down Geoff's chest, tongue lapping at his skin, stopping to tease over his nipples and to nip at the sensitive skin just below his rib cage.

He twisted, stretching and arching beneath the waves of sensation.

Mauve gave him no quarter, pushing him closer and closer to the edge as the fairy's tongue swirled over his abdomen, dipped into his navel and teased across the tip of his erection. Mauve's hands were busy as well, working to completely remove his leathers.

He'd stopped trying to do anything but breathe and feel -- and breathing was quickly losing what importance it had held. His entire body was tingling, filled with anticipation, as if he were a stormy sky about to birth thunder.

Mauve had managed to get his leathers off, using fingers and legs and sheer will power. The fairy's hands were sliding between his legs, fondling his balls and teasing the bottom of his shaft. All the while the sweet tongue was working its magic along his cock, touching and tasting and teasing, the wet, warm touches not quite enough.

"Mauve... Please..." Legs freed, he parted them widely, arching up and offering himself more fully to the sweet tongue and fingers.

"Mm, so wanton, so eager." Mauve spoke the words against his shaft, making him quiver. "Such a wonderful lover, my Geoff."

Then the fairy's lips closed over the tip of his cock and pulled him slowly in.

His cry rivaled the winds, spine drawn tight by pleasure. Everything but the wet-heat of Mauve's mouth dissolved, leaving him bare, body and soul, sinking into his lover's touch.

Mauve didn't hold him down or try to stop him from thrusting up into the hot mouth, the fairy simply concentrated on sucking his very bones out through his cock.

Fortunately, his body understood what to do even when his mind shattered into a dozen bolts of lightning, understanding only the heat and intensity of what Mauve was sharing with him.

Mauve continued to suck him, fingers stroking over his hips, his legs, his belly, his balls, his opening, keeping him shuddering and shivering with pleasure. Geoff was gasping, so close to climax, but caught in passion's storm. It felt so good; he never wanted it to end.

Then Mauve began to push one of his fingers inside Geoff's body, insistent and sure.

"Oh!" He arched, pushing down onto the finger as he came, violet sparks shooting behind his eyes.

Mauve suckled until he was breathing normally and then the fairy slid up his body, dragging the sweet purple flesh along his own skin until they were mouth to mouth. Bending, Mauve brought their lips together, sharing the taste of his own pleasure with him.

He moaned into the kiss, reaching up to hold Mauve close, fingers sliding over feathers and skin. "Thank you, Mauve. You make me fly inside."

"Good." Mauve kissed him again with passion, body rubbing against him sensually. The fairy's length was hot and hard against the softness of his own spent flesh.

"Mm... You still have a need, I feel." Geoff stretched, undulating lazily, relaxed and happy. "How can I help you with this... need?"

Mauve grinned down at him, moving with him. "I would like very much to really be inside you, Geoff. To take that pleasure and share it with you as you have shared it with me."

Geoff stilled for a moment, remembering the pressure and pleasure Mauve had given him with only his fingers, the bliss and hunger upon Mauve's face as he was filled. Then Geoff nodded, beginning to move again. "Yes, Mauve. I would like to know that pleasure."

Mauve beamed down at him, looking pleased and happy, arousal and anticipation deepening the color of the violet eyes.

"Wonderful," Mauve said quietly, rubbing his nose against Geoff's and then touching their lips together again.

Geoff hummed low, stroking along Mauve's flanks as the kiss slowly deepened. Brushes of lips became lingering caresses, brief touches of tongue became searching thrusts. Dancing fingers stroked over his skin, searching out sweet spots that made his hum turn to a rumbling purr, Mauve's fingers moving slowly, but inexorably downward.

He thought, briefly, that he should be nervous, worried -- the priests would call him heretic, blasphemer. Then he looked into Mauve's eyes, laughing and warm. Here he had found acceptance, hunger, joy. Let the priests have their laws and morals and truths. He knew he was the forest's son.

With another happy purr, Geoff left the thoughts of men and laws behind and pressed up into love's touch.

As if he knew that Geoff's doubts had disappeared, Mauve's kisses became voracious, hungry. The slender fingers that moved over his skin slid between his legs, teasing at his entrance but not breaching him.

He bent his knees, cradling Mauve between and offering himself, his heart, to the sweet touch. The kisses made him dizzy, head swimming and spent flesh beginning to fill again. Mauve murmured happily into his mouth, fingers still teasing, but now pushing just inside him, one after the other. It felt odd, made him want to tense up, push against the touches. He could feel shivers inside him, crawling over his belly. He gasped, toes clenching upon the furs.

"Sh. Relax -- it feels good, I promise." Mauve began to drop soft kisses along his jaw, tongue teasing through his beard to wet the skin beneath.

The touches soothed him, aroused him. He tilted his head back, encouraging more of the sweet kisses. "I trust you, Mauve. I want you."

Nodding, Mauve smiled down at him. "Good. Good." The soft kisses resumed and he almost missed the finger that slid into him.

He focused his mind on the brush of Mauve's lips and let his body react to the touches and pressure of Mauve's finger. His hips rolled, rocking gently, fucking himself slowly and steadily.

"Oh, I knew you'd be good at this." Mauve's voice was warm and husky. "So good, sweet man." Mauve's lips found his nipple, tugging gently, the soft feathers of the gossamer wings finding his face and shoulders as one finger suddenly became two.

"Oh..." The sound he gave was low, dark, guttural. His knees widened, hips jerking slightly and then pushing back. The burn was sweet, dancing through his spine and belly, balls aching.

Mauve laughed, the sound dancing down his spine, adding to his pleasure. Then Mauve did something with his fingers and for a moment the pleasure became almost unbearable.

He arched, back and throat and world tightening until he would snap. His mouth opened, intending to ask why, how, more, but only a single word made sense. "Mauve!"

"Oh, yes, Geoff." The sensation came again, and then again.

"Mauve, Mauve please... Please..." He pressed down against the fingers inside him, rocking harder, faster.

Mauve's fingers continued to move inside him, letting him set the pace, the fairy's body rubbing against him in time, sliding their cocks together. "Warm me before it becomes too much," Mauve murmured, lips warm and soft along his ear.

"Oh, Mauve. It's so good. Feels so good." Gasping, groans coming almost constantly, Geoff was flying, body gripping the fingers inside him, lips sliding restlessly over soft skin. Mauve kept moving against him, driving him higher and higher. He gasped, needing more, deeper, higher, something. Geoff leaned back, eyes wild, breath coming in short pants. "I need, Mauve. Please. I need."

Mauve's fingers slid away, leaving him empty, making him cry out.

"Then you shall have, sweet Geoff." Heat pushed against him and then into him, the burn both pain and pleasure.

Time stilled, captured between violet feathers and violet grey eyes. Full -- so full, he hadn't imagined, hadn't known he could be filled like this, touched like this. He reached up, stroked the soft, smooth cheek with a trembling hand, one hot tear sliding over his scarred face.

Mauve bent and licked the tear from his skin, tongue warm and soothing over his damaged skin. "It is good, yes?"

"Yes, Mauve. Yes." His whisper was shaky as he nuzzled into the touch. "Yes."

"Good." Mauve licked and kissed the skin of his face. Then the fairy looked down at him, wicked glint in his eyes. "It gets better."

"B...better?" His cock leapt, stomach clenching.

Mauve laughed, making the fairy's body shake, making the heat inside him move just a little.

"Oh!" He shifted his hips, gasping as the burn inside him grew and moved and oh...

Then Mauve began to move in earnest, the violet eyes gazing down at him, drinking him in as Mauve began to thrust, pulling out and pushing back into his body in long, smooth strokes.

Geoff couldn't hold in the cries, the moans, the exclamations. Mauve pushed them out of him, pushing and pulling until all he knew was Mauve and Mauve's eyes and Mauve's heat and Mauve's hunger -- moving within him and through him, touching him throughout.

"Oh, Geoff! You're beautiful. So beautiful."

"Mauve." He would remember this always, hold it close and guard this moment forever. This moment

when someone loved him, found him beautiful, judged him worthy.

Long fingers wrapped around his cock, sliding along the flesh in time with Mauve's thrusts, the fairy's mouth bringing their lips together. "My sweet, beautiful Geoff." The words were whispered against his lips and then Mauve's tongue was sweeping into his mouth.

Geoff sobbed once, tongue sliding against Mauve's as his seed spilled into the fairy's hand. Mauve's thrusts became graceless, jerky and then the fairy cried out, heat filling him even further.

He shivered, eyes falling closed as his body tried to take everything in, all the joy and sensation and love, and make it understandable. Mauve slipped from his body and collapsed onto him, peppering sweet kisses over his shoulder and neck.

He managed to wrap his arms around Mauve, fingers sliding through lighter-than-air feathers, and hold his lover close.

"Thank you, Geoff, for sharing that with me."

"Thank you, Mauve. That... you... I will hold this memory within my heart to warm me."

"Mm, it is a good memory. I will cherish it as well." Another soft kiss touched his skin. There was a soft brush of feathers against his face and arm and then Mauve settled more firmly against him.

He began to stroke Mauve's skin, the motion slow and easy. Geoff could hear the wind as it crashed against the wood, blowing snow everywhere.

Somehow he knew that late winter storms would never feel quite the same, the still clouds and early twilight would forever be tinged with purple.

Chapter Fourteen

Spring was well and truly sprung: the snow was gone, trees full, flowers blooming and it was warm enough that even Geoff was wearing less.

They had spent days exploring Geoff's woods, the woodsman sharing a special pool that was cool even in the hottest days of summer and where the sweetest berries grew. Everything was lush and beautiful and wondrous and it was hard to believe this landscape was the same one that had been covered in snow only weeks ago.

At last there came a morning when Mauve could delay it no longer. The geese had flown overhead at the sun's first light and it was time for him to fly as well and return to the lands where his kind lived and played.

He pushed the greens around his plate as if they were stale and horrid instead of fresh and succulent. He just couldn't eat.

Geoff's hand, warm and familiar and gentle, landed on his arm. When he looked up, the bright eyes were looking at him with an interesting, heart-wrenching mixture of sorrow and fondness. "Eat up, Mauve. You have a long day ahead of you."

"How did you know?"

Geoff smiled. "Your wings flutter, even when you sleep. Your eyes are fastened beyond the mountains. The gracious Lady Spring has come and calls you home."

He felt tears come to his eyes. "I wish I could take you with me -- show you my world."

"I know, but wishing will not make it so." His arm was gently squeezed, fingers rubbing. "I belong here between men and fair folk. Here in the trees."

Nodding, he reached out and slid his fingers along the scarred cheek. "I will miss you, sweet Geoff."

His hand was nuzzled, Geoff's lips just brushing his palm before moving away. "I know. The cabin will be too big and my heart lonely, but we have our memories, our laughter, our joy. Those will surely stay with each of us."

"I will never forget you, Geoff. You brought so much laughter into my life. It is the coin among fairies you know -- laughter and pleasure. And you have paid me well."

He felt guilt, leaving Geoff here on his own while he returned to his brothers and sisters and friends, to a multitude who would open their arms to him in welcome.

But he also felt the pull to go like a physical ache. His wings itched, the soles of his feet and his palms itched, his very skin itched. He could deny it no longer; it was time to go.

"We have given much to one another." Geoff took a deep breath and stood, hand trailing over Mauve's hair. "Shall I put some bread and cheese in a pack for you? Some of the berries we picked?"

He shook his head. "There should be berries and sweet grasses along the way. A pack would only unbalance me, slow me down."

He looked down to find Wolf sitting in front of him, the animal was looking up at him with eyes that he would have sworn were sad and when he knew he had Mauve's attention he barked once and whimpered.

"Good-bye, Wolf." Mauve slid his hand along the animal's head and scratched behind Wolf's ears.

Wolf whined, head bowing so that Mauve could reach more easily. When the scratching ended, Wolf pressed his cold nose against his knees and then turned to curl up near the hearth.

Sighing, he turned to Geoff. "Walk with me to the clearing just west of us?"

Geoff nodded, giving him another sweet, sad smile. "It would be my pleasure."

Oh, this human was going to make him cry. Mauve blinked quickly and cleared his throat.

"No use losing sunlight," he said quietly, holding his hand out for Geoff's.

Warm and gentle, Geoff's fingers twined with his. "Come, my friend. Let us greet this beautiful day that's waiting for your travel."

Geoff led him outside, Wolf remaining inside by the fire, pouting. His lover shrugged and smiled apologetically. "You're part of the family. He doesn't understand."

He nodded, but he still felt bad, felt guilty. Geoff's quiet acceptance was almost worse than Wolf's pouting. The day didn't seem nearly as warm as the previous ones had. In fact it almost seemed to hold a chill he used to associate with winter.

They walked quietly, Geoff's hand holding his. The trees were heavy with bright green leaves and blossoms, the birds and bees and butterflies were everywhere.

They were almost to the clearing when Geoff stopped, turned, and hugged him, kissing his forehead gently. "I will miss you."

He wrapped his arms around the thick middle and tucked his head under Geoff's chin, just holding on for a long moment. Then he spread his wings and wrapped them around both of them, holding Geoff within the bower of his feathers one last time. "I never expected to meet a human up close, much less live with one. You will always be a part of my spirit, sweet, beautiful Geoff, one of the joys in my life."

He settled his feathers back in place and stepped away, hand slowly slipping from Geoff's body.

One callused hand stroked over his feathers, Geoff smiling softly. "You fly, Mauve, free and happy. I will hold your lessons tight forever." Another caress and then Geoff winked at him. "Be careful and watch for those trees. They're bigger than you are. Goodbye, my friend. I love you."

Then Geoff turned and began heading back the way he came.

Mauve watched him go until the trees swallowed him up.

Fairies didn't cry. They were pretty and beautiful and lovely to look upon. They sat in trees and made love with other fairies as beautiful and lovely as them. They laughed and danced and loved, flitting from one partner to another, from one interest to another, their joy raining down on the ground like pollen from bees.

At least that was what he told himself as he took wing, heading toward the sky.

Chapter Fifteen

Winter was coming.

He and Wolf were sitting, warm and dry before the fire. The larder was full of dried venison and salted pork, smoked bear meat and even three pheasants. Onions and peppers were dried and hanging above the hearth, bottles of homemade meads stood along the wall, and balls of cheese were wrapped and hanging. The woods had been good to them.

So many things had changed since last winter -- there had never been a longer spring or one more filled with gray skies and rain. But, as it always did, the sun drove the clouds away and he had gone to work. The sleeping room now had a hearth of its own and a small window with closing shutters. He would be able to sleep warm and cozy all winter.

Not as warm as last winter, but comfortable nonetheless.

He'd brought in a few pieces of wood; he hadn't gotten any carving done last year at all. Of course there'd been something else to occupy his time last year.

He should get lots of carving done this year though; Wolf was a good companion but he was a lousy conversationalist, and though the beast made a great foot warmer, Geoff thought maybe it was parts further north than his feet that would lack heat this winter.

He smiled, the memory of fluttering wings and laughing eyes and being held less bitter and more sweet these days. He supposed he could have asked Mauve to stay, wept and raged against it all and begged for more time, more touches.

He could have, but he hadn't. Mauve needed to fly and be free and home amongst others as beautiful and smooth and fine and... well, everything he wasn't.

Wolf nudged his hand, nose sliding beneath his fingers. Geoff scratched the big, furry head, sighing softly as Wolf whined. "Yes, I know. I miss him too, but we'll manage you and me. We'll manage."

The wind howled mournfully around his home, promising snow before morning.

It was early for a storm as bad as this one was gearing up to be, which boded a long, hard winter ahead.

He almost missed the knock beneath the sound of his wooden walls creaking.

He frowned, hauling himself up and grabbing his axe. He and Wolf were going to have to move. The people were moving closer and closer and the last thing he wanted was more strangers, more people to scare and horrify. More trouble.

The door opened upon a slender, purple figure with wings. His hair was a little longer, but otherwise Mauve looked the same, face beautiful and unlined, naked as the day he was born, gossamer wings fluttering softly. "I was wondering if you would have enough room in your home and heart for a silly fairy who has left it too late and cannot possibly return to the land of the fair folk before the winter storms overwhelm him?"

He placed the axe aside and held out one hand, Mauve's fingers cool and right when they slid against his. "Mauve."

"Geoff." They stood like that a moment, maybe more and then Mauve shivered violently. "It's cold, Geoff. I'm cold. And I want to come home."

Oh. Heat filled him, his heart trying beat its way through his chest. He pulled Mauve into the cabin and his arms in the same motion, holding tight. "Welcome home, Mauve. Welcome home."

Mauve's arms circled his waist, the gesture so familiar and heartily missed over the last months. "I'm a silly fairy, Geoff, for not realizing sooner that you were my home. But I'm here now. And staying. If you'll have me."

Geoff bent his head and took a kiss, soft and slow and warm. The silken lips were sweet and open to him and he drank deeply before lifting his head again. "All I have, all I am, it's yours. I missed you."

"Oh, I missed you, too, Geoff. I got home and everything was just the same as I remembered. Beautiful and lovely and warm and so terribly dull. I tried to tell them about the human I'd met, about the man with the twisted face and the beautiful heart, but they weren't interested." The feathers of Mauve's wings twitched with annoyance. "Fools."

His hands smoothed over the gauzy feathers, shivering at the feel of Mauve close to him. "So, not every fairy is a curious and brave and giving as you?"

"Not every fairy has a Geoff to call their own." Mauve's lashes lowered and the delicate wings shivered beneath his fingers.

"No. I would think fairy-chosen Geoff's are somewhat rare." He laughed, nuzzling along Mauve's hairline.

"Oh! I've missed the pleasure of your laughter!"

The joy and pleasure in Mauve's eyes made him laugh again, happy and complete. His lips mapped Mauve's face, relearning the skin that he could never forget. "Thank you, Mauve. Thank you for coming home."

Mauve nuzzled into his touches. "You're welcome, my sweet Geoff, though I must tell you that I did it for me."

Laughing, Mauve met his lips. "And I haven't felt such bubbling laughter since I left with the geese in the spring. I think though, that you will forgive me my selfishness, won't you, Geoff?"

Geoff nodded, hoping to ease his lover's nerves. "There is nothing to forgive, Mauve. Although, if you want a certain wolf to warm your feet at all this cold winter, you might go say hello."

Mauve looked past him to the fire where Wolf was lying, back to the door and the two of them. "Do you think a scratch and a hello will do it? Or is he going to pout at me all winter?"

"I think he missed you. Come on, Mauve, come tell Wolf hello while I start late meal." Geoff grinned over, tucking Mauve back into the empty space in his life that the fairy had left behind. "I built a hearth in the bedroom, so the furs will be warm and cozy for us."

Us. He liked that. A lot.

The lovely wings fluttered at him along with the long purple lashes. "You were expecting my return?"

"Expecting? No. Hoping?" Geoff looked at the floor, cheeks heating. "With all my heart."

Mauve was suddenly at his side again, wings fluttering along his arms, one slender finger beneath his chin. "And such a heart it is. There is none that has its equal in the world of men or fairies. I love you, Geoff."

"As I love you, Mauve." He looked into those beloved eyes, heart swelling. "Welcome home."

Mauve's happy laughter filled his life.

Bus Story ☀️

He followed J to the three seater and sat carefully, sniffing.

He was careful not to touch J, trying not to draw attention to himself.

He didn't know which scared him most, Gary being HIV positive or J when he was mad like this. Probably J.

It wasn't that AIDS wasn't scary, but it wasn't really real either. Not like J who was big and mad and right here.

And it wasn't that J was scary, well maybe just a little when he got really mad like he was now, but what scared Benny the most was the thought of J leaving.

J loved him and took care of him and if he didn't have J... he didn't even want to think about it because it was gonna make him cry again and J was fixing to yell at him for his sniffing, he could tell by the way the muscled arms were bunching and clenching.

Oh, man, he loved those muscles.

They rode through the Arboretum area, past fast food restaurant, then they were at the transfer center and still J didn't move, didn't speak, just sat there staring out the window.

"We going home, J?" he asked. He didn't have any cash and J had his transfer and he really didn't want to get stuck at the end of the line somewhere with no way to get home. But he didn't want to get off if J wasn't 'cause what if J was so mad at him he never came home?

"Not yet, Benny." Those hard, so-blue eyes looked over at him and the low, deep, rumbling voice was tight. "Sit tight, 'kay?"

"'kay, J." If J wanted him to stick around, he couldn't be that mad anymore. Not as mad as he'd been anyway.

Benny looked out the window, teeth fiddling with the ring in his lip. Gary had been his first lover and Gary had said he was clean, so Benny'd believed him. He hadn't known any better. 'Course at the time he'd thought he was in love with Gary and he was in love with J now and him and J weren't using condoms or nothing, so maybe he'd have done it even if he did know better.

He started bouncing in his seat, singing under his breath.

"Benny, I will beat you to death if you don't stop."

He froze and tried to figure out what he was supposed to stop -- the singing? The bouncing? Chewing on his lip and the ring embedded there?

In the end he figured it was safer to just stop all three, so he sat his board across his legs and started drumming with his fingers, careful not to bounce or hum along. And he only fiddled with the piercing a little bit.

J handed him a piece of gum, one of those pink bazooka kinds that meant Halloween trick-or-treating and visiting old ladies with mom. There was a cartoon inside the wrapper, too. Some silly joke about an elephant and a marshmallow.

He chewed on the gum and started blowing bubbles. Looking out the window, he tried to figure out where they were, where they were going.

The bus passed the hospital and then J pulled the cord. "Come on, Benny-boy. Hustle."

They hopped off the bus and J walked them up to the free clinic that J'd taken him to when he couldn't stop coughing last winter.

"J?" He tugged on J's arm to get his attention. "What're we doing here, J? 'm not sick -- are you?"

"Fuck, I hope not." The answer was almost whispered. J walked them over to the side of the building, leaning back against the wood. "We're gonna go in and get tested, Benny. We're gonna go make sure, one way or the other, right?"

"Tested? Like with needles?" He looked up at J, really not wanting to do this. "But I don't feel sick, J. I feel fine!"

"Tested. With needles." J sighed and looked at him, really looked at him. "Gary doesn't feel sick either, does he?"

"He didn't say -- just said he was HIV positive and had to tell all his lovers and I had to tell all mine, too." He scuffed his shoes on the pavement. "I just hate needles, J. You promise to stay with me for the test?"

"I promise. We have to know. If we're clear, we're clear."

"What if we're not?" he whispered.

J sighed and then lifted his chin and gave him a long, slow look. "If we're not, then we're not and we figure it out. Together."

Relief flooded through him and he wrapped his arms around J's middle, giving him a quick short hug, not caring who saw. "'kay, J. Long as it's together I can do needles and tests and being sick."

"Well, let's hope for together and clean, 'kay? Come on, we gotta sign in."

"'kay, J." He trotted along next to J, trying not to stand too close as they walked in and everyone in the waiting room turned to look at them. He clutched his board tight and followed J to the sign in desk.

J talked to the kid at the desk and dealt with the paperwork and the questions and everything in that steady, rumbling, 'don't even fuck with me' way J had while he read some old magazine about making Christmas wreaths out of crushed soda cans. Fucking weird.

"Is it gonna be long?" he asked as J came and sat next to him.

"No. Just a few minutes. The lady's gonna take our blood and send it off, then we come back in two weeks. No biggie."

"And you're gonna come with me when they take my blood, right?"

"Didn't I say I would, Benny? They can just do us together." J rubbed his forehead and sighed. "I'm fucking glad it's Friday, man. Gonna sleep all weekend."

"You're not feeling sick are you?" he asked suddenly worried. J did look awfully tired -- he'd been tired all week long.

"Stop it, Benny." He got another hard look. "You know the a/c's out at the shop and it's damned hot, especially under those engines. It takes it out of you, that's all."

"I'm sorry." He said it real soft, worried J was gonna give him another one of those looks, and he blinked his eyes really hard, not wanting to start crying again 'cause that was gonna make J even madder. He really was sorry, too. He hated it when J was mad at him and he just wanted to go home and fuck like bunnies and then fall asleep all wrapped up around J.

J's name was called and he looked up, scared for a second that J would leave him out here alone, but then J stood and spoke. "He's coming with me. We're going together."

"Benjamin Frank?" He nodded. "All right, you're next anyway."

He followed J into the back room.

"HIV tests, right? Both of you." J just nodded at the nurse and sat in the chair. Benny didn't look as they look J's blood, just looked at the safe sex and don't smoke when you're pregnant posters on the wall.

"Your turn, Benny."

He bit his lip and nodded, ducking into the seat eyes locked on J, holding tight to his board.

"Hey, this is easier than the piercings right?" J stood where Benny could see him, all solid and strong and fuck, when was it gonna be time to just go home?

"Wasn't much blood with the piercing," he complained. "This is really gonna hurt and I'm gonna feel all weak and they stick the needle in and it just stays and--"

"There we go. All done."

He blinked and looked over at the technician and then down at the band-aid on his arm.

"Oh."

"Come back in two weeks, right?" At the nurse's nod, J sighed. "Cool. Let's go Benny."

Benny gave her a sheepish smile and followed J out. He had to almost skip to keep up as J strode out to the street, heading for the bus stop. "What're we going to do now, J?"

"We're gonna go home and I'm gonna take a shower. I'm hot and smelly."

"Smell good to me, J." He smiled up at J, wanting more'n almost anything to hold his hand.

J's cheeks flushed, making the scars stand out. "I know, Benny." He got a gentle nudge from a big shoulder. "I know."

That made his smile brighten and he nudged J back, standing close for a second and then backing off again as they got to the bus stop. "Transfers still good?"

J looked and nodded, "Yeah, believe it or not. They are. Good sign, yeah?"

"Yeah. Maybe I can share that shower -- I'm pretty smelly, too."

"Smell good to me, Benny."

That made him grin. "Maybe we should just skip the shower and smell each other then."

"Maybe we could take the shower and then get smelly again... here's our bus." J stood, handing Benny his transfer.

"Yeah. That sounds good."

He followed J onto the bus. It was gonna be all right.

If he thought it would do damned bit of good, he'd go pray. Go find himself a church and get down on his knees and Our Father and Please Jesus and "Path to Glory" for two entire fucking weeks if it meant him and Benny were clean. He didn't bother though.

He was pretty sure he didn't believe in God and he knew God didn't believe in broke-dick queer boys, so he didn't bother. He just got him and Benny on the goddamned bus.

It didn't take but a few blessedly quiet and cool minutes and they were home. Second floor efficiency, right on the bus line, no embarrassing questions, \$400 a month-on-the-third-we-pay-utilities-no-pets-take-it-or-leave-it-boys, home sweet fucking home. "C'mon Benny. Let's go."

Benny followed him off the bus and he thought about walking down to the corner store and buying two burritos or something and then shook his head. Papa John's was having a special and he knew two of the drivers. That would do.

After their shower.

They were barely in the door when Benny's arms slid around his waist, the kid plastering himself up against his back and just holding on. He put his hand over Benny's, holding tight for a few minutes, letting Benny know he knew the kid was scared and sorry all at once. He knew. "C'mon, shower."

Benny ducked around him and made a beeline for the shower, shedding clothes as he went. "Gonna scrub your back, J -- you gonna scrub mine?"

"Maybe, if you manage to be good." He grinned and settled on the toilet to pull off his boots and socks.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Benny asked him, leaning over to turn on the shower. "Making it pretty cool, J. I'm hot."

Jonathan leaned over and licked a long line up one of Benny's asscheeks. "Yeah, Benny. You are."

Benny half-giggled, half-moaned, ass pushing backward.

He grinned and nipped once before standing and pulling off the rest of his clothes and pulling back the old blue curtain to get under the water with Benny. "Hoo! You weren't lying about cool. Is there steam coming off me?"

Benny giggled happily and dunked his head, hand working the mousse out of his spikes. The kid looked younger than ever with the purple and orange hair straggling down around his face and neck, even the

piercings and tats didn't make up for it.

He leaned down, giving the tattoo he thought of as his a long sucking kiss, nuzzling Benny's jaw with his nose. Benny made a soft, happy noise and his arms wound around J's neck. He kissed his way up to the sweet, hungry lips. He didn't want to talk, didn't want to think, just wanted Benny.

Benny's mouth was open, ready for him, the kid's tongue pushing into his mouth as the skinny body pressed up tight against him.

All sorts of questions were asked and answered while they kissed and Jonathon's head was spinning. Benny was rocking up against him, cock hard and hot between their bodies, sliding against his own.

He grabbed Benny's ass, leaning back against the wall and thrusting up harder. He swallowed Benny's groan, holding tight. The kid climbed up his body like he was a fucking tree, legs going around his waist.

He widened his stance, fighting to keep his balance and then he found it, holding up Benny's weight, moving the thin hips against him, strong and steady. It made him feel invincible, holding Benny like this, like he could move the fucking world.

Benny was moaning steadily now, hands gripping his shoulders tight, moaning and whimpering and gasping like it was the best sex they'd ever had. Fuck, who was he to say it wasn't? He pushed harder, faster, biting and pulling at the sexy little ring in Benny's lip.

Broken words were being fed into his mouth. "J... yeah, J. Oh, fuck, yes. J. Love it. Coming... coming, J."

He pushed up into Benny's hot little stomach, grunting hard as he sprayed, coming hard. Benny clung to him, head buried in his shoulder, tongue licking at his neck, playing with the mess of scars.

"Love you, Benny, forever. You know that." It wasn't a question, hadn't been for a long time.

"Yeah, J, I know." Benny's mouth worked its way over to his, going slowly. "I love you, too, J. No matter what."

"I know."

"Good." Benny continued to nuzzle into his neck, legs locked tight around him. He knew from experience the kid had faith that he could hold Benny up forever.

"Water's getting cold, Benny. Wanna get out?" When he got a better job, they were fucking getting an apartment with a bigger water heater.

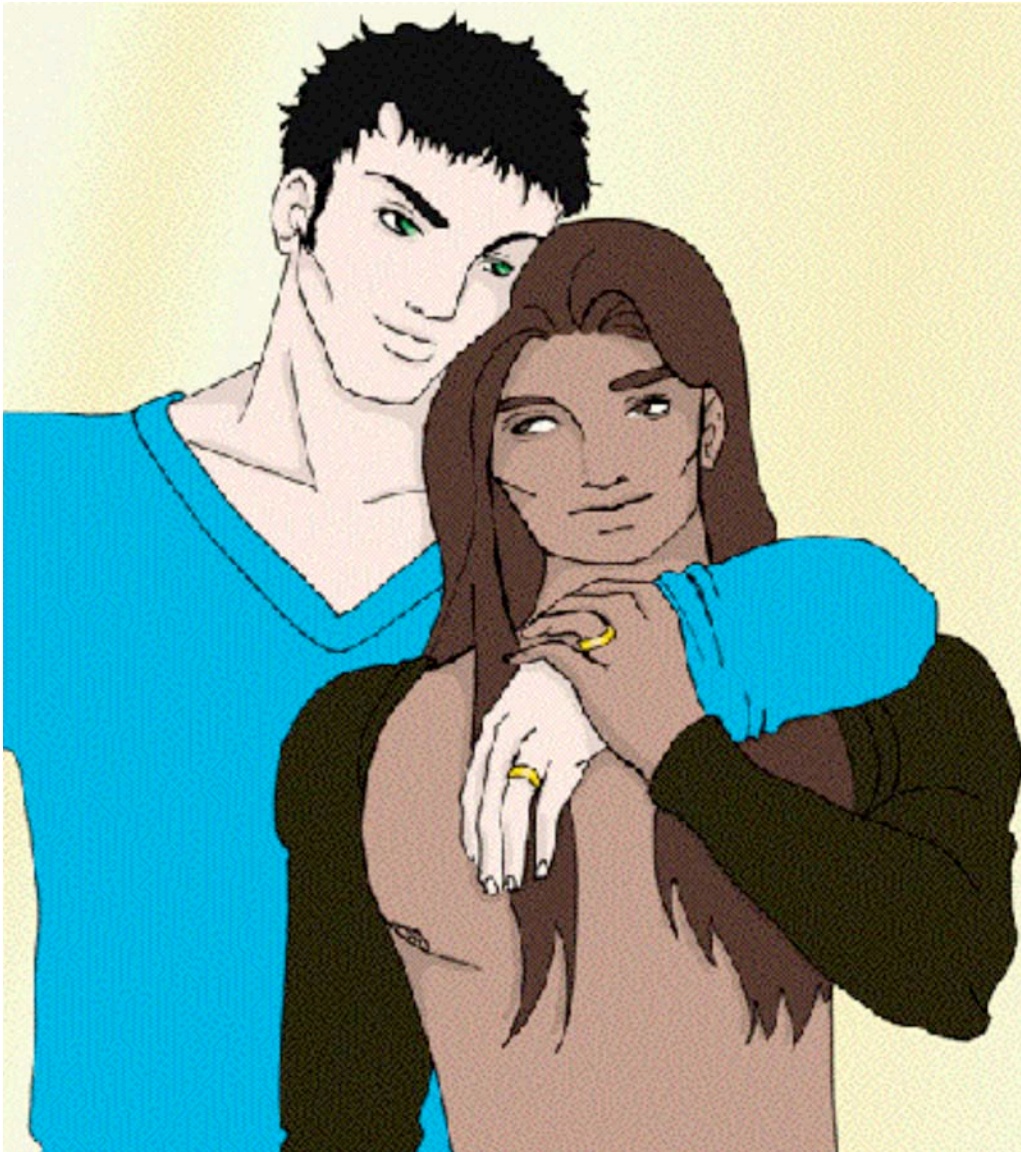
Benny sighed and kissed him and then let his legs unlock and slid down J's body.

He held Benny close for a minute, then found the pierced ear and whispered, "Come to bed?"

There were lots of questions in those three words -- come kiss me? Let me hold you? Promise me we're not sick? Tell me I'm strong enough to take care of us? Come love me? -- but, well, there were only so many questions a guy could ask, so he picked the easiest one.

"I was worried you weren't gonna ask." Benny squeezed him tight and whispered, "Yes."

Watching Angels



He pulled his hair back into a long braid, listening to the sounds in the shower. Ben was singing, something sort of sad and sort of low; it was lovely, and Gabe moved with the rhythm. He put his clothes away, checked the temperature of the water where the oil was bathing, pulled back the sheets.

When the shower turned off and the singing stopped, he pulled the oil from the warm water and coated his hands. He loved touching Ben -- loved the lines, the planes, the silk and smooth and sheer pleasure to be found in the long touches.

Loved to hear Ben moan. Loved to feel him shiver. Loved the smell and taste and... Oh, Gabe loved the whole package.

Gabe chuckled at himself. Just the act of smoothing the oil across his hands made him hard. They really

discouraged that in massage school... "You get lost in the steam, Ben?"

A soft laugh came from the bathroom door. "I'm just admiring the view."

He blushed, grinning over at his Ben. Ben looked so good, the still misty air from the bathroom pouring around him, the green towel dark against his skin. "You're a flirt."

"Me?" Ben looked shocked. "I'm half dressed here."

"A little less than half, I think." Gabe chuckled, tilted his head, considering whether to play or just ask for what he wanted. "Come here. Let me touch you."

Ben just looked at him for a moment, a long, slow look that sent the temperature in the room soaring. Then his lover dropped his towel and came forward.

His cock throbbed -- God, how could he still want Ben so much, after so long?

He met his lover halfway, slick hands sliding over Ben's shoulders. He lifted his face for a kiss, body snuggling up against Ben's.

Ben's mouth covered his, the kiss long and languid, hot and steamy like the shower Ben just had.

He moaned into those lips, hands moving and rubbing and stroking that soft skin. Ben made his head swim, made him ache.

"Gaby..." Ben nipped at his nose and then his chin and then dove in for another kiss.

Gabe walked them backwards towards the bed before he forgot that he was going to give Ben a massage and just lost himself in those kisses. Those sweet, long, slow, magic kisses...

Ben's eyes were closed, his face a study in concentration, hands sliding over Gabe's back, stroking the inked feathers by memory. His own hands moved lower, stroking Ben's back, that sweet ass. He touched in long, slow strokes, fingers finding each and every little spot that made his Ben moan.

Ben pressed his full cock against Gabe, the tip leaving a slick, hot trail behind.

He couldn't resist that hard flesh, one slick hand moving around to touch, to stroke. Oh, fuck -- so hot and smooth and hard and his and the fucking massage could just wait.

He sat down on the edge of the bed, leaning forward to take the head of Ben's cock in his mouth, hands working the shaft.

"Oh, Gaby..." Ben's hands found his shoulders, gripping hard, a soft groan sliding down over his skin.

He hummed, pulling gently with his lips, hands moving over the hot skin of his lover. Oh, he loved this man. So much. So much.

He could feel the muscles of Ben's ass clenching as his lover tried to stay still. He chuckled, sucking a little harder, testing his lover's patience. He heard Ben's breath hitch, the fingers at his shoulders biting in hard. Gabe let his tongue play along the slit, lapping the salt from Ben's cock.

"Gaby..." Ben's hands slid to his head, just holding for now, legs trembling.

One hand cupped Ben's balls, rolling slow and easy. Come on, love. Feel it. Feel me, Ben. His whole body was shaking.

A whimper and then those hands on his head tightened, Ben's hips pushing his cock deep. Gabe groaned and sucked, hips rocking on the bed, cock hard as steel. So good. So good.

Ben's hips snapped, hands holding him in place as his lover fucked his mouth. The room was silent but for Ben's gasps for breath and the slick almost silent sound of Ben's cock sliding in and out of his mouth.

He shivered, one hand falling to his own cock, pulling fast and rough, in tempo with Ben. He whimpered, sucking Ben deep, swallowing hard.

Ben made a soft noise and pushed hard and deep, coming down his throat. He gasped, drinking Ben down as he came, heat pouring over his hand. Ben pulled out, pushing him back on the bed and kissing him hard.

Gabe pushed up into Ben, whimpering softly as they kissed and kissed and oh... Oh... "Ben, love. Gonna make me hard again. Make me want you."

Ben drew back, smiling down at him. "Is that a problem, Gaby?"

"No. Ben, love. Not if... not if you're still interested." He arched, humming and rubbing. "Love you. God, you make me hot."

"If I'm still interested?" Ben laughed and rolled them, putting him on top, looking down at the happy, laughing face. "I can't think of a time when I'm not my hot lover."

He grinned down, bending close for a kiss. "Love you. Want you inside me. Want to feel you everywhere."

Ben nodded. "Uh-huh. Yeah, I can do that." Ben's eyes were dark, the green swallowed by dark pupils. "I can really do that."

"Oh, good." He chuckled, leaning down to nuzzle Ben's jaw, breathing in deep. "Smell good, lover. Could eat you up."

Ben's laughter was back, loving and joyous. "You already did."

He nipped the soft skin beneath Ben's ear. "God, you make me happy, Benjamin."

"Do I, my angel? Then I'm happy too."

He blushed dark, could feel his cheeks heating against Ben's skin. "Ben..."

Ben kissed him hard. "I love you."

Then he was flipped, pinned to the bed. "I smell massage oil. I want you to use it. I want to watch you make yourself ready for me."

He moaned, rubbing his cock against Ben's belly, hands reaching for the oil. "You like to watch me? Like when I ride my fingers?"

"You know I do." Ben's voice had gone all husky, his cock hard again. "You're so fucking sexy, Gaby -- you blow my mind."

"Oh, Ben... you make me. Oh..." He opened the oil, coating his fingers. He reached down, spreading the oil over Ben's cock.

Groaning, Ben pushed into the slick tunnel of his hand. "That's not... oh... that's not you."

"Just... love touching you... just getting you ready." He moaned, body shuddering and aching.

"Yeah. Love it." Ben was breathless, moving into his hand, hips snapping.

He removed his hand, lifting and spreading his legs. He pushed his hand down between them, rubbing the oil around his entrance. "Oh... Ben... Love..."

Ben whimpered, the sound soft and barely there. "Do it, Gaby. Please, let me see how much you want me."

"So much..." He closed his eyes, lips parting as his fingers pushed inside, making him slick. Making him open. Making him ready. Ben sobbed and pulled his fingers away with a trembling hand. The cock that replaced it was hot and solid, sure.

"Ben! Oh, Ben!" He took a deep breath, arching up with a cry. Perfect and strong and his and right and oh, god, so good, right there, love you, Ben, love you! Ben moved in and out of him, finding a hard, strong rhythm. His lover's eyes held his, dark and hungry.

He reached up, cupping Ben's face, fingers sliding through the silky short hair. "Good. Feels so good, love."

Eyes still holding his own, Ben turned to kiss his palm, nuzzle his fingers. "I know. You're the best, Gabe. Ever."

"Love you." He grabbed his knees, pulling them back and up. "More, Ben. Want all of you."

Ben groaned and grabbed his hips, pulling him down onto each thrust. He cried out, again and again, shuddering hard. He gripped his cock, pulling and tugging in time with the sweet thrusts. All he knew was his Ben, his life.

His love.

"Ben! Love!"

"Yeah, Gaby, yeah." Ben's eyes were fierce, his gaze holding even as they grew darker and darker. "Coming, angel..."

"Yes..." He arched, sobbing as he came, clenching around his Ben, holding him tight.

Ben made a soft noise, eyes losing their focus as heat filled him. He just rode it, rode the long, sweet waves of pleasure. Finally he sank, Ben's weight pressing him into the mattress.

"Mm, that was nice, Gaby."

"Yeah. Yeah." He dropped soft kisses over Ben's skin, breathing in the sweet scents.

Ben's lips slid over his neck, gentle and sweet. "You know I love you, Gaby."

"Oh, I know, Ben, corazon. I know." He smiled, nuzzling his lover. "I love you."

"Good." Ben beamed at him, green eyes happy and sated. "That's good."

"Yeah, Ben." He just grinned, petting the sweet, soft hair. God, Ben made him all mushy inside, made him warm and fuzzy and happy.

Ben's lips covered his in a soft, easy kiss.

"Love you," Ben murmured, settling down against him, heavy with satiation and nearing sleep.

"Mm... love you." He pulled the blankets over them both, reached out to kill the light and turn off the water bath. "Gonna be home tomorrow, Ben? Wanna go to breakfast? Get waffles?"

"Yeah, sounds good. Sounds yummy in fact." Ben placed another kiss on his skin.

"Cool. Night, love." They shifted and settled, bodies finding the places they belonged.

"Night, angel."

He hummed softly, hands running over Ben's spine. Loved touching his Ben. Loved being touched.

Loved the whole package.

Ben chuckled, the sound sleepy. "Go sleep, Gabe. Still be here in the morning."

"Promise?" He nuzzled close, fading.

"Promise, angel."

Ben's voice followed him into his dreams.

Chapter Two

Ben looked into the mirror and laughed. The all in red devil that laughed back at him was quite something. Red tights, red long-sleeved turtleneck that fit close, a long tail, pointed ears and the perfect goatee that he'd spent all month growing. All he needed was a pitchfork and a sweet angel to corrupt. "Gabe? You ready yet?"

He couldn't wait to see his lover, they'd decided to each choose their own costumes this year for Nat's party, instead of coming as a pair that went together like they usually did.

"Yeah, Ben. Just a second." Gabe edged out of the bathroom, and Ben gasped. White and gray feathers rose above Gabe's shoulders, each feather done in the thinnest leather and iridescent fabric. The wings moved, tips curling around in front. Gabe was dressed in a black leather jacket and matching pants, but no shirt or no shoes. Best of all, Gabe's hair was down, let air dry into the hundred natural waves, the silver at his temples shining.

"Oh, my love..." The party was forgotten, the occasion for playing dress up was forgotten as he surged forward to take his very own angel into his arms. "I have never seen anything or anyone so beautiful."

Gabe blushed, eyes twinkling. "You like it, then? It works?"

"I love it -- you look absolutely stunning." He bent, lips finding Gabe's.

Gabe moaned soft and low, wings rustling as he reached up. Those sweet lips were parted, open and hot for him. Gabe tasted like toothpaste and he smelled like soap, good and clean and sweet. The soft, silken hair slid through his fingers as Gabe pushed close, rubbing leather-trapped heat against his thigh.

He groaned and slid his hands back to grab Gabe's ass, pulling him tight. "You taste good, Gaby."

"Oh, Ben, you look so good, so sexy." Gabe's hands were traveling over his chest, working their magic. "How did you know about my costume? I tried to keep it a secret. Did Nat tell?"

He shook his head. "I just knew." He walked Gabe over to the mirror, moving behind his lover, their cheeks resting together. "I just knew that my beautiful angel would be waiting for me to debauch him."

He could see the way Gabe's belly rippled, dark trail of hair beneath that navel leading to the shiny dark curls hidden by the leather. Gabe's eyes were bright, lips parted and swollen -- just perfect. "Ben..."

"Yes, my beautiful angel?" He slid his hands over Gabe's chest, along the muscles of chest and belly, fingertips teasing their way into leather as he watched in the mirror.

He watched his hands on the olive skin and he watched Gabe's face.

"You... you flatter me, love." Gabe lifted his chin, sliding his lips over Ben's jaw even as those feathers tickled and fluttered and touched. One long curl rested alongside one of Gabe's nipples, the silver catching the light.

Ben blew gently, watching as the hair slid across Gabe's flesh. So beautiful. So sexy. His angel. Gabe gasped and shifted as one dark nipple tightened, hardened, drew to a peak just for him.

"We're going to be late, love. For the party." Gabe's voice, low and husky and hungry, belied the concern in his words.

Ben chuckled. "We show up on time and she gets a gander of you in your costume she's gonna think something's wrong."

"Wouldn't that be you in your costume? Looking so good, skin-tight clothes, got that wicked, seductive thing going on..." Gabe pushed back against him, ass sliding against his cock. "So sexy, Ben."

"Oh, yes, Gabe, that's good." He took a deep breath, watching Gabe's body undulate in the mirror. "So we're agreed she would be surprised to see us on time, yes?"

He slid one hand down into Gabe's pants, the leather hot from his lover's skin, Gabe's cock hotter.

"Yes. Yes..." Gabe arched and hissed, wings moving again. "Let me take off the wings, so I can move easier."

"Oh, no, my angel. They are a part of the charm." He rubbed Gabe's cock, unable to circle the hard flesh properly within the confines of Gabe's pants.

Gabe whimpered, hands searching for a way to touch him, stroke him. Finally Gabe settled on sliding up and down along his arms, fingers easing the leather pants open, a little at a time.

"Oh, yeah, Gaby. Open to me."

"Ben, oh God..." Gabe's cock was throbbing, pushing open the leather, wanting him.

He wrapped his hand around the firm heat, moaning as he watched them move together in the mirror, his hand stroking long and slow, Gabe pushing into the touches.

Gabe's ass pushed back against him, dark eyes closed as his angel just felt. Just touched. Just moved and rocked and moaned.

So beautiful, their faces bracketed by wings, Gabe's cock bracketed by leather. He slid one hand around to push his tights off and started to rub against Gabe's leather-clad ass.

Gabe's pink tongue sliding out, wetting those sweet lips; the hair around Gabe's face was wilting, sticking to the gleaming, glowing skin. The feathers trembled constantly, the scent of leather and sex and Gabe so heady, so strong.

He continued to pump Gabe's cock, rubbing himself against that sweet ass as his free hand wandered up to tweak the peaked little nipples.

Gabe's face was flushed with color, glowing with sweat. So good, so beautiful.

"Gonna make me come, love. Gonna... oh, God! Ben! Love!" Gabe jerked, ass moving faster, flush crawling up that rippling stomach.

"Yes, Gaby, yes. Come for me, my angel. Show me." Gabe arched, the wings flaring as his shoulders moved. Ben could see everything -- strings of come pulsing, muscles jerking, lips and thighs and fingers and eyes open wide, given up to pleasure.

He held on as long as he could, greedy for the sight, but Gabe's ass slid back along his cock and he lost focus, the mirrored images becoming a blur as he came.

Gabe was holding onto his hand, breath trying to slow then his vision cleared. "You make me crazy, love. Make my head spin." Gabe's eyes were so warm, playful and happy and full of love.

He laughed and nuzzled Gabe's neck, still watching him in the mirror. "That's what the devil does, yes?"

"Mm... that's what my Ben does, no question." Gabe was laughing, happy. "How many times you figure we'll jump each other at the party, love? Ten bucks says two."

"Only two? With you looking this fine?" Ben slid both hands back into Gabe's pants, cupping his balls, sliding along his cock. "I think I'm going to be inspired to more than two."

"Oh, Ben." Those sweet thighs parted. "You'll be distracted -- so many pretty bodies, so much skin on display."

"It will make me hard. I'll be imagining them all with you, Gaby, thinking of how they would look fucking my angel. Then I will find you and jump you and then go out and do it all over again." He shivered, cock twitching against Gabe's ass. "That is if we even make it out the door."

"No, we'll go." Gabe's cheeks were flaming, eyes fastened to his in the mirror. "Because you'll want to watch and then fuck me over the desk."

A shudder went through him. "Oh, I think this angel is far from innocent. I like that. And I love you, Gaby."

"I love you, Benjamin." Gabe turned, looking him in the eye, taking a long, slow kiss. "Let's go play, love."

"Yes, my angel." He adjusted Gabe's wings, threw his tail over his arm and sauntered off.

Chapter Three

He came home to a quiet house, dark studio. It was empty without Gabe's laugh. Gabe flew out Wednesday afternoon to be there when their new niece made her appearance and he'd been on the road.

Stuck at home.

Alone.

Without his angel.

Where he could eat pizza and drink beer on the good sofa and no one would know.

And have all the hot water.

And watch TV in his underwear.

Or naked.

Okay, so there were perks.

After he showered, Ben plopped down on the sofa and grabbed the remote and turned on the TV, flipping channels idly. 118 channels and they were all still showing I Love Lucy.

Ben hit the VCR play button accidentally, jerking as the sight of their bathroom and Gabe's voice filled the room.

"I...I'm going to miss you. I wanted to... Well, I wanted to give you something to watch while I'm gone. I..." Gabe's face, painfully heated, sweating lightly, eyes dark and nervous, appeared. "I love you, Ben. Really."

Oh... His heartbeat quickened. His shy, sweet angel had filmed something for him. For him. He settled more comfortably and gave the television his full attention.

Then Gabe silently got into the shower, the water beating down against that golden skin, flattening the dark hair against the sweet curve of Gabe's lower back and sweet, fine ass. Gabe moved and stretched, obviously trying to ignore the camera, trying to shower naturally, easily.

Gabe shampooed his hair, arching his back, heavy cock obvious against the tile. Then his angel's hand snaked down to rub against the dark column of flesh, pulling and stroking slowly.

Groaning, he dropped his own hand to his cock, watching and matching his angel's movements.

Gabe kept pumping, soft moans sounding. "I... I wanted to do something different. Something that would excite you. I thought... I thought you might like to... to watch me do something."

Then his angel's embarrassed eyes flashed to the camera. "I... You know I trim sometimes, but when I know we're going to be apart for a week, especially if I'm going somewhere where I'll miss you, then I... well, I... I shave. So I feel sexy and think about you and can... can get off quick and not get caught. Anyway, I do. And I thought, I thought maybe you'd want to watch."

Gabe thought he'd want to watch? His Gabe was such a smart man. He pumped a little harder, hand sliding up across the head of his cock.

There was something fascinating about watching Gabe lather himself up, slowly stroking the safety razor

over his pubes, washing the silky black hairs away. He couldn't quite see with Gabe bending over, the play of Gabe's muscles in the morning light beautiful.

Gabe stopping talking, moaning and murmuring periodically. Then Gabe started shaving his balls, humming low and easy.

He slid his hands down along the same route, stroking his balls.

Gabe turned back into the spray, a low, hungry cry sounding as the water hit his bared skin. "Oh, fuck. Feels... oh, God... Ben, it feels so..."

Gabe was stroking faster now, wet hair slapping against his skin, cries sounding continuously.

A shudder went through him, his own hands working faster, harder. His Gabe, his sweet, shy Gabe was doing this for him, in front of a camera. He cried out as he came, Gabe's name on his lips.

Panting, he lay there, eyes riveted.

Gabe was calling out his name, calling out as those hips pistoned, dark cock shooting into the spray. Gabe was turned so he could see those sweet eyes, open mouth, flushed cheeks. So beautiful.

Then Gabe turned, bare and flushed, staring into the camera. "Love you, Benjamin. Gonna miss you, corazon. See you Monday afternoon."

Then the tape went black.

He sighed, reaching a hand out toward the blank television.

Monday afternoon. It was too long. He reached for the phone, dialing Janney's number.

"Janney? It's Ben. I need to be on the next plane to San Antonio."

Chapter Four

Ben hit the off button of his phone with a relieved sigh. He took off his headset and shut down the computer, stretching with a moan.

What time was it anyway? 3:12 am. No wonder he was exhausted.

The only drawback to being the sole employee of Feller Enterprises was that when a tech call came in from California two minutes before midnight, he was the only one there to take it.

Almost three and a half hours of dealing with a panicked curator who knew next to nothing about computers. It had been horrible.

He scrubbed at his face and tried to find the energy to move. The only reason he wasn't going to just lie back in his chair and fall asleep was because Gabe was upstairs waiting for him in bed. That and the last time he'd slept in his desk chair he'd put a crick in his neck he couldn't shake for a week.

Hot, slick hands curled around his neck a second before familiar lips brushed over his ear. "Enough, lover. You work too hard."

"Gabe..." His head dropped back, arms reaching up to circle Gabe's neck. "Oh, my angel..."

"Yes, love. The bed was lonely without you." Gabe's lips slid over his cheekbones, heading towards his mouth. "Come to bed?"

"Yes -- I was trying to work up the energy to get there when you arrived. Perfect timing my beautiful angel." He turned his head just enough that their lips met, sliding his tongue into the wet warmth of Gabe's mouth.

"Mm..." Gabe tasted like cream and coffee and honey, shuddering against him.

He broke the kiss with reluctance and forced himself up. "Let's take this to bed."

"Yeah, lover. Let's get naked and I'll unknot those muscles and then, if you're still awake..." Gabe's hand slid around his waist. "I'll ride your cock until we both come."

A shudder moved through him. "Oh, I think I'll still be awake -- love your hands on me."

Gabe blushed and herded him upstairs and into the bedroom. "Get naked, Ben. Let me make you feel good."

The oil heater was already on and a clean white sheet was spread on the bed. Gabe's skimpy white robe dropped to the floor; then those long curls were braided and pushed out of the way.

He took his own clothes off slowly, cock hard and aching, muscles yearning for the magical touch of Gabe's hands.

"God, you're a beautiful man, Ben. So fucking sensual." Gabe's voice was husky, dark hand stroking an even darker cock. "Come to bed."

"I don't know, Gabe, the view from here is pretty awesome..."

He moved toward the bed though, drawn by his lover.

"Mm... hands are slick with the oil. Got distracted." Gabe's color was high, embarrassed, but willing to

show this to him.

"I imagine you did," Ben said softly, eyes on the lovely angel in his bed. "Those hands feel so good, why wouldn't you want to touch yourself all the time?"

"That's easy, lover." He got one of those warm, happy, god-I-love-you smiles that he'd fallen in love with. "If I did that, I couldn't touch you."

Then those arms opened, beckoning him in.

He stood at the bottom of the bed a moment longer, loving the way Gabe looked, skin flushed, cock hard and dark, aroused. Then he climbed onto the bed and into his lover's arms, moaning at the touch of skin on skin.

Gabe gave a soft cry and rubbed up against him, slick hands sliding along his spine, stroking and pushing into the muscles. He groaned, aroused and relaxed at the same time. He didn't know whether to beg for more of the amazing touches or to grind down against Gabe's cock.

"You gonna lay on the sheet, Ben? Or do you want your massage like this?" Another slow undulation of body, another long stroke up his back made him gasp.

"Oh God! You have to ask?"

"Love you." Gabe's hands started working on specific muscles, cock rubbing slow and steady. Soft kisses brushed over his jaw, his cheek.

He was whimpering and groaning, pleasure sparking through his whole body. His angel was a magician.

Gabe just kept it up, moving slow and easy and steady, loving him with hips and hands and lips. "Love you, Ben."

"Oh, God, Gabe, I love you. My angel..." He was melting and getting impossibly hard at the same time, all bones but one disappearing beneath Gabe's amazing touch.

"Yours. Forever sweet love." Gabe slowly rolled them over, dark eyes shining as Gabe straddled his cock.

"Fuck, yes!" He pushed up with his hips, searching for Gabe, needing Gabe tight around him.

Gaby sank down on him with a cry, heat gripping him hard. He slid his hands up along the muscled thighs, stroking Gabe's skin, watching his lover's face as Gabe adjusted to his girth inside.

"Oh, God. Ben. Love. So... so fucking good. Love this." Gabe's hips started to rock, moving slow and steady.

"I love watching you like this," he murmured, hands tightening on Gabe's thighs as he fought to stave off his orgasm -- he wanted this to last, needed it to be good for his angel. "All wanton and slick. So fucking beautiful you take my breath away."

"Love you, Ben." Gabe wrapped those dark hands around his own cock, pumping. "Love when you fuck me."

He snapped his hips up, pushing deep into Gabe's body. "Love you, Gaby -- love watching you while I fuck you."

Gabe threw his head back, free hand working those tight little nipples.

"Yes, that's it, Gabe, make it good, touch yourself. Oh God, I'm going to come." He slid his hands up to Gabe's waist, holding on and pulling Gabe down hard into each thrust.

"Ben! Oh, fuck! Ben!" Gabe's voice rang through the bedroom, flush covering his angel's belly.

"That's it, Gaby, show me how much you like it."

"Love..." Gabe's hands moved faster, tugging nipple and cock.

"Oh Gaby, angel... feels so good, looks *so* good." He pushed up into his Gabe, thrusting up harder and harder, pulling his sweet lover down onto him.

"Gonna come, love. Gonna make me come on you." Gabe ground down, voice rough.

"Yes. Yes, Gaby, do it, come on my cock, let me see you."

"Ben. My Ben..." His cock was squeezed, milked as Gabe's seed shot out onto his belly.

"My angel!" He shoved up deep, coming hard. Gabe jerked, riding his orgasm, making his pleasure last. Shudders wracked him and then it was over, his hands sliding slowly down along Gabe's legs as he relaxed back against the bed. "Angel..."

Gabe slid down, cuddling against him. "Yeah, Ben love. Love you too."

He smiled, arms wrapping around Gabe. "Thank you."

"Mm... Sleep. You staying in tomorrow? Sleeping in?"

"Hell, yes." He managed to kiss Gabe. "Stay with, angel?"

"Until the end of time, Ben." Gabe's fingers brushed over his eyelids. "Sleep, beautiful."

"Yes, Boss," he murmured.

Gabe's chuckles followed him down into his dreams.

Chapter Five

He frowned as he pulled into the driveway. All the windows in the house were dark, quiet. Still.

If Ben's car hadn't been sitting in the driveway, he'd have sworn his lover wasn't home, had run out on a service call while he was at the store. Gabe hoped Ben wasn't sick, hoped Ben was just zoned out on the sofa, napping.

He unlocked the door and let himself in, calling out for Ben softly, not wanting to startle him awake. "Ben? Lover? You okay?"

"Close the door. Strip." His lover's voice was even, quiet. Emphatic. "Slowly."

"Ben?" He squinted, trying to see his lover even as he closed the door and locked it behind him.

"Just do as you're told, Angel. And don't squint -- I want to see those beautiful eyes."

Gabe felt his cheeks heat as he grinned, fingers working open the buttons of his shirt. "You can see? I'm impressed."

A click sounded, a soft light coming on over his head.

"Slowly, Angel, slowly."

His fingers stuttered and he looked down, wishing to fuck that his hair was down so it covered his face. Slow as he could, he worked the buttons open, exposing his chest and belly.

"Do you know how beautiful you are, Angel? How the sight of you exposing yourself to me turns me on?"

"Ben..." He shrugged his shirt off and toed off his sandals. "The things you say..."

"Do they turn you on? I know they make your cheeks blush, but is your cock blushing, too? Filling with blood, pounding with your speeding heartbeat?"

"Ben!" His cock throbbed, pushing against his button fly, filling fast. He popped the top button, breath catching as his fingers trailed along his shaft.

"Mmm, yes, I think they do." Ben's voice was rich and low, full of sex and promise.

He nodded. "You know they do. Like nothing else. Ever."

He pulled his jeans open, slid them over his hips along with his briefs. Gabe wiggled a little as he worked them off.

"Yes, sweet Angel, I do know." There was a sweet catch in Ben's voice -- his show affecting his lover as much as Ben's words affected him.

"Would you like to touch yourself now, Angel? Would you like to make yourself come, knowing I'm watching you? Can you feel the air against your skin? Air that's been in my lungs, air that has carried my words to you, made you hard, made you need, made you mine."

Gabe whimpered, hands sliding down his body, fingertips brushing through the slick hair crowning his cock. "Love... Oh, Ben..."

He widened his stance, thighs parting, balls hanging free.

He heard a sharp intake of breath. "Oh, my Gaby... shall I tell you what I see?"

Gabe nodded, moaning, body swaying towards that beloved voice. "Please."

"I see the angel Gabriel, come to tempt me, to seduce me with his beauty. I see a man, legs, hands, torso, jutting cock, who holds my heart inside himself. I see soft skin over hard muscles. I see need. I see love."

His cock jerked, fingers wrapping around the base, body straining. "Oh, Ben... Love..."

His eyes closed, head falling back on his shoulders.

"Yes, Gaby, your lover watches you and sees everything. Sees the way you need and want and ache. And now he wants to see you come, see you lost in ecstasy, body flushed with pleasure. He wants to see your cock give up its seed."

"Oh, God. Ben... Oh." He shuddered, hand sliding along his shaft as he shot, refusing to admit Ben could do this, make him shoot without a touch, make him feel so fucking beautiful.

A soft whimper sounded.

"Transformed by pleasure, the beauty of my angel becomes overwhelming." Ben's voice was ragged, desperately hungry.

"My Ben." He kept stroking himself, reaching out with his free hand. "Oh, love. I need you."

"Are you ready for me though?"

Something slid along the floor to him -- a tube of KY. "Make yourself ready, my Angel and then I will make love to you, bent over the receiving couch."

"Ben..." He shivered and bent over for the lube. His cock was slick with his own come, so was his hand, so he lifted his shining fingers up to his lips, slowly licking them clean.

"Gaby!" Ben's cry was wanton, hungry, full of need. "Oh, my Angel, you torture me with your beauty."

"I love you." He opened the tube, squirting some on his fingers, knowing his whole body was flushed. "Here, love? Or bent over the couch where you can see?"

Another whimper sounded. "The couch," rasped Ben. "So I can see and I can fill you the moment you're ready."

He nodded, moving to bend over the low, long couch. His thighs parted as he reached around, slick fingers moving over and into his hole, cock growing firm and needy again. Already.

Ben made a noise like a strangled choke. "Hurry, Angel. Hurry."

"Yes. Ben. Love. Come fuck me." He pushed two fingers in deep, hips rocking to meet them. He was burning, so hungry, wanting to be touched, to touch his Ben so badly.

His hand was pulled away, his hips grabbed and Ben's heat sunk into him, his lover's head resting on his back. "Gabriel... my Angel."

Gabe nodded, thighs parting farther, body clenching around Ben's cock. "Yes. Yes, love."

Ben gasped and then started to move, thrusting hard. He braced himself against the couch, meeting each thrust with his own strength, sobbing into the darkness, so full.

Ben was silent behind him, but for soft gasps and low moans.

Shaking and beginning to fly, Gabe reached back, touching Ben's hip, loving him. One of his lover's hands slid over his own and then came forward, wrapping around his cock and pulling in time with Ben's thrusts.

Oh, yes. Yes, Ben. There. Good. Please. Love. The words flew through his head, dissolving in the heat of their passion before they reached his mouth.

"Angel. Come for me. Let me see your passion. Let me feel your pleasure." Ben's words were broken, hoarse, wanting.

"My Ben!" The words were a harsh shout, his body convulsing, milking Ben's cock as he came, world dissolving.

"Yes! Angel!" Ben shot deep inside him, forehead dropping to his back.

He caught his breath, head spinning. "Hey, love. I'm home."

Ben chuckled, the sounds sliding along his back and making the shaft inside him move. "I noticed."

Gabe started laughing, happy all through. "Yeah? You sure? I could go out and come back in again."

"Give me a half hour first." Ben groaned as he slid out.

"You've got me forever. I can handle that." Gabe stood slowly, swaying just a bit. "So, what had you riled up? You watching porn between phone calls again?"

Ben sat down on the couch with a groan, tugging at his arm. "I was thinking of you and what we would do when you got home."

"Must have been wicked thoughts." Gabe haphazardly cleaned them both off before settling half-on, half-beside Ben. "You almost made me come without a touch."

Ben rested against him, nuzzling. "I'll have to try harder next time."

He took a kiss, humming into Ben's warm lips. "You try harder and I might go up in flames."

"Oh, I'd like to see that." Ben chuckled, hands sliding up over his back. "I like to watch you, Gabe."

"I'd never have guessed." He reached for Ben's shoulders, massaging out every last knot. "I like to touch you, Ben."

"I know. Your touch is so good, Gabe. Your hands are amazing."

"Flatterer." Gabe took another kiss, hands sliding over Ben's chest. "You want to shower and go out for supper somewhere nice or shower, order in something, and get a nice, long hot-oil massage?"

"Hmm... I think the last -- I haven't finished with you yet."

He smiled into Ben's eyes, shivering as his nipples tightened. "I've already come twice, love. I'm getting old, you know."

"And only better with age, my Angel." Ben's hands slid up along his arm, stroking softly. "Take me to our bed and show me just how good."

He nodded and stood to lead his lover upstairs, turning out the entryway light as they passed.

Chapter Six

Ben looked over the bedroom, making sure everything was where it should be. There were dark brown silk sheets on the bed that would compliment Gabe's skin.

The bedside table held a bottle of body oil in the warmer, a medium sized plug and a cock-ring. His armchair was set up beside the bed, the perfect spot for watching. All he needed now was Gabe.

He was already hard in anticipation, body thrumming with excitement. Even the silk of his robe seemed to rub his skin.

He looked at the clock. Soon. Gabe should be here any moment.

It didn't take any time for the front door to open, Gabe's sweet, husky voice calling out to him. "Ben? Love? You home?"

He grinned. "Upstairs, angel. I've been waiting for you."

"Yeah? Did we have plans tonight?" Gabe's feet sounded up the stairs, and then his angel appeared, dressed in a white gauzy shirt and jeans, hair pulled back in a long braid, long strands curling around his face. Beautiful. "Oh..."

"Yes, my sweet Gaby, we do have plans. Or at least I do. For you." He went and took Gabe's hands, drawing his lover into the room, showing Gabe the stuff he had out next to the bed. "I want you to take a shower first. Just a quick one and then come and sit on the bed."

"Oh..." Gabe shuddered, pressing up against him so he could feel his angel's sudden need. Full, red lips parted, begged for a kiss.

He bent and took a taste, moaning as the sharpness of his angel's desire hit his tongue. "Go now. Wash. No coming, I want you to save it for me."

"Ben..." The name was whispered, full of need, but Gabe nodded, fingers pulling his hair free from the braid as he headed towards the bathroom.

"Beautiful..." He watched Gabe's outline against the curtain, the anticipation stronger now, almost too much. "Be quick, lover."

It didn't take long before Gabe emerged from the steam, skin dark and gleaming, nipples peaked, cock full and heavy.

He moaned, licking his lips. He almost gave up playing for the evening in favor of fucking Gabe through the mattress. Almost. He had been anticipating this evening since he'd woken though, planning and picturing it in his head.

"You have no idea how beautiful you look, do you, my angel?"

One dark eyebrow arched, Gabe's cheeks pinking as he moved closer. "You're biased, love. Always have been."

He laughed. "And you've always been shy about your looks. Go on, get on the bed and put the ring on that beautiful cock."

He took off his robe and settled back in the chair, legs sprawled wide, his cock hard, ready.

Gabe crawled onto the bed, adjusting the pillows before unbuckling the strap of leather and wrapping it around his fine skin and cinching it closed, the leather black and shiny where it pressed against his angel's need. Gabe's cheeks were dark, eyes glittering with a heady mixture of self-consciousness and arousal.

He swallowed, hand dropping to his cock, stroking slowly. He had a feeling that he would be coming more than once before he was done with his angel.

"Oil yourself up for me, Gabe. From your toes all the way up and don't forget to oil yourself inside -- you'll need the lubrication."

"Oh... oh Ben... Love..." His angel shivered, hips shifting before settling. Gabe's hands were confident and steady, sliding over his feet, up the strong legs. Gabe oiled his balls, pulling slightly, then his cock, head falling back on a soft moan.

His own moan replied to his lover's, his hand moving faster over his cock. "Save your ass for last, angel."

His voice was deep and rough, his arousal and need clear.

Gabe didn't answer, just nodded, slick hands working up the rippling belly, fingers tweaking and teasing those dark, hard nipples.

"So beautiful. You make me ache, make me need."

Finally Gabe's legs spread wide, opening for him, letting him watch as two slick fingers pushed inside that tiny ring of muscle.

"Gabe!" He called out his angel's name as he came, seed splashing over his hand.

His Gabe was so beautiful, such a joy to watch.

Gabe's soft moan answered him, one hand working the needy cock even as Gabe's fingers disappeared into Gabe's body again and again.

He continued to stroke himself until the sweet shudders had subsided.

"Stop." He was breathing rather heavily, cock still hard. "Put in the plug now, love. And make a show of it -- you know what I like."

Gabe was practically vibrating, eyes huge and hot, lips parted as he panted. "Oh, fuck. Ben. Love. So close."

"Not quite yet, Gabe. Tighten the ring if you have to."

Whimpering, Gabe tightened the buckle, entire body taut. The fingers that oiled the plug were shaking, needing.

He didn't stroke his own cock, already too close despite his own orgasm only moments before. "When you're done we'll come together, come on each other. And then I have a light supper prepared. You can keep the plug in so that you'll be ready for me when we come back upstairs."

Gabe's eyes flashed at him, stomach clenching. "Keep it... Ben... Oh, God..."

He smiled. "I love to watch your eyes when you're aroused. Love the way your skin keeps its flush of color. Dinner will be such delicious torture. For both of us."

Gabe gave a soft sob, muscles rippling throughout the sweat-sheened body. Then he turned, settled on his

knees, guiding the tip of the plug to that hungry little hole, hips rocking as he slowly took it in.

Ben moaned, grabbing his balls to hold himself back. "Gabe... my angel..."

"Love you... Oh my Ben... My Ben..." Gabe's body worked its way down the plug, thighs shaking as it spread him wider and wider.

"Look at that, my angel. Look at the way your body takes my gift as readily as it would take me."

Gabe's head had fallen forward, entire body shining. When the plug slid in, seating itself in that sweet, hot ass, his angel jerked, straightened, white-knuckled on the headboard.

"Turn around now love," he murmured. "On your knees."

He climbed onto the bed on his knees to face his lover.

Gabe was shuddering as he moved, entire body flushed, heartbeat visible in that swollen, dark cock. "I need... Please, Ben... Oh, God. I need."

He nodded, moving forward until their cocks slid together. His hands moved over Gabe's oil-slicked body. "I know, my angel. Come. Come on me."

Gabe gave a short, sharp scream, fingers tangling in his hair as their lips met, heat splashing over his belly, his cock, his thighs. He moaned into Gabe's fierce kiss, his own cock jerking against Gabe's belly and spraying his lover.

Gabe took his mouth with a desperate need, cock still hard, still ready, sliding through the come on his skin. He wrapped his hand down around the hot, slick skin, fingers finding and undoing the buckle that held the cock ring tight. He began to stroke Gabe's fat prick. "Do you still hunger, my angel?"

"Yes. Ben. Need." Those dark eyes were almost black, fastened onto him, body undulating against him.

He shook his head as he continued to stroke the hot flesh in his hand. "How can you say that I am biased when I say you are beautiful? Your eyes shine, your body glows."

"I love you." The words were intense, whisper heavy.

"Oh, my angel, I love you as well. Come for me now. Show me your pleasure." The scent of musk was strong, more heat sliding to cover his fingers as Gabe went boneless.

He held his angel in his arms, pressing small kisses over Gabe's face.

Such beauty and it was all his.

Gabe hummed, little aftershocks making him gasp. "Love you, Ben. Blow my mind."

He chuckled, licking the sweet lips. "It wasn't your mind I was aiming for, angel."

Gabe's laughter tasted sweet, rich and happy and right.

The best appetizer a man could ask for. His angel was going to make a pretty good dessert, too.

He was a very lucky man.

Chapter Seven

It was hot, sun blazing. Janis Joplin was blaring from the speakers. Sweat was pouring off his bare chest, down his arms. His hair was pulled back, braided, heavy.

He was focused on the leather, on the movement of the metal against skin, but the slide of sweat down his thighs distracted him.

Made him think of fucking.

Made him think of Ben.

His cock swelled, bumping up against the rough metal zipper in his shorts like it was begging for a chance at the breeze that teased through the studio. When he finished the next line, he unzipped, let it out, pumped it lightly while thoughts of slick, silk skin went through his mind, fueled by heat and leather.

He stroked until he was hard, wanting; then he went back to work, curious as always to see if hunger made the grooves on the leather deeper, wider, smoother.

His braid fell heavy on the hide, made him think of a horsetail, swatting flies.

Joplin switched to Grace Slick and he continued working.

The back screen opened and closed loudly, Ben's bare feet slapping on the stone path that lead to his workshop.

"You know," Ben said conversationally. "I can't decide if I'm more worried about you stabbing something important, or turned on by the conjunction of hard flesh and harder metal."

"What?" Gabe finished his next line and then looked up with a grin. "Oh, that." He motioned to his cock. "It was hot."

Damn, but Ben looked good, relaxed and cool, and flushed -- whether from running or watching or wanting, he didn't know.

Ben's chuckle made his cock hotter. "You, my dear angel, are hot." His lover's voice was a low purr, smoothing over his skin like a physical caress.

He considered pointing out that it was 90 degrees and the air conditioner was still at the shop, but common sense and sheer, honest desire made themselves clear.

"Yes, Ben." He pushed his braid back, worked on a short, simple section. While he worked, he moved, giving Ben something to focus on, something to see.

"You look hotter like this than you would naked. The fact that all that glorious skin is broken by the blue of your shorts..."

"Sensualist." He put his tools down, turned with spread legs, hand already curling around his cock, sliding slow and long.

"Wanton," Ben shot back.

"Voyeur." This answer was a purr, he couldn't help it, the underside of his cock was so sensitive right there...

"Oh, God, yes." He heard Ben's zipper slide down. "I love to watch you, Gaby. Love to watch you touch yourself. Did you know that your skin is shining in the sunlight? All that sweat glistening, sliding over your skin. I want to watch someone lick it off you, want to tell them what path their tongue should take - because I know, I know how to touch you to make you squirm."

"Always have, love." He let his head fall back, let his thighs spread farther. He pumped his cock with one hand, tracing his skin and his nipples and his throat with the other, enjoying his own touch and the weight of Ben's eyes and the fantasy Ben wove for them.

"Oh, yes, Gaby, touch yourself there and there, now down. Touch your navel, slide your fingers in it. If we had another lover here right now he would lick you there, pushing his tongue in and swirling, just like you like it."

"Oh..." Gabe's eyes closed as his fingers answered Ben's directions. The sweat slid down behind his knees, pushing his legs even wider. The breeze tickled the back of his neck, the taut curve of his throat.

The hard, aching tilt of his cock.

"Lower now, take your balls in your hand, cup them, stroke them, roll them with your fingers."

He shifted forward on the chair, hand pushing inside his shorts while he moaned. His other hand was taking turns working the tip and then the underside of his cock. "Hot. Fucking hot, Ben."

He didn't know if he meant the room, Ben's voice, or the fact that he was doing this for Ben's eyes.

"Yes, my angel. You are."

Ben's voice was one caress, the heavy gaze another. His hand added the third and between them, he was flying. "Ben. Love. Gonna come."

"Oh, yes, Gaby. Come for me, show me how much you love it. Show me how much you love me." He could hear the strain in his lover's voice, could hear Ben working his own flesh. "Bring us over, angel."

"Love..." He was almost completely arched over the chair when he came, heat sliding over his fingers, splashing on him.

"Gabe..." Ben whispered his name, the sound ending on a moan as his lover came.

He pushed himself upright, head spinning. "Oh, fuck. I love you, Ben. Love you."

Ben came forward and knelt between his legs, licking the seed from his fingers, his belly and his cock. "I love you, Gabe. My angel. So hot. So good."

"Oh, Ben, nothing's as sexy as you." He stroked his fingers through Ben's hair, humming low. "Nothing ever has been."

Ben turned, nuzzling his hand. "You're the sexy one, my Gaby, so beautiful. Make me hard."

"You make me happy, love. Happy all through." He took one kiss after another. "If you're not careful, I'll push you over and molest your sweet bod and we'll never be showered and ready when your company shows."

Ben chuckled up at him. "Oh, I don't know, me bent over your workbench, your hard cock inside me as your sweat drips on my body? Maybe that's just the impression I'm hoping to make."

He arched an eyebrow. "Are you interested in the guy you met then? He's gay?" He'd listened when Ben

had called -- sort of. He'd been really busy arguing with the guy taking the window unit from the studio.

Ben grinned up at him, the look in his eyes wicked. "Oh, my beautiful angel. He's not only gay, he's bringing his boyfriend. And." Ben paused dramatically. "His name is Rafe."

"Oh, good God. Another angel!" He looked at his love. "Is his lover Michael or Luc?"

Ben shook his head. "I believe he said Jackson. Which is good because I'm not sure I can handle three angels."

Gabe chuckled. "I think you'd just explode, Love. We'd be finding bits of Benjamin all over the city."

Ben chuckled and waggled his eyebrows. "Why love, I thought you already were."

"Incorrigible beast. How I love you." He stood, cursing as his braid caught on the worktable. "Damn it. Ben! Help!"

Ben laughed, nibbling at his belly. "I don't know, Gaby, you know I like to watch you when you're tied up." A soft nip gently pinched the tip of his cock. "Maybe I'll just leave you here and then serve you up as dessert."

"Beast!" He was giggling, trying not to fall or pull his hair too hard. "Be good or I'll get the shears and snip it right off!"

"Oh! You wouldn't dare!" But Ben was helping him now, working the braid loose.

"No? It's heavy and hot and Nat says it's aging..." He teased gently -- he'd no more cut his hair than his fingers. Ben loved it, found it sexy, liked to watch it. He had to admit, though, the teasing was fun.

"And I've already told you the silver makes you sparkle and shine, not look old!" Ben got the end of his hair free and was running his fingers along the braid. "It feels like silk in my fingers."

"But if it was short..." He chuckled at Ben's look and took a kiss. "Thank you. Wanna take a shower with me? I'm sticky."

"Yes. And I'll wash your hair for you."

"Mm... sounds perfect." He turned and straightened his workbench, putting his tools away.

Ben made a soft purring-growling noise, it was his only warning before Ben's hands grabbed his ass.

"Hey, you! What do you think you're grabbing there?" He parted his thighs, chuckled.

"Your ass," Ben said, holding tight, squeezing.

He leaned forward into the table, flexing his back muscles, grinning. "We have company coming..."

Ben growled, pulling his shorts down and his cheeks apart, pressing a hard cock up against him. "Nobody's coming yet."

"No, Love." He pushed back, thighs spreading, teasing them both. "Not yet."

Ben was nibbling his neck, mouth moving down toward his shoulder blade. "Your wings are gleaming, my angel. I cannot resist."

"And if they come early?" He groaned, hips rocking against Ben's cock, wanting.

"Then we can skip dinner and head straight to the "do you play" conversation." The tip of Ben's cock nudged at his entrance.

"Sounds like a plan, love." He reached up and grabbed the far side of the table, stretching his body, his tattooed wings for Ben.

"Oh, angel..." Ben's voice had dropped low, deep with wanting. The cock at his hole pushed, demanded entrance. He bore down, spine shivering as he welcomed his heart, his Ben, deep inside, riding the burning, gasping and gripping and arching through it.

"Oh, Gaby... so tight, so eager." Once Ben was deep inside, he reached up and traced the wings on Gabe's back. "So beautiful."

He cried out, sensitive and so excited and fuck he loved when Ben touched him there, made something silly seem beautiful.

Ben started to move, one hand on his hip, pulling him back into each thrust, while the other continued to stroke his wings. "Fly for me, my angel."

"Ben! My Ben!" He held on, riding Ben's cock for all he was worth, his own cock bumping against the table. Hot, hot and happy and oh, fuck he loved this man, loved Ben more than art, more than anything, more than life.

Ben was still talking though now his words were interspersed with gasps and shudders and moans and whimpers. "Love watching you. Love watching you get fucked. Love fucking you more. See your wings while in you. Yes. So good. My angel."

"Yours. Oh, Ben! God, love!" He leaned his head back, groaning. Needing. Ben leaned forward, biting at his neck, licking lines of fire along his wings. Gabe came with a scream, aflame -- body and soul.

"So beautiful..." Ben's words were harsh whispers and then he was filled with heat, his Ben's love pushing aftershocks through him.

"Love you. Oh, God, Benjamin. Feel you inside." His hands slid free, body resting against Ben.

Soft kisses dotted his back. "I love you, Gaby. My angel. So much."

He nodded, sleepy and sated and baked all through. "My Ben."

Ben slipped from him with a groan, hands sliding along his sides. "Come, my angel. A quick shower and then dressed -- our guests are due any minute."

"I'll never set my hair dried in time, Ben."

"So you'll leave it down and let it air dry -- you'll look edible and I won't need my seduction plan."

"Ben..." He looked over, blushing dark. "Come on. Water. Clothes. Wine."

Ben chuckled and twined their fingers together, bringing his hand up to kiss. "I love you."

"I know, my seductive love. I love you, too." A cool wind started to pick up, the sound of Kate Bush filling the studio before he turned off the lights, the stereo. The sun was setting, night was falling.

Sweat and come slid along his inner thighs, his belly. His braid weighed, hot and damp along his back.

His mind was filled with sex. His mind was filled with Ben.

Just as it should be.

Chapter Eight

Ben growled at the vermicelli nests that refused to nest for him. How the hell was he supposed to make chocolate bird's eggs if the fucking vermicelli wouldn't nest!

He threw his spatula across the room and sat down on one of the barstools. Fuck he was tired. And grouchy and just about up to here with technical support calls from idiots who were making his nice little program much harder than it needed to be.

Maybe it was time he hired some help.

And he didn't mean a chef. Goddamn it, cooking was supposed to be fun and relaxing and he was wound too tight to do something as simple as wrap noodles into a circle.

Maybe he should have opened a bottle of wine before he started cooking...

Warm hands fell on his shoulders, lips brushing against his jaw. "You're all stiff, lover. Can I help?"

Gabe's fingers started working their magic, massaging deep, stubbornly working out one knot after another.

He groaned, head falling forward. "Angel..."

"Yeah, Ben. Right here." Gabe never stopped touching, melting him in slow easy stages. "You work too hard, lover. You worry me. So tense, so stressed."

"I'm beginning to think I'm working too hard, too. I can't remember the last time we played, the last time you lay on the bed and followed my direction."

Gabe gave a soft little moan, but those hands kept working. "You don't worry about me, 'kay? You just worry about my man and keeping him healthy, happy."

"You're what makes me happy, Gaby." He reached back, hand finding Gabe's thigh, sliding around it to cup his lover's ass.

"I love you, Ben." A soft, sucking kiss fell on the nape of his neck, Gabe holding him close.

"Yeah, and I love you." He turned around and looped his arms around Gabe's neck. "Take me to bed, angel, and make me forget anything else exists but you."

"I can do that, my love." Gabe took a kiss, tongue pressing deep, fingers massaging his scalp now, melting him. He moaned into Gabe's kiss. His lover was solid and firm and so good against him.

Gabe eased him off the barstool, leading him out of the kitchen and up the stairs with long kisses, deep touches, glimpses of dark, perfect skin. He gave himself over wholeheartedly, trusting Gabe to know what he needed and give it to him.

By the time they made the bed, Gabe had them both naked, both hard, both panting into those lingering touches and kisses.

"Want you to fuck me," he murmured to Gabe. "Want to feel your thick cock split me open and make me yours."

"You're already mine." Gabe smiled at him, eyes sure and steady, unquestioning. "But I'll make love to you until you remember."

Then Gabe spread him out on his belly, warm oil drizzled down his spine and along his crease. He whimpered, humping up into the air, searching for his angel's touch. Gabe's hands slid down his back, thumbs sliding into his crack, spreading him wide, massaging the muscles of his hole. "My sweet love."

Then wet heat slid over him, Gabe's silken hair brushing his balls, the backs of his thighs.

He whimpered, jerking and bucking back. "Gabe! Oh sweet angel, you torture me."

He felt Gabe's soft giggle, then the soft touches of tongue started again. He closed his eyes, hands clutching at the blankets as Gabe's tongue made him fly.

Gabe loved him long and slow, starting a fire deep inside him, blazing away the food and the program and the phone calls and the stress and everything but that tongue, those long fingers, that thick, pressing cock spreading him wide.

He was writhing and moaning, lost in the world Gabe made for them. Gabe's fingers tangled with his, his lover rocking deep inside him, black curls pooling on the sheets beside his head. He turned his head, seeking Gabe's mouth with his own. Gabe's lips found his, a soft whimper pushing into his lips, even as that sweet cock pushed deep into him, nailing his gland.

He shouted into Gabe's mouth, pushing his hips against the sheets. Gabe jerked hard, pumping into him, filling him with heat even as Gabe's fingers wrapped around his cock. He bucked up and then ground down into Gabe's hand, crying out his lover's name as he came, shaking hard.

Gabe gave him a soft purr, body sinking down again him. "Mine, remember?"

"Yes, angel. Yours." He lay beneath Gabe's weight, his lover keeping the world away.

Gabe eventually moved to the side, hands moving to pet him, keeping him relaxed and floating, refusing to let the tension take hold again.

"Mmm... you take such good care of me, angel." He nuzzled into the touches, enjoying floating and being and Gabe.

"That's my job, love. Rest and I'll call Rafe and Jac later and see if they want to eat at Lindy's Cafe, maybe go dancing."

"That sounds like fun. Later. I want to just lie with you first."

A sheet was pulled over them both, Gabe's hair tickling his back. "As long as you let me."

"Forever," he whispered, sinking into love and care and Gabe and sleep.

Bus Story ☀️ 4

He was going to kick Benny's ass.

Kick it hard until that ungrateful, selfish, thoughtless, faithless, little son of a bitch landed into next week. Maybe next month. Maybe next fucking year.

Benny sniffled beside him and he almost reached for his handkerchief.

Almost.

Damned kid. Best day of his fucking life after twelve months of goddamned hell and misery and Benny ruins it. Stands up in the middle of the fucking mall accusing him of what? Running out? Deserting him?

Bastard.

"J? You gonna be mad at me all day?" Benny's voice was soft and sorry and full of tears.

"Hush, Benny. Not here. Not on the fucking bus, okay?" He was so mad he was shaking inside, but he'd be damned if they had it out in here. Ten minutes, twelve stops and they'd be home.

Benny sniffled again, the sound more like a whimper and looked away out the window, clutching his board tight.

Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars were being put in his savings account. Right now. His hand traced the scars on his throat. He'd thought he was going to die, known it really. The machine on the line had blown and fucking pinned him to the fucking wall and when all was said and done fourteen months later he said five new quarts of blood, a mass of scars and a quarter of a million dollars with \$30,000 annual subsidies coming. He was fucking rich.

On a city bus.

Miserable.

This was utterly fucked up.

The bus stopped and he stood and got off, hoping he was close enough to the apartment to walk there.

"J!" Benny ran after him and was trotting to keep up as he headed off toward home. "It's too hot to run, J."

He sighed and slowed, almost in tears. "I'm going to pack when we get back. Tonight's it. Tomorrow there'll be somewhere decent, somewhere cool, somewhere on the fucking beach."

He realized Benny had stopped and he turned back to find the kid standing there, clutching his board, tears pouring down his face. "Please, J. I don't care about the money, but please don't leave me."

"Goddamn it all to hell, Benny!" The roar shook Benny almost as badly as it shook him, and he took a deep breath. "Did I ever say, even once, that I wouldn't take you with me? Goddamn you, I love you. I

thought..."

To his utter horror, his eyes filled with tears. "I thought we were forever. I thought you'd be happy. I thought you trusted me, Benny."

He wiped his cheeks and turned towards home at a run. He was not gonna cry on the street. No fucking way.

"J!" Benny's cry was lost and lonely and hurting, but he couldn't stop, so he didn't.

He managed to get the door unlocked and all way to the bathroom before he lost it, losing his lunch, leaning over that cracked fucking toilet. He hated this place with the bugs and the broken shit and leaky air conditioner, but it was their place -- his and Benny's.

And now he didn't know... oh, fuck it!

He stood up, cleaned his teeth, washed his face and went to find a duffel bag.

He almost missed the sound of the door, except that it stuck a little when you closed it. Looking over he found Benny standing against the wall next to the door, clutching his board with both hands, tears still rolling down his cheeks. The kid was watching him with eyes the size of saucers -- he'd never seen Benny look so miserable.

He'd pulled out Benny's bags too and thrown them on the floor with his own. He started throwing in the stuff he wanted to keep -- cool clothes, some books, pictures, good stuff -- into his duffel, watching Benny out of the corner of his eye.

"I thought..." Benny sniffed and his breath hitched and Benny wasn't watching him anymore, instead he was looking at his feet as he rocked against the wall. "I don't have nothing to give you, J. All I've got is my board. Just a beat up old board and a scrawny kid. What would you want with that?"

"I want you, Benny. Just you." Jonathon put down his bag and walked across the room, touching the tattoo that matched his scars. "Why did you get this, babe?"

Benny bit his lip and nuzzled into the touch, managing a little half shrug. The big green eyes turned back up to meet his, wet with tears. "Because you can take a ring off but you can't ever take off your scar and I can't ever take off the tat."

"That's fucking right. I love you and you love me and we're going to the goddamned beach, Benny." He shook his head. "It never even crossed my mind to leave to behind, Benny. Not even once."

"You..." Benny licked his lips and looked like he knew Jonathon wasn't going to like what he was going to say but he was going to say it anyway. "You could do better'n me. You could have anyone now."

J sighed and stepped away, shaking his head. "This was supposed to be cool. I'd tell you our wishes came true and we'd run home and pack and plan and tomorrow get on a plane. You don't want to come? Fine. I'm not hunting for a trophy boyfriend. I was wanting to share my life with the guy I love."

He picked up his bag and kept on packing.

"Sooner or later I always screw everything up." Benny slid down the wall, curled up and rocking, still clutching his damn board. He was whispering "I'm sorry," and "I love you," over and over, face buried in his knees.

J put down his bag and walked over to Benny, pulling the board out of his hands. "Enough, Ben. Get up

off the floor." When Ben's eyes met his, he nodded. "Get up off the fucking floor. You need to hug something, you hug me."

Benny made a soft broken sound and then he launched himself at J, arms going around his middle, head buried in his chest. The kid was holding on tight, holding on like he was never going to let go.

That was just fine with him.

He wrapped around Benny, hugging hard, rubbing the skinny back, loving on the kid.

Sniffling, still whispering sorries and I love yous now and then, Benny slowly stopped crying, his breathing evening out, but his grip never wavered, never loosened.

J lifted Benny's face and smiled. "Do you want to come with me? You want to come, Benny?"

"I just want to be with you, J. The rest of it don't matter none."

"Then come on, babe. We're gonna have fun. We're gonna make love and plan our lives together." He stopped talked and gave Benny a long, hungry kiss. All the talking in the world wouldn't work, but this might.

Benny returned the kiss like he was fucking starving.

He stumbled Benny over to the bed, landing hard on the mattress, never breaking the kiss. One more fuck in the old place wouldn't hurt a thing.

Benny's hands slid up to his face, fingertips stroking over his scars, loving them, loving him like only Benny ever did.

He put one hand over the tattoo, that was *theirs*.

Benny's arms and legs wrapped around him, hanging on tight. Benny tasted like love and tears and hope and fears.

"I'm not leaving you behind, babe. You belong with me, yeah." He kissed Benny over and over, trying to lessen the panic in the thin arms. "Come on, Benny. Touch me. Let me feel you."

"I love you, J." Benny's fingers made their way to the buttons of his shirt, the green eyes intent on each one as it was undone.

"Love you too, Benny." He let his hands trail over Benny's back and shoulders, squeezing and holding tight. Benny opened his shirt, eyes lighting up as it was pushed off his shoulders. The kid's fingers traced his muscles and then found his nipples, playing gently. He wiggled and moaned, the feather-light touches almost torturous. His belly jerked, hips pushing up towards Benny. "So good, Benny."

Benny smiled up at him and brought their lips together again as one hand stroked downward, warm and soft and Benny. He let Benny's kiss relax out all the hurt and anger and frustration of the day. As they left, sweet hunger and passion filled him and he opened his lips, offering it to Benny.

Making soft sounds that were happy and horny, Benny started rubbing up against him. Even with two layers of clothes between them, he could feel the heat of Benny's erection against him. He spread his legs, humming into Benny's mouth. He wanted to stop, to get them naked and skin on skin, but he wanted to keep touching, keep kissing.

Benny's knee pressed up between his legs, the kid's hands stroking over his belly and chest.

"Benny..." He was shivering, groaning and rocking back against the bony knee.

"Wanna taste you, k?" Benny didn't wait for an answer before shimmying down, fingers working his button and zipper open.

"Oh, Benny..." He gasped, body shuddering. Oh, God. It made him insane, made him so hard and desperate when Benny sucked him. Felt so good it was scary.

Benny's mouth was busy on his navel as the kid's fingers fought with his clothes. Sweet breath slid over his skin and then a sound of crowing delight and cool air hit his cock as Benny pulled his pants open.

He lifted his head, looking -- sex was still new enough that he wanted to see it, wanted to watch what he felt. He figured one day it would stop -- but then again, with Benny, it might not. Benny was licking at his cock like it was an ice-cream cone, green eyes intent, tongue busy. One hand wrapped around the base, the other was holding his hip, fingers digging in.

It felt like... like... oh, God, he didn't know, but if he ever found out he was going to keep some on stock for days when Benny wasn't interested, because, fuck it felt good.

Really, really good.

Benny kept licking at him for awhile, then Benny's mouth wrapped around the tip and he started sucking. And, oh fuck, that felt better'n anything.

He was making those noises, those helpless, hungry weird noises that only Benny found inside him. Fuck! His hips pushed against Benny's hand, wanting, needing.

Benny made some noises of his own, the sounds translating as vibrations along his cock. Then suddenly Benny's mouth was coming down over his cock, wrapped tight around him, and pulling up again. He watched Benny's head bobbing up and down, trying to somehow put together what he was feeling with what he was seeing while his mind tried to dissolve.

"Gonna... oh, Benny, you're gonna make me..." He arched backwards, not looking, not doing anything but feeling.

Benny's grip on his hip disappeared, both of the kid's hands sliding behind him, grabbing his ass. He lost it, coming in hard, steady pulses, groaning and grunting and crying Benny's name. Benny kept sucking for a while and then let his cock go and lay there with his head on J's hip, fingers playing with his skin. "Oh, wow. Benny. That was... wow."

He reached down, pulling Benny up for a kiss.

Benny came up happily, mouth eager for his own. The kid was almost glowing now, happy and aroused and feeling the love.

"Mmm... my sexy Benny..." J rolled them over until they were side by side, stroking over the thin body, working away clothes. "Love you, babe."

Benny was writhing happily in his arms, responsive to every touch, no matter how small. "Love you, too, J."

He nibbled and tickled and touched, looking for the smiles and the laughter that warmed him through. He played with the rings, pulling at Benny's t-shirt, pushing the loose jeans over thin hips.

Gasps and giggles and Benny pushing into his hands were his rewards.

J grinned and continued, not teasing, because he didn't want to deny Benny anything. He wanted to give happiness to Benny, handfuls and bucketfuls of it.

He leaned in to nibble and lick at the dark tattoo on Benny's neck, hands circling the long cock that pushed and pressed and wanted his hands.

"Oh! Oh, J. Yeah, I like that -- I like it." Benny was wriggling with purpose now, pushing up into his hands.

He groaned against Benny's neck, hands moving up and down, pulling and stroking, drawing Benny closer to him, to the edge.

Muttering, mumbling, Benny repeated his name, over and over, and said things like I love you and need it and oh, yeah, like that. The actual words didn't matter, only that they were there, that Benny was feeling pretty fucking good.

He loved Benny with his mouth and hands and body, knowing Benny heard his heart, his hopes, his dreams. Hoping Benny saw that the place beside J belonged to him.

"Oh, J -- love you!" Benny came, body tight, eyes closed, mouth open on a long groaning gasp.

"Love you, Benny." He mouthed the words against Benny's damp, hot throat.

Benny's arms and legs slowly circled him again, holding him, but not clinging.

He leaned back, gave Benny a kiss. "Feeling better?"

Giving him a sheepish look, Benny nodded. "Feeling pretty damn good, J."

"Gonna come to the beach with me? Plan our lives?" He grinned, touching his nose to Benny's.

Benny giggled and nodded. "Yeah, J. I like the way that sounds."

The green eyes were huge in Benny's face. Full of happiness and love and a reflection of himself.

"Cool, babe. Me too."

Benny rubbed their noses together again, smiling. "I'm sorry I made you mad, J."

"It happens sometimes." J grinned and took a kiss. "You gotta believe in me, Benny. I want you with me. No matter what."

"I believe in you, J. I really, really do."

"I believe in you too, Benny." He nodded, giving the boy who held his whole heart in long, skinny hands a hug, holding them tight together. "Really, really."

"Are we really going to the beach, J?"

"Oh yeah, babe, we're going to the beach." He grinned, happy all through. Oh, yeah, this was what he'd wanted. "Wanna learn to surf?"

Benny's eyes lit up. "Really? Oh yeah, do I ever!"

"Then let's pack our shit up, throw some stuff in Mom's garage and go, babe. There's nothing stopping us."

"Like, right now?"

J laughed, loud and long and happy, squeezing Benny tight. "Like right now, Benny. Right fucking now."

This was what he was needed, what he had hoped for. His dreams coming true and Benny coming along with them.

Benny was grinning up at him, eyes full of happiness and love. "I'm gonna need a bathing suit, J. And some of those floppy beach shoe things. Do you think I can bring my board? Do you think I can make it go on sand? Or maybe they've got paved walkways by the beach. Do you think they've got that, J?"

"We'll have to find out together, Benny."

"Together. Sounds good, J." Benny hugged him tight, face buried against his skin. "Sounds really fucking good."

"Yeah."

Yeah, it did. Really, really fucking good.

Now he was a winner. Now the money meant something.

Now it was all going to be okay.

The True Wind



He'd followed the cry of the Wind here, finally listened to the call that had followed him from the Circle of Stones, past the Black Mountain, even to the edge of the Endless Water. The song had invaded his dreams, his hunts, his flight -- it had been quite irritating, like the itch when a feather was growing back in.

So he had returned to the Clan Tree, found himself a fine perch upon the Tree that Burned, and watched. None would dare to greet him, for he was a Traveler and perched beyond the Clan, but there were long looks and curious eyes and he believed he saw a Nest Mate flutter down below.

In the darkness, when there was only moonlight and all should sleep, that is when the other Elders -- the Hunters and the Builders and the Singers and the Keepers of Feathers came to perch below him and he moved to sit with them and share his stories. They spoke of the great Gathering to come and the rise of the NightFlyers and the Ones that Slithered upon the Ground and Hunted Eggs. They spoke of his brother, who had flown far to share a nest with another Clan. They spoke of Tolin, the Elder who had led him out into the Big Sky.

They asked him if he was here to claim a fledgling, to seek a partner, to cast off his collar of mourning and solitude and return to the Dance of Life.

The first night he had said no. The fourth day, he had handed the finely woven collar to the Head of the Keeper of Feathers. On the morning of the fifth day, he had begun his watch.

The Clan fledglings were busy, feathers shining as they played and worked and spun in ages-old mating dances. His wings ached to move, to send him up towards the sun and the sky and the clouds. There was no room to soar within the Trees. Still, someone would come to him and it was his place to wait.

Tolin had waited for him. Kitar had waited for Tolin. Namon had waited for Kitar. Prita had waited for Namon.

He would wait and his partner would find him.

His eyes felt upon a still fledging, strong and lithe, with bright wings and dark skin and bright visage. That one had tilted his head and looked many times. That one had rebuffed the call of the other fledglings. That one showed intensity and curiosity.

Cikor allowed himself a smile and a moment of excitement. His place was to wait, his partner's to choose. Of course, the Winds did allow for hope and encouragement.

Whenever the bright eyes searched him out, Cikor presented his best, most golden feathers.

Iknor sat on the branch next to the family nest, watching as his siblings flew among the branches of the Clan Tree and into the valley. The sun glinted off their feathers, making the varying shades of brown come to life and shine.

He spread his own wings and resettled them. He didn't need the sun to shine, his feathers were shimmered bronze and scattershot with silver.

The down upon him appeared almost red against his dark brown skin. He was fine boned and light, yet tall for his age -- already taller than the smaller full-grown males, taller than most of the females.

He watched every day as the males and females of his Clan searched for a mate, finding the best nesting places to start families of his own. He watched, but he did not join them.

The last hatchling of the batch, they had thought his shell quite empty until two days after the rest had hatched when he began to chip away at his prison.

They had named him Iknor, son of the sky, and when he'd asked why his mother had tilted her head and clacked her tongue and just said "it was right."

He looked up into the sky and wondered what prophecy had been in her that day, for he was indeed a son of the sky, he had no desire for a nest or hatchlings of his own, he had no desire to remain in the valley, close to the Clan Tree.

He had noticed the gold one several days ago. He sat alone, aloof, up in the high tree with no leaves, on the very top branches, looking out over the valley. It was as if he were waiting for some signal before heading out across the peaks that marked the western edge of the Clan Tree's borders.

Iknor wanted to go with him.

He could fly of course, but his wings were untested, he, like his brethren, had never before flown without the safety of the Clan Tree above and below him.

To reach the gold one he would have to fly up into the sky, to trust that his wings would carry him, to trust that he could soar.

Iknor was not the son of the sky for nothing.

He didn't look back down, there would be time enough for a last glance down when he reached the gold one's side.

The brightly winged one was coming. No false starts, no fear, no advice or goodbyes -- just a strong beating of wings and a fiercely determined flight.

The cry came from the Clan as the young one cleared the tops of the First Trees and felt the True Wind on his feathers for the first time.

The Ones who Watched called warning, the Elders stood to watch, the constant dance stuttered. All the mothers, save one, called in relief that it was not their nestling that was lost to the Pull of the Clan.

Cikor resisted the urge to add his hope-filled cry to the mix. The Wind assured him this was good and right, that this could be another in an endless line of Travelers. That he could, after so many seasons of mourning, be with another.

Cikor would wait to share the call until the others were silent, until the fledging had succeeded to step upon this path. Until this one could know that the sound was one of joy, and solely for his ears.

The fledgling continued upward, not once looking back, not when the cries had begun, not now that they had ended and the Clan watched to see if he would make it.

No, the brightly winged one was flying face pointed toward his goal, beginning to soar now that his wings had found the True Wind. His wings flapped with more confidence as he approached; though there had obviously not been any doubt that he would not fail, now the fledgling had no doubt that he would succeed.

Shooting past him with a long cry of victory, the fledgling banked sharply and landed with more enthusiasm than finesse on the branch beside him.

The dark head dipped, bronze head feathers gleaming for a moment and then he was being regarded by bright, sharp eyes the same color as the young one's feathers.

"Take me with you."

Cikor looked at the fledging, the Wind singing within his feathers, encouraging and rejoicing.

He wondered if Tolin had felt this when he had landed that first night, so long ago.

"I am Cikor, this Clan's Traveler. Once you take my band, you cannot return below. Are you willing to relinquish your nest and fly with the True Wind?" The words had been spoken for so many generations within these trees that the leaves vibrated with the weight of their import.

"I am Iknor. I have already relinquished my nest. I will take your band." If the young one was nervous, he hid it well.

Cikor reached behind him to where the two finely woven bands, one bright and new, one faded and weathered, waited. The blues and greens and violets spoke of the Big Sky and the land it covered. The Keeper of Feathers had kept his while he mourned and provided one for his partner.

He held them both out, showing them proudly. "This is our band, our station, our mark. Come and fly with me if you will and I will show you the Big Sky and the Endless Water."

The bright eyes grew brighter still. "I am the son of the sky. Teach me my father's secrets."

He reached down and fastened the thin band to Iknor's throat. The feathers there were smooth and straight, their spines whole, their barbs unbroken and untried. Another cry sounded from below, Cikor could not tell whether the sound was pleasure or sorrow. Not that it mattered in the least.

He held out the faded band to Iknor and bent his head, closing his eyes and breathing in the edge of excited pleasure carried by the Wind.

Iknor's hands were warm as they slid around his neck, moving carefully through the feathers at the back. It was only a matter of seconds and the band was fastened.

He could smell the clean, fresh scent of Iknor's skin, and hear the rapid beat of the young one's heart.

He lifted his head, pride and joy and satisfaction filling him. He leaned forward, displaying his wings as he kissed Iknor's forehead and chin.

Then he straightened, lifted his chin and gave a fierce cry, announcing to the Winds that a new Traveler was coming.

Iknor's cry joined his own, adding voice, giving the sound new wings with which to greet the sky.

"Come with me and greet the Wind." He stood and shook out his feathers. They would fly only a short way, to the Green Valley beyond the Forest. There they would learn each other's habits and Iknor could grow strong and hunt. Then they would begin their Travels.

"Lead and I will follow, Cikor." Iknor spread his wings and gave him a wide grin. "This time."

He took off, careful not to set Iknor off-balance, laughter filling him as they moved into the sweet True Wind.

Bus Story ☀5

It had just been a dare -- he hadn't even known the girl.

Benny sniffed and looked out the window, not really seeing the buildings they passed. Sure it had been stupid, but it was supposed to be harmless.

How was he supposed to know the chick would decide she liked it and kiss him back, arms wrapping around his neck like a fucking boa constrictor. And how was he supposed to know that J was going to be early and see him kissing the girl?

J hadn't even given him a chance to explain, had just walked out. Benny'd only narrowly seen him getting on the bus and managed the sprint to the next stop.

Now he was out of breath and hot enough he thought he was gonna ralph and sniffing like a stupid fucking two year old. He just couldn't help it -- he hated it when J was mad at him. There wasn't anything worse.

And it wasn't even his fault. Not really anyway.

J wasn't saying a word. Nothing. He was just sitting.

Well, and clenching his teeth.

Benny practiced some lines in his head. "I'm sorry you saw me kissing a girl." "I'm sorry I kissed a girl." "I'm sorry, J -- it didn't mean anything."

"I'm sorry, J, Doug made me."

"I'm sorry, J, I'll never kiss a girl again -- I didn't even want to kiss one this time."

In the end he just sniffled and said, very softly. "I'm sorry, J."

"Hey, it's your life, Ben. Do whatever the fuck you want." Quiet and ice-cold, J's hurt was obvious, painful.

"It wasn't nothing, J. I don't even like girls like that."

"I don't want to talk about it here." J moved across the aisle to sit by himself, shoulders tight.

Oh, fuck.

He felt like he'd been kicked in the gut.

He looked away. He was gonna start crying again if he watched J's stiff back.

It was the longest fucking bus ride ever.

J got up at their stop and got out without even looking at him, heading down the sidewalk towards the

apartment. He had to trot to keep up with J, and it was too fucking hot to do it, but he wasn't gonna let J go on his own mad like he was.

J stopped short and turned to look at him. Hurt and pain were evident in the bright blue eyes. "Why, Benny?"

"It didn't mean anything, J. It was just a dare."

"It didn't look like nothing, Ben. It didn't look like you were fighting her."

"Well I went up and kissed her on the dare, I couldn't tell her to fuck off when she kissed me back -- I was just happy she wasn't calling the rentacops on me." He went up to J, looking up into the beautiful blue eyes. "I love you, J."

"Yeah, Ben. It's hot. I'm going home." J turned back around and headed off again, walked more slowly, letting him keep up.

He wanted to take J's hand, but it would just kill him if J brushed him off. So he just followed, wishing for all he was worth that he could take the kiss back.

J headed up the stairs and into the apartment without another word. Once they were inside, J headed for the bathroom and turned on the shower.

Benny went as far as the door and stood there biting his lip. Normally he'd get undressed and go in with J without a second thought. Usually J wasn't mad at him.

He could see J getting undressed in the mirror, could see the stylized 'B' on the muscled shoulder. That was his 'B'.

He stepped in and stood behind J, watching him in the mirror. "J?"

"Yeah, Benny?" Those blue eyes met his. Nobody had eyes like J.

"I shoulda never done it and I'm sorry -- please don't be mad, J."

"I just... is that what you want, Benny? Am I... am I not enough?" J looked sort of unsure and young for a minute, like he had the first few times they'd made love, and then it faded. "It doesn't matter. I'm not mad. I want a shower."

"No," he shook his head and grabbed onto J's arm, keeping him there. "No, J -- I didn't want it at all. Doug was being an asshole and I let him get to me and then he dared me to kiss a girl and he and Shoe picked one out and I went up and kissed her and she kissed me back and that was it, J. I didn't even like it."

"Promise?"

"I promise, J. She was all... girly. If you hadn't come along and distracted me I was gonna disinfect for cooties."

To his pleasure, J chuckled, chin dipping. "Cooties? Those... those are damned dangerous, you know?"

He smiled up at J. "Yeah, I know. I need lots of boy germs to fight 'em. Lots of J-boy germs."

He got a smile back -- a real smile, a warm, Benny-you're-mine-and-I-love-you with teeth smile. "Wonder where you could get an injection of J-boy germs, Benny?"

He shrugged. "Well... the best way would have to be application of the germs directly to the spot where the girl cooties were unleashed, you know?"

"Oh. I could probably manage that. Maybe." J leaned forward and brushed his lips against Benny's. "Better?"

Oh, it was going to be okay. J was going to kiss him and erase the memory of that girl from both their minds and then, if he was really lucky, J was going to fuck him in the shower. "A little. But you know, she had her tongue in my mouth, J -- it was really quite traumatic."

"Poor Benny." J bent down again, giving him a quick kiss, tongue just sliding inside, teasing him. "How's that?"

"Better, getting better, but I still... I still feel the girl cooties, J."

J tugged him close, lips covering his as J kissed him long and hard, making his toes curl. He gasped into J's mouth, loving the feeling of J's tongue inside him. His hands found J's arms and he held onto the muscled biceps, loving the feeling of them in his hands.

"Benny." J groaned into his lips, hands sliding up to hold his face as the kiss deepened.

J tasted so good -- he tasted right. And it wasn't cooties or a guy versus girl thing, it was an everyone versus J thing. Nobody else was J, nobody else would do.

The kiss lasted forever, until they were both gasping and he was dizzy and breathless. "Oh, Benny. Good."

"Not good. Much, much, much better than good."

"Yeah. Yeah, Benny." Those eyes were warm now, looking at him with hunger and need. "'m sorry for losing it. I just... you know."

He nodded. Oh yeah, he knew. If their positions had been reversed... "I woulda too, lost it I mean, if you were... you know, kissing some girl. Or some guy. Or anyone that wasn't me."

"Good thing I'm not looking for anybody else to kiss me, huh?"

"Yeah." He smiled and pushed up on his tiptoes rubbing their cheeks together. "I'm not either, J. Really, okay?"

"Okay, good." He put his mouth on J's, taking another kiss, one that didn't have someone else's kiss hanging over it.

J's lips were hot and salty and hungry, hands moving to pull restlessly at his clothes. Oh yeah, J was going to take him in the shower and touch him, kiss him, maybe even fuck him. One way or another J was going to love him and it was going to be good.

He slid his hands over J's shoulders, touching the hot skin, the firm muscles moving as J did, fluid and solid and they felt good.

"Benny, lose the clothes? Please?" J's mouth moved, tongue tracing his tattoo, their tattoo.

"Only if you take off your pants, too."

Reluctantly, he let go of J's skin and pulled his t-shirt up over his head, keeping his eyes focused on J's tanned muscles instead of his own skinny white body.

His jeans were next and he wondered what J would say when it became clear he was going commando.

J's eyes widened when his jeans fell and then J went to his knees right in the bathroom, lips nuzzling right on his cock. "Fuck, Benny, you're so sexy."

He would have said something to J, about only being sexy for J, but he was too busy moaning and feeling the feeling of J's mouth on his cock. J sucked him with a happy groan, hands reaching around to cup his ass and hold him.

He reached out, putting his hands on J's shoulders, holding himself upright as J's mouth worked his cock. There was nothing like this in the world. It felt so good, but even better than how it felt was knowing it was J down there, making him fly.

J sucked him deep and slow, eyes looking at him the whole time, admiring him, loving him. He didn't know what he'd done to deserve this, to deserve J, but he wasn't going to risk losing it again. No matter who dared him.

J's tongue was so hot and his fingers tickled and pressed on Benny's skin. Even J's body was caressing him, pushing against his legs hard.

He could hardly breathe, could hardly think, could just feel and feel and feel how good it was, J all pressed up against him, J's mouth around him, J's hot skin under his hands. He shivered hard when he felt J's cock sliding along his leg, J's hips thrusting in time with the sucking, J as excited as he was.

He slid his hand over the shaved head, groaning. He couldn't stop himself, couldn't keep from holding J's head still, hips moving as he started to fuck J's mouth.

J moaned, so loud, and started to suck harder.

Oh, yeah, that was it... so good, so right. He moved faster, hands tightening. Oh, he was going to come soon, he was.

Heat splashed on his legs, J's mouth tightening, body jerking. He wailed, the smell of J's pleasure strong, making him fly. Shuddering, he came down J's throat.

J swallowed a few times and then buried his hips against Benny's stomach, kissing while the final spurts splashed on his scarred neck.

He was trembling, knees threatening to buckle as he stroked softly across J's head. "Oh J... love you."

"Love you, Benny." J was nuzzling him, playing with his skin and loving on him. "Love you."

His hands slipped back to J's shoulders, holding himself up, not wanting to miss a moment of this. J was warm and wonderful.

Those bright blue eyes looked up at him, so happy and close. "Taste good, Benny."

That made him grin, he was happy all the way inside.

"Shower or bed, Benny?"

"Shower first -- I like being all soapy with you."

That got him a grin, quick and easy. "Come on then. Get your sexy ass in the tub."

J stood, stretching over to turn on the water.

Reaching out, Benny slid his hands along the warm, stretched stomach muscles. Oh he loved touching J.

J chuckled and wiggled away. "Tickles, Benny."

He followed, hands sliding over J's ass this time. "You feel good, J. All warm muscles."

"Your hands feel damned good too, Benny." J turned the warm water on and stretched up along the tile. His "B" tattoo was dark and wonderful on the tan skin.

Benny pushed into the shower, J preceding him and then pulled the curtain closed. He rubbed up against J, fingers playing over his tattoo on J's skin.

J hummed and wiggled, back muscles rippling. "Feels good."

"Yeah?" He rubbed some more. Yeah, it felt good, his cheek warm against J's back, the solid buttocks against his belly. "You going to fuck me now, J?"

"Either that or you're going to fuck me. Either way works, Benny."

Benny giggled. "Not in the shower, J. It only works if you do me in the shower -- 'm not big enough."

J chuckled, voice low and teasing. "What? You can't stretch, maybe jump for it?"

Turning, J took his mouth in a slow, happy kiss that tasted like laughing. He was gonna whap J, but the kiss convinced him not to. Instead he pressed close, cock rubbing against J's thigh.

They rocked together, humming and muttering, water falling all around them. J's hands were hot on his back and ass, tickling and rubbing.

He pushed back into those hands, trying to encourage J's fingers to go into him, but J was teasing and playing and it felt too good to complain.

"How do you want it, Benny? Bent over? Holding the showerhead? Like that? How?"

"Oh..." he gasped and pushed harder against J. How was he supposed to decide? "Anything, J. Just want to feel you in me."

One of J's fingers slipped inside him, pushing deep. "Like this, Benny?"

He gasped again, body moving back eagerly, whimpering and shuddering as J's fingertip just barely brushed over his gland. "Yeah. Oh, yeah, J."

"So sexy, Benny." J slid another finger in fucking him slow and deep and easy. "You make me want you."

"You make me sexy," he murmured, body moving with J's fingers, trying to coax him even deeper.

"Want to be inside you, babe." J lifted him up with a hungry groan. "Now, Benny?"

He clutched at J's shoulders, legs wrapping around the trim waist. "Please, J."

"Oh yes..." J shifted him and then J's cock was full and hard and nudging at him, wanting in.

He let gravity take him, push him down onto J's cock. He gasped sharply as it breached him -- J was so big, he always forgot somehow how it burned when he was stretched. Fuck, he loved that burn.

J's lips were on his face. "Okay, Benny. You okay? Fuck, babe, so... so tight. So tight..."

He turned his face, searching for those lips with his own. "'m okay. Want more of you."

"Benny..." J leaned back against the tile, hands pulling his hips down into a strong, deep thrust.

He cried out, hands tightening on J's shoulder. "Oh fuck! Oh, fuck, J." He gasped and clutched the warm muscles with his hands. "Do it again."

A groan and he was lifted and brought back down, J's cock pressing into him hard and long and so good. "Benny. Oh, god. Benny."

"Yeah, J, yeah. Do it again."

With an almost pained growl, J began to fuck him. Again and again, harder and deeper, J loved him, brought them together. Benny wailed, riding J's thrusts.

"Oh, Benny. Love... love you. God. Love you." J was gasping, hands squeezing his hips.

He nodded and pressed his lips against J's. J's tongue pushed into his mouth, thrusting as deep and steady as the strong hips. His own cock rubbed between him and J, just enough friction between their bellies to make him shiver and gasp into J's mouth.

The thrusts became rough, J's cries pushing into him even as heat pulsed inside him. He slid one hand between them, sliding it up and down over his erection.

J dropped his head, watching as Benny's hand moved. "Fuck. So sexy. So fucking sexy, Benny."

"Oh!" He came, body squeezing the cock inside him as heat splashed over his hand.

"Benny..." J hugged him tight, arms trembling.

"I love you, J." He held on to the broad shoulders, pressing close.

"Love you, too." A soft kiss landed on his neck, J's breath hot.

He leaned forward and kissed J's scar, tracing it with his tongue.

J hummed. "All the cooties gone?"

He laughed, giggling against J's skin.

"Was that a yes?" J began nibbling, teasing.

"Yes." He kept licking at J's scar. "Yes."

"Good. Your kisses are mine. I need them."

"All yours, J. I promise." He shifted and brought their lips together, giving J one his kisses. "All yours."

J smiled at him, warm and happy. "Yes, Benny. Yes."

He nuzzled in close again, letting his head rest on J's shoulder as he started to feel heavy and tired, but the good kind, the kind that meant they'd just had really good sex.

The water was cooling off fast and he curled tighter into J, letting his lover's body shield him.

"Come on, Benny. Let's order a pizza and watch "Cops."

"K." He hugged J close for another second and then let his legs slide down.

It sounded like every other night. It sounded perfect.

The Bistrot



The Bistrot was small, but crowded. Cloth tablecloths and napkins. Real flowers. Real candles. And the most delicious smells.

Richard could understand why Damen had suggested the place, it promised to be a gastronomical pleasure. He glanced irritably at his watch. Even if the date itself was a wash.

Damen was forty minutes late. Perhaps it was for the best, their first date had been boring and he'd ended it on a light kiss and promise for a second date, despite his better judgment. This lack of promptness only confirmed that Damen was not in the cards for him.

He had just decided to go ahead and order without the boy when his cell phone rang. He raised an eyebrow at the number. "Hello, Damen."

The boy on the other end apologized profusely, gave one sad excuse after another and finally hung up. Richard erased the number from his phone and returned it to his pocket. The little twink could go blow himself.

Just then a waiter went by with a couple of plates, the succulent smell evaporating his bad mood immediately. There was nothing like a well-cooked meal to brighten one's mood, and, if it was served with style and flair, in a welcoming atmosphere, all the better.

A half hour later he was happily making his way through the veal piccata, almost moaning in orgasmic ecstasy. He couldn't remember when he'd last had such a well-cooked meal.

A soft laugh caught his attention, a slim back and sweet ass standing at a table in the center of the room. Another low comment and the table broke into peals of laughter, a thin, fine hand motioning to the waiter and giving some soft-spoken instructions.

He briefly caught the man's profile -- short-cropped blond curls, close-cut beard. The man was young, to own a place of his own.

The young man reminded him of someone...

He watched the owner move through the room, stopping periodically to check dishes as they left the kitchen, tweaking a garnish here and there. Richard never got a full-on look of the man until he turned, heading for his table, when he saw a pair of bright green eyes and high cheekbones.

Stephen Dean. Now there was a name from the past. It had to be... eight years since they'd parted, Stephen insisting he didn't love the boy enough. Stephen had wanted some sort of white knight sweep you off your feet adoration. Richard still wasn't sure what was wrong with steady and true, but he'd accepted long ago that he couldn't give Stephen what the boy needed.

Stephen had done well for himself. Very well.

Stephen's eyes widened as their gazes met and then a pleased smile crossed the thin face and he held out his hand. "Richard. How wonderful to see you! It's been ages!"

Richard wiped the corners of his mouth and stood, taking Stephen's hand in his own. Warm and dry and soft, Stephen always did have wonderful hands. "It has been awhile -- I see you've realized your dream, and very impressively, too, if I may say so."

Stephen still blushed so prettily. "Thank you. I'm very proud of my little Bistro. Please, take your seat. Are you enjoying your veal?"

"It's wonderful. I can only think of one other time I've had a better meal made of it." He sat and casually waved a hand at the other chair. "Did you want to join me? Catch up on old times..."

"A better meal of it?" Stephen looked at the chair and shook his head. "I would love to, but I have a dessert course to check."

Those eyes -- so very bright and green -- looked over at him. "If you aren't busy, I'll be free in forty-five minutes and we can share coffee and a chocolate ganache."

"There was this small cafe in Paris..." He grinned at Stephen, sure the younger man would remember it. "Perhaps it was merely the company I was keeping at the time. And yes, coffee and ganache sound delightful -- I'm flattered you remember."

Stephen's cheeks flamed. "You are a terrible flirt, Richard. Of course, I remember. Remembering people's tastes is a knack. I'll be back with your dessert once the course is complete. Let Jim know if you need anything." Then he got a slow, flirtatious wink. "And there is something magical about Paris, isn't there? The air maybe..."

He grinned as he watched Stephen's fine ass move away. The evening was just getting better and better.

The forty-five minutes sped by, his waiter attentive, the atmosphere relaxed, the periodic glimpses of Stephen a delicious tease. His coffee arrived first, a gourmet blend that made his mouth water in anticipation for the sweet that was to go with it.

Within a few moments, Stephen, apron and whites removed, now dressed simply in a black turtleneck and

black slacks, served a plate of chocolate topped with sweet crème and dark, rich cherries. "Your dessert, sir."

He licked his lips, eyes on Stephen himself. "It looks delicious."

"It ought to. I made it myself." It was slid in front of him, then Stephen took the seat beside, Jim appearing with an espresso and placing it before Stephen.

"Will you share it with me?" he asked, sliding a small bit onto his fork and holding it out to Stephen.

It felt good to flirt like this, with a man he'd never stopped caring for, really.

"Perhaps a bite or two." Stephen leaned forward, wrapping his lips around the fork and tugging gently. A soft hum sounded as Stephen settled back in his chair. "Delicious."

Richard smiled warmly. He almost would be satisfied watching Stephen eat the concoction. Almost. He had a weakness for sweets, which Stephen well knew, having kept him quite fattened during their time together.

He took a forkful of his own, eyes closing as the flavors exploded across his tongue. He moaned softly, all flirtation and teasing forgotten in the taste of the ganache.

When he opened his eyes, Stephen was sipping his espresso, grinning at him, eyes so familiar to the boy he'd known. "Good?"

"No, not good, Stephen. You were a fantastic cook when we were together, now... Good would be an insult."

Stephen gave him a nod, cheeks pinking. "Thank you, Richard. I'm glad you like."

"I do -- very much." He took another bite and then another, managing to stop long enough after three to make some conversation. "So how long have you owned the bistro?"

"I bought the spot five years ago. I managed to save up enough money to fix her up, built a staff, selling pastries." Stephen grinned. "It took a few years, but it was worth the wait."

He raised an eyebrow. "Most people have to wait a lot longer than five years to reach the reservations only stage. You've done well. I'm impressed."

"The mixture of commitment and luck. Well, that and being a certain actress' favorite pastry chef." Stephen's eyes were bright, warm. "And you? You look spectacular, Richard."

He smiled, trying not to feel too inordinately pleased. "I take care of myself." He chuckled. "Try not to indulge in too many of these..."

"Oh, indulgence every now and again can't possibly hurt anything." One blond eyebrow arched. "In fact, it might be very good."

He arched an eyebrow of his own. Oh, Stephen had improved his flirting abilities. "It depends on what you indulge in, doesn't it?"

"Perhaps, but I have found that one should feed their appetite." Espresso finished, Stephen dabbed at his lips with a napkin, drawing Richard's eyes to that pointed chin. Stephen hadn't had a beard when they'd been together. "And I feel it's important to feed yourself with the best."

"Indeed." Richard found himself staring at the way the light hair on Stephen's face framed his mouth.

He couldn't help but wonder how it would feel to kiss those bearded lips.

"Are we done making small talk or should I ask if you're still a designer and whether you've been in town long before I invite you upstairs to my apartment?"

Sure, definite and laid right out on the table.

His cock went from interested to wanting just like that. "Yes, I am, two years and I'd love to."

"Excellent. Now?" Stephen stood and held out his hand, no nerves, nothing but straightforward interest. The boy had grown up. He couldn't wait to see how the lover had changed. He stood, making no effort to hide his obvious erection, and took Stephen's hand.

Stephen lead him toward the back of the restaurant and then through a door and up a long, incredibly narrow stairwell. Stephen stopped to unlock the door, him a few steps back, that sweet ass framed beautifully.

Some things hadn't changed.

Leaning forward he slid his hand along one sweet cheek. The muscles beneath his hand rippled and then Stephen pushed back towards him. "Your hands always were the warmest I'd ever felt."

The door opened and Stephen moved forward, drawing him into a jewel-toned apartment filled with tiny rooms, all laid out one after another. "We're going to bed, yes? My couch is lumpy and my sheets are clean." Green eyes looked back at him. "I don't see any reason for us to play the games, Richard. I want you. You want me. Simple as that. Yes?"

He raised an eyebrow. And some things had changed a lot.

"No games, Stephen. Take me to your bed."

Stephen nodded and took his hand, leading him through a fascinating and so Stephen home -- clean, open, sparse -- to the room that was dominated by a big bed. His hand was brought to Stephen's lips, the action well known, so familiar. "I am glad to see you, Richard."

He slid his hand along Stephen's cheek, the beard tickling his palm. He brought their faces together. "Me, too," he said softly as his lips closed over Stephen's.

Stephen smiled and then those soft lips opened and the flavors of coffee and chocolate and crème and Stephen filled his mouth, slid into him like that quick, hot tongue that met his hunger equally.

He slid his hands around Stephen's back, pulling him close, letting Stephen feel his need. Stephen made a soft noise, arms reaching up to circle his neck. Stiff heat pressed against his thigh, solid and needy. Moving his hands, he stroked the length of Stephen's back until he was cupping that fine ass, pulling Stephen tighter against him, rubbing their bodies together.

He sure hoped Stephen wasn't going to send him on his after just one go, because he wasn't going to last very long this time out. One slim leg wrapped around him, Stephen stretched out against his body, mouth fierce and focused as they kissed.

All the old feelings came flooding back, hitting him hard -- he'd loved Stephen, maybe not the fairy tale all encompassing love that Stephen had been looking for but he'd loved Stephen more and harder than anyone before or since.

He felt like a teenager, some kid who barely knew how to rub himself, coming so quick and hard, ruining his \$60 silk boxers just like that.

Stephen moaned against his lips, fingers tangling in his hair. "God, you... so good, Rich. Still feels so good."

He chuckled, somewhat embarrassed. "I'm not usually so quick off the mark," he murmured, sliding his hands up beneath Stephen's shirt to stroke the warm skin.

"Mm... The chocolate counts as hours of foreplay." Stephen's voice was warm, playful, green eyes narrowing as he ran his fingers along the bumps of vertebrae, the hints of ribs. "Warm..."

His laughter was more relaxed now, and it made him a little breathless, how Stephen was the same and so different. More mature. "What can I do for you and can we move this to the bed before I really embarrass myself when my knees give way?"

"What you can do for me is lose the clothes -- I want to see you." Stephen took a long, slow kiss from him. "And your knees aren't the only ones shaking and my mattress is a lot softer than the floor."

He cupped Stephen's face, looking, seeing the same shape, the same green eyes. The beard was new, as was the maturity. He liked this Stephen a lot. He brought their mouths together again in a slow, exploring kiss.

Stepping back, he began to undo the buttons of his dress shirt.

Stephen just watched for a moment, then slowly began to undress himself -- watch, shoes, socks -- eyes never leaving his body for a second. When his shirt was unbuttoned, Stephen grinned. "Let me?"

He chuckled and nodded, remembering how scared and shaking Stephen had been that first time, that first touch.

This time, those hands weren't as soft, weren't scared, were steady and sure as his shirt was pushed away. The lips that brushed against his collarbone still felt damned good, though.

"You're a beautiful man, Rich. Always have been."

He swallowed hard. "Thank you, Stephen. You always were a pretty kid -- now you're... grown up -- handsome and confident, happy. It's a heady combination."

Tilting Stephen's head back up, he kissed Stephen again. He liked the way the beard felt against his skin -- different, a little scratchy, a little tickly. He liked the way Stephen's tongue met his, played and explored, Stephen not waiting for his mouth to be taken but meeting him like an equal. He couldn't remember the last time he'd had an equal in bed with him. It made him hard again. Or maybe that was just the sweet flavor in his mouth and the warm hands stroking his skin.

Stephen stepped away, smiling and winking when he began to protest. "I want skin on skin." Then that turtleneck was pulled up and off with no ceremony and Stephen was there again, pressing into him with a warm moan. "Oh, yes. That's it."

Then his head was tugged down to resume their kiss.

He murmured his agreement into Stephen's mouth. Yes, this was better, warmer, softer. His hands went around Stephen's back again, moving over warm flesh. Stephen was smooth and softly muscled, not overdone, but not just boy soft either.

Stephen's hands were exploring, too. A brush over his nipple, palm curved over his shoulder blade, fingers stroking his belly -- the touches were familiar and different all at once. Fascinating and arousing.

His cock was hard again, his knees feeling more and more wobbly. He walked them back toward the bed. They separated there, both sliding out of their slacks, both stealing peaks to see what had changed, what hadn't.

He knew he had a bit of gray now in his pubic hair, to match the stuff on his head, but his cock was still thick and long, curving up toward his belly. Stephen's prick was red and leaking, his balls up close to his body. He licked his lips and dropped to his knees, pulling Stephen's cock into his mouth.

The sweetsaltsogood flavor shot through him. He remembered this taste, remembered it in his bones and his body reacted strongly to it.

"Oh, Rich..." Stephen sobbed and arched, one hand sliding through his hair. Thighs parting, Stephen panted, trembling. "Christ, you're going to set me right off. Your mouth..."

As that was the idea, payback of the best kind, he sucked harder, head bobbing up and down along the hard, hot flesh. His hands found Stephen's hips, encouraged him to move, to find the rhythm Stephen wanted. Not hesitant, Stephen fucked his mouth with long, deep strokes. Sweet sounds full of pleasure and need poured down, Stephen's fingers stroking his cheeks, his hair. It didn't take long before the steady strokes became jerks, long cock pressing deep, filling his throat with hot come.

It was only as he swallowed, taking Stephen's pleasure inside himself that it occurred to him that he knew better than this, hell he'd taught Stephen better than this.

He felt like an idiot as he pulled off, giving Stephen's cock a last kiss. Christ, Stephen had him acting like a teenager.

Stephen blinked down at him, a ghost of the younger man flitting in those green eyes as they met his. Thin fingers slid out, captured a drop of come off the corner of his mouth. "Oh, fuck. I'm sorry. I should have pulled... I'm clean. I'm very careful..." Then Stephen stopped and rolled his eyes. "Except when gorgeous former lovers drop to their knees before me, of course."

He turned his face and kissed Stephen's palm and then pulled himself up. "I should have waited for the condom." He shrugged. "But when I saw you there... we'll be more careful now and we can go get tested on Monday."

He pushed away his own concerns. It was done now.

Stephen nodded and sat them on the bed, watching him closely. "You do look good. I can't quite believe you're here. I have the strongest temptation to push you down and see if you still have the scar on your calf where the dog bit you when we were buying wine."

He chuckled and lay down on his stomach. "See for yourself."

He heard a warm laugh and then cool hands wrapped around his ankles, sliding up his calves. The scar was found and traced and kissed. "Yes. Right here. Hated that dog."

He nodded. "I noticed you were rather quick to insist the owner put him down. He was a vicious little mutt though. Just like the dog."

Stephen's chuckle slid up his inner thigh. "I was quite a little hothead then. Oh, God, you still use the same soap -- those little round bars with oatmeal in it. Violets on the box."

"You remember..." Oh, this was good. Too good. Being with Stephen was warm and easy and right. They were moving too quickly, he was moving too quickly, falling headlong into the place they'd been before Stephen left all those years ago.

"Ask me what I don't remember." The soft beard brushed along his ass, laughter tickling him. "Christ, Rich. My gingerbread recipe still doesn't have molasses in it because you don't like it."

"Why did you..." No, he couldn't ask it, now wasn't the time to relive the past, to dredge that all back up. Now was the time to deal with the hard-on he was sporting that was trying to drill a hole through Stephen's mattress. If he was still here in the morning, if Stephen was interested in this lasting more than one night, then they could talk. In the meantime, he wanted to make love.

He pushed his ass back, encouraging Stephen to keep touching.

"Later. We can bitch and cry and fight tomorrow over coffee and bagels." A series of soft kisses tickled up his spine, searching out each little hot spot with a patience that a younger Stephen would never have had. "Let's just make love tonight."

He smiled as he nodded. Stephen was reading his mind. Turning his head, he searched for Stephen's mouth, looking for another of those same-different kisses.

Stephen settled beside him, kissing his forehead, lips sliding down his nose, before coming to rest on his, Stephen just breathing with him, watching him, eyes wide.

He smiled, hand sliding over Stephen's back, touching whatever skin he could reach.

Stephen's eyes smiled and he pressed close, tongue sliding over his bottom lip. He opened his mouth wide, taking Stephen's tongue inside, turning to press their bodies together. His prick slid along Stephen's, both of them hard again, needing and wanting.

After a few adjustments for legs and arms, Stephen fit so well -- warm and almost liquid, relaxed and hungry at the same time. Stephen kissed him, touched him, met him halfway in every thrust and stroke and moan.

It wasn't what he was used to at all, but he liked it, the newness exciting, the fact that it was Stephen, making it right rather than scary.

Stephen's hands stroked through his hair, eyes getting darker, heavy-lidded. "Rich. God."

"You feel good, Stephen. Better than ever." He slid his own hands along the slim, lightly muscled lines of Stephen's body, enjoying the heat and smoothness of it.

"I do. I missed this." Green eyes caught his, serious and happy all at once. "You should eat chocolate every day; it tastes amazing in your mouth."

He chuckled. "Do you know how many years it took before I lost all my pastry fat from when I was with you? God, you're an amazing chef. Pretty fucking hot in bed, too. Now more than ever."

"Well, the secret is more fucking than chocolate -- an orgasm for every bite." Stephen chuckled, licking his mouth. "Then your question is -- do you take big bites or little bites?"

"Mm... I'll go for big bites and big orgasms, please."

Stephen's laughter bloomed in his lips, bright and warm and happy. "Well, let's work off bite number two, shall we?"

"Oh yeah, you're on." He swallowed Stephen's laughter and his tongue, pulling as much of Stephen as he could into himself.

Stephen's laughter morphed into a sigh into a groan. He fed a moan back into those hungry lips as

Stephen rolled their hips together, cock hard and hot and silky against him. He got his hand around that prick, loving the way it felt like his palm was on fire, burning up with the heat of Stephen's cock.

He thought Stephen was mimicking him when the thin hand moved between them, but then Stephen pushed their cocks together, groaning, "Together, Rich. Need... Oh, together."

Groaning, he opened his hand to bring his own cock closer to Stephen's. Was that whimper from him as the heads slid together?

Stephen twined their fingers together, gasping into his mouth as their hands began to move. "Oh! Yes... Yes."

Damn it was good. So hard and hot and desperately fucking needy and good. He pushed his hips, cock sliding along Stephen's as well as within their hands.

Stephen pushed deep into the kiss, hungry for him, humping their hands with quick, jerky motions, sobbing into his mouth as those green eyes devoured him. He felt consumed, eaten whole by Stephen's need.

Their hands slid over the heads of their cocks, squeezing, and Stephen came with a cry, body shaking, his name ringing through the room. His name like he was special, like he was responsible for Stephen's pleasure. Like Stephen meant it.

He cried out Stephen's name as he came, adding his own heat and liquid to the mess on their hands.

Stephen was still licking and moaning against his lips when the aftershocks faded. "I missed you, Rich."

"Stephen." Smiling, he slid his fingers along Stephen's face. Yeah, this was good.

Stephen sighed, nibbling at his fingers as they crossed near hungry lips. "Stay?"

"I was hoping you'd ask."

"Good." He got another kiss and then Stephen sat up long enough to clean them up, set the alarm, and turn off the light. Then Richard found his arms full of warm, familiar skin.

"You work on Saturdays?"

Stephen grinned at him. "I own a restaurant on my own. I work everyday. Don't worry, I won't wake you at 4, honest, and by 9, there'll be coffee and breakfast on the table."

"Sounds wonderful. And you can wake me at 4 for a quickie."

"Sounds perfect." He got a soft kiss and then Stephen nuzzled against his shoulder, almost immediately asleep.

He stroked the soft skin for a while, wondering at how fate had brought them back together and what it could mean. Eventually, his eyes dropped closed and his breathing slowed as he fell asleep and dreamed.

Bus Story ☀️

He was going to kick Benny's ass.

Kick it hard until that ungrateful, lying, thoughtless, faithless, little son of a bitch landed into next week. Maybe next month. If he was lucky, maybe next fucking year.

Benny sniffled beside him, the sound achingly familiar, and he almost reached for his handkerchief.

Almost.

But they weren't together anymore and Benny wasn't his problem and he didn't have to worry about him, didn't get to worry about him anymore because Benny had lots of friends and lots of fun and didn't need him anymore.

Didn't want stodgy, boring, no-tattoos, no-piercings, got a real job, old Jonathon.

Well, fine.

He reached up, pulled the stop-cord. He was getting off. Fuck, Benny and his tears and his green eyes and how good he smelled, even sweaty and hot.

He was already out the door before he'd realized Benny had followed him, coming down the stairs behind him. His fucking shadow. Just like old times.

He started down the sidewalk, steadfastly ignoring the boy behind him. Uncle Jerry'd given him two twenties for a bonus and he was gonna take himself to the Burger King and eat two double whoppers and take his soda home and watch the Matrix.

Twice.

Alone.

Damnit.

"How long you gonna ignore me for, J?" Benny's voice was small and nervous and full of the sniffles.

He stopped and sighed, still not turning around. "What do you want, Benny?"

"I just wanna spend some time with you, J. I missed you."

He closed his eyes, heart aching. "I..."

I miss you, Benny, so bad. So fucking bad. Every goddamned night for days and days, I've missed you, pretending I can still smell you on your pillow. Miss you. Need you.

"I'm going for supper and stuff. Nothing you'd be interested in."

"I could go with you." Benny came around in front of him, eyes still wet with tears. "I can pay my own, J

-- 'm not trying to scam food off you, I swear."

God, J loved him.

Still.

"Going to Burger King." He didn't say yes, but he couldn't say no and he ignored the flare of hope when Benny kept walking with him.

Benny's sniffles slowly faded and by the time they got to Burger Kind and Benny held the door open for him, the kid was almost bouncing.

"Thanks." He didn't say anything as they waited in line, just looked at Benny. The tattoo was still there, big as life. He'd thought maybe Benny'd cover it up, get rid of it sort of like they'd gotten rid of each other. By the time he ordered and got his food, he wasn't sure he could eat, his stomach was so tied up.

Benny sat across from him, leg wiggling ninety miles a minute, popping a french fry every now and then, or sipping from the big coke the kid had ordered. The kid was watching him, silent and steady.

He ate a quarter of his burger before he broke. "What do you want, Benny? Why are you here?"

"Told you. I miss you." Benny sipped some more of his coke, leg moving faster, making it look like he was vibrating.

"You're gonna make yourself sick, you don't stop jostling yourself." He took another bite of burger to keep his hands busy, to keep them from touching Benny's knee. "You been staying out of trouble?"

"I've been good, J. Caught a bit of courier work. I tried picking pockets, but every time I went to, I could hear your voice in my head, telling me off." Benny stopped wiggling and looked up at him. "Seems I hear you where ever I go."

He swallowed hard, meeting those sweet green eyes. "Really?"

Benny nodded, eyes begging, pleading. "I miss you so bad, J."

The kid's hand went up to his neck, sliding over the tattoo, rubbing absently.

Oh, God. Please God, say it's real and you're not teasing me, not punishing me or playing some nasty joke. 'Cause I love him, God. Really. Have since I met him. Never stopped, never figured out how. He realized he was touching his scars, motion matching Benny's. "Miss you, too, Benny. All the time."

Benny bit his lip and his eyes got really, really big. "Does that mean you're going to take me back, J?" Benny whispered the words, like saying them out loud would break some sort of spell.

"I never wanted you to leave. I... your pillow's still on the bed."

"Oh, J..." Tears filled Benny's eyes and he wiped at them. "I wanna come home, J. Please. Today. Now. I shoulda never left."

He stood up, saving his other burger for later, and picked up his soda. Benny was looking up at him with a stricken look. "Come on, then. Let's go home."

He couldn't kiss Benny or worry or think or nothing in a fucking Burger King.

"Oh! Oh, yes. Yes, J. Home." Benny bounded up and practically bounced out of the Burger King, keeping up with his longer steps easily.

He didn't think about what he was doing, about whether or not it was smart. J just thought about getting home, about getting Benny home.

About kissing Benny.

They made most of the trip in silence, Benny scurrying easily alongside him. As they climbed up the stairs to the second story apartment, Benny's hand slipped into his.

"Oh." He squeezed Benny's hand. "Missed you."

He unlocked the door, letting go of Benny's hand long enough to let him in the apartment.

Benny hung his skateboard on the special hook by the door and toed off his shoes, heading straight for the bed in the corner of the little apartment. "You really did keep my pillow on the bed."

"Yeah." He put the burger in the fridge, took off his boots. He didn't know what to do, what to say, how to make sure Benny stayed. Benny sniffled again, shoving his hands in his pockets and just standing there by the bed, looking lost.

"Can we... I mean..." He took a deep breath, hands clenched at his sides. "Oh, fuck. Benny, kiss me?"

"Oh yeah, J. Yeah." Benny moved over to him and raised his tear stained face and there was just a little spot of ketchup under his lip, just near the piercing. He leaned down, licked it off, moaning softly when the tartness of the ketchup disappeared and just left his Benny. Benny whimpered and the slight body leaned hard against him. "Oh, J..."

Lips pressing against his, Benny kissed him.

Oh, he'd missed this, missed Benny's flavor, missed Benny. He pushed deep, kissing Benny with all his passion, his need, his love. Benny's arms wound around his neck, tongue playing with his, giving back as good as he got.

They stumbled back toward the mattress, Benny pulling as much as he was pushing. Hands tugged at shirts and pants and looked for skin. Oh, so good. His Benny. His lover. Here. Home. He was so hard he hurt.

Benny's hand wrapped right around his cock, warm, tugging. "Oh, J. Fuck, you feel so good."

"Benny. Missed you so bad. Don't stop. Stay." He yanked Benny's loose pants down and away, pulling him close so they could feel each other's bodies.

Benny gasped, rubbing against him. "Gonna stay. Was stupid. No more."

Kisses punctuated each small phrase, Benny's hands sliding over his bare head.

"Promise?" He gathered Benny so close every part of them was touching, rocking together, putting the smell of Benny back into their bed.

"Promise, J. Not gonna leave you again." Benny moaned, arching tightly against him.

"Thank God." He rolled on top of Benny, hips sliding his cock against his lover's. It felt so good, too good and he wasn't going to last, was going to come.

Benny gasped, hands sliding to his ass and pulling him closer.

He pushed hard, tugging at the ring in Benny's lip with his teeth. When he came, he cried out Benny's name, shooting all over his lover's belly. Benny's body shook beneath him, more heat spreading between them.

"Love you, Benny. Missed you, you know? Missed this. Missed us." Now that they had come, that his body wasn't aching, he could talk. "It hurt me when you left, Benny. Bad."

"I know, J. I'm sorry." Benny worried at the ring in his lip with his tongue. "I'm really sorry."

"Me too." He touched his tongue to Benny's. "Just... if you're mad, stay. We'll fix it, but only together. Yeah?"

"Yeah, okay. Sure beats missing you so bad."

"Yeah." He didn't know what else to say, so he settled down and kissed his lover. "Wanna watch a movie? We can pretend we're necking in the theater..."

"Can we make love again after the movie?"

"Yeah. Yeah, Benny." He grinned. "During too, if you want. The Matrix has a great soundtrack."

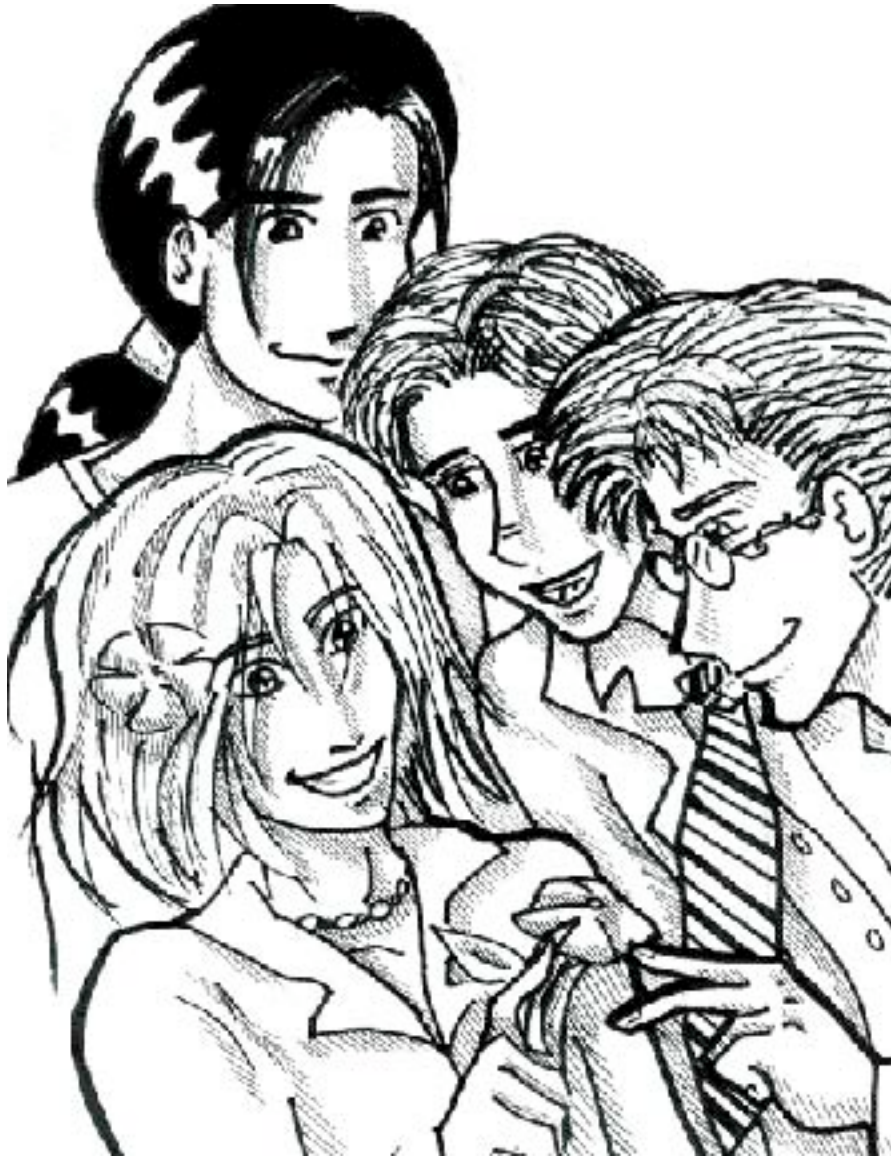
Benny giggled. "Long as you don't mind me shouting out 'Keanu' as I come."

Jonathon shook his head and laughed, swatting Benny's hip. "For that, you have to get up and make popcorn."

"Hey, I'd do worse for Keanu." Benny hightailed it out of bed before he could land another swat, laughing happily all the way to the cupboard.

He snuggled into Benny's pillow, breathing in deep, saying a little prayer of thanks, and turned on the movie.

The Bohemians



Quincy loved visiting the flower shop. It started with the name, high black letters on a white facing "Pistil and Stamen". It sounded dirty, raunchy, like nature at its most base.

It was a corner shop with huge glass windows on two sides. It always contained the most exquisite displays that must have taken hours to produce. There was a new one on the first of every month and the flowers were changed often enough that they were always fresh.

He walked in off the hot street into cool perfection. The air was soft and gentle against his skin, a light aria playing, soothing his ears, replacing the sounds of the street.

The owner, Stephan, was at the wide counter where he put together his amazing creations. The brown hair was mussed, glasses perched on the end of the aquiline nose. The countertop was scattershot with

color, flowers of all sorts and sizes spread out around the man and the vase at its center.

There were only three flowers in the vase so far, two purple tiger lilies and one yellow one in between them. Stephen was caressing the stem of the yellow flower, long, sensuous fingers sliding up and down the green tube as the man murmured.

Stephan looked up as he approached the counter and gave him a distracted smile. "Do you have a minute? I need to talk Tigra into letting me sit her with a few of her lesser brethren. They're such fussy children, yes?"

He smiled but didn't laugh as he had the first time he'd come into Stephan's shop. The man was a genius with flowers and it was well worth the time spent to be patient and wait for your very own customized creation.

"I'll just look around, see what kind of stock you've got in today."

Stephan beamed at him. "Wonderful! There's a half dozen buckets of wildflowers in the far fridge -- weeds some might say -- but the wild ones hold a beauty all their own."

His nod was wasted, Stephan already back to his coaxing among the flowers.

He made his way slowly over to the glassed fridge Stephan had indicated -- wildflowers wouldn't do for Barney's wife, but he'd been planning to pick himself up a bouquet for his own desk.

The masses of blooms were beautiful, mad colors everywhere. He'd picked out a nice, bright, cheery bunch, when a soft husky voice sounded.

"There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; pray, love, remember; and there is pansies, that's for thoughts." The accent was dead on, and he turned to see a clown in a purple tunic and multicolored pants, burnished hair wild, tied here and there with bits of strings.

"There's fennel for you, columbines; there's rue for you; and here's some for me. You must wear your rue with a difference. There's a daisy. I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died." Thin fingers plucked a stem from his bunch and he received a quick grin. "Happy day. Is our flower master in?"

He blinked and then blinked again when the apparition didn't disappear. "At the counter, trying to make the tiger lilies behave."

"Oh, they are growly beasts, aren't they?" A lilting laugh sounded and the slender man disappeared toward the counter. "Stephan, lily of the valley and master of blooms! Bright day! I come to deliver your lunch and see if my marigolds have arrived."

Stephan looked up from a much fuller vase with the same distracted look he'd been treated to earlier. "Topaz! I knew I'd forgotten something this morning. Leo sent you?" A small frown furrowed Stephan's brow. "He didn't want to come himself?"

"Don't be silly, daisy-head. He's in the middle of a piece and wanted to make sure you had your hummus and tabouleh. He says he'll be off early, though, to help you move the heavy buckets in the back."

Stephan's face cleared and Quincy could see the brown eyes glowing, even from here. "Thank you, Topaz. And your dancing marigolds are in line after Quincy's wildflowers. Of course if you gave him a hand you could have your dear ladies sooner."

"Anything for you, Stephan." Another soft giggle sounded and then the thin face appeared in front of him. "Can I help? I mean, besides quoting Ophelia, I can tell you the healing medicines in the flowers

you're holding and read your palm and make them all pretty in a vase."

"You can make my palm and the flowers look pretty in a vase?" He let one eyebrow quirk. "I'm afraid I'm going to need the palm attached to my arm if I'm going to get anything done."

Oh, he was flirting. He'd promised himself he wouldn't do that anymore.

That grin widened and his hand was patted. "Oh, okay. If you insist. I'll leave the palm attached. You have beautiful eyes. I like them. What color vase?"

"I usually let Stephan work his magic," he admitted. "You look like you might have magic, too."

Way to stop flirting there, Quince. Not to mention this guy was all wrong for him. Not at all his type. And you've done so well with your type in the past, taunted a little voice.

"Oh. I do. My magic's a little different than Stephan's, but it works. It works." The quick fingers pulled out a cobalt vase. "To go with your eyes."

"As long as you put in something to match yours."

"There I'm done -- do you two need help?" called Stephan.

"No, daisy. We're fine." Topaz smiled up at him. "I think we're just fine."

"Yeah." He nodded, smiling, feeling himself start to fall for that smile. Fuck, he'd just never learn, would he?

"Excellent." The smile that answered him was all warmth, all peace. "Come sit down and we'll make art. What's your name? When's your birthday?"

"Does that make a difference to the arrangement?" he asked, following this very strange pied piper.

The man found a spot on the concrete, pulling a square of fabric out to settle on. "Of course it does! The flowers should resonate with you. Come on, sit!"

Grinning, he did, not quite sure whether he was being conned or not. "Quincy Williams and my birthday is the third of June."

"A Gemini!" Snowdrops got added to the vase. "A twin. How clever, how fun!"

"I'm an only child."

"You are? Were you lonely?" Columbines, pastel and fragile, went in next. "I was an only child."

He thought about it for a moment -- no one had ever asked him the question before. "No -- I was spoiled and cosseted, but I wasn't lonely. Not then."

"Are you lonely now?" One bright blue daisy was added, nestled into the pale blooms.

They'd somehow gone from light and flirting to was he lonely now and he wasn't quite sure how they'd gotten there or how much of himself he was willing to reveal. There was something about this man though... maybe it was the crazy pigtails. "Yeah. I guess I am."

"Yeah." Almond-shaped eyes the color of dark honey shone at him. "There's a cure for that. Geminis need friends. It's good for air signs."

"Oh? And what's your sign?" He blushed hard as the words passed his lips. Had he really said *that*?

The odd little man laughed happily. "Pisces, Gemini rising. Very fun, yes?"

"Does that mean you'd make a good friend?" he asked, embarrassment giving way to the man's laughter. The man was infectious, in a good way, and he had to bite his tongue to keep from asking him out. He asked a different question instead. "And what about your name? What is it?"

"Topaz." A series of delicate brown flowers were interspersed amongst the blue. "And I'm a great friend. No question. I love to play."

"Topaz... it suits you." And it did, it fit with the odd way the man was dressed and coiffed. "I haven't played in a long time. I hope I haven't forgotten how."

Those eyes fastened onto him. "I don't believe you could. Your eyes want to be happy."

"Yours want to have fun."

He lowered his eyes to the vase, gasping a little at the arrangement. It was wild and free and shouldn't have worked, but it did. Kind of like Topaz himself.

"You like?" He wasn't sure if Topaz meant the arrangement or those eyes.

It didn't matter though because his answer was the same either way. "I do."

He looked back up, met Topaz' eyes.

"Yeah, Gemini. I do too." Those thin fingers grabbed some twine and a bit of this and that from deep pockets and a simple adornment was on the vase, a blue bead and a tiger's eyes hanging on a bit of copper wire.

He reached out, brushing his fingers over it. "Thank you."

"You're welcome." His fingers were touched, caressed. "If you decide to play, I'm at the Loft -- the artist's co-op -- in the weaver's shop. I'm very interested."

"I've got your marigolds, Sunshine," Stephan called out. "And a lovely cluster of crocuses for my Leo."

He started at the sound of Stephan's voice, but found a smile for Topaz. "I have a feeling I'll be seeing you there."

"I would enjoy that." He was handed his vase and then Topaz stood, and headed towards, Stephan, singing, "For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy."

He went in the same direction more slowly, freezing as Stephan laughed and grabbed Topaz by his neck, taking a happy kiss.

"Now, now. What would your mountain man think?" Topaz smiled and hugged Stephan. "Bright blessings, Daisy. And Gemini, do come to play, please? Your eyes are addictions!"

With that, the whirlwind disappeared out the door with a laugh.

Stephan gave him a smile and he thought the man was going to say something about him and Topaz, but the brown eyes lighted on his flowers.

"Oh! How wonderful! The perfect combination. They suit you. And what do you want for the boss'

wife? Something big and showy I'll bet. I just got in some orchids in the most brilliant colors."

And just like that the moment was gone. It was probably for the best, Topaz wasn't his type, he had a horrible track record and the last guy he'd been seeing had taken out his heart and stomped it into little tiny pieces. Okay, so that was a bit melodramatic, but it had hurt and he'd declared it the last straw.

Still, nine months was a long time for a man to be celibate and he couldn't help hoping that something might come of the flirting. Or maybe it was just the wildflowers and Mozart lending him some optimism.

Chapter Two

He parked the bicycle in the back yard and backed into the kitchen, bags in hand. "Daisy? Ku? I brought tomatoes and cilantro and some spinach on my way home from Rosa's. They had beautiful honeydews, too."

Grinning Leonaka grabbed the sacks with huge, calloused hands, shiny black hair held back in a braid. "What did she say, Topaz?"

He sighed, heading for the refrigerator for some tea. "She said I have to wait for him to come to me. That the spirits want me to be patient and calm." He poured a glass and then brought the pitcher to the table, refreshing Leo's and Stephan's before kissing Stephan's cheek. "I don't *do* patient so well, Daisy."

Topaz settled into a padded chair, watching Leo wash the food in the bright, sun-drenched kitchen. One of the kittens climbed up for her love, his fingers stroking her soft ears without hesitation.

Stephan smoothed the edge of Leo's t-shirt down with graceful fingers and then came over and began to rub his shoulders. "You don't do patient well? Leo, do you believe that?"

"Little bit, I have seen you sit for hours and hours, untangling a single skein of thread. You might be eager, but you are the most patient man I know." Leo chuckled, gaze warm. "He's that special?"

Topaz relaxed under Stephan's magical fingers, the worries and negative energy of the day fading. "You should see his eyes, Ku. There's something about them. Something I want to know all about."

"They are a pretty blue," Stephan added. "I haven't seen you this excited about someone in a long time, Sunshine."

"Oh, Daisy. It's been so long since I had a soul mate. Someone who looked at me like Leo looks at you." He turned his head, kissed Stephan's fingers. "I know you two love me, but part of my heart is missing. Maybe making those eyes laugh is a piece of that."

He heard Ku's soft cluck, the worried sound that meant that Leo was sure he was leaping into open air without a net. Again.

Stephan's hands tightened on his shoulders and then pet him gently, his friend sitting next to him. "How can we help, Sunshine?"

"Rosa did my cards, Daisy. She says he'll come. That I should be still." Topaz grinned over, taking Stephan's hand in his. "That doesn't mean we can't let the universe know I'm interested though. I'm thinking some long meditations, a cleansing bath, a few candles lit in hope." He gave Stephan a grin. "Maybe some more wildflowers?"

Stephan grinned back, brown eyes dancing. "From you? Or anonymously? I could start small -- a single marigold and work up to romantic. Something every day."

Leo started chopping, knife flashing in the sunlight. "And beads, I think. A blue one for memory. Violet for love. Ruby for passion."

"Perfect," murmured Stephan, fingers sliding over the cloth on the table, tracing the patterned stitching. "Your Gemini with the blue eyes will be coming for you in no time."

The scent of roasting tomatoes and basil filled the air, the kiss of garlic behind it. "With your magic behind me, Daisy? I don't doubt."

Brown eyes found him, Stephen's hand reaching out to trace his cheek, Stephan never quite trusting his eyes to tell him the whole story. "Anything for you, Sunshine."

Oh, he loved them. Loved them both dearly and couldn't manage without. He dropped an open-mouthed kiss onto Stephan's palm. "You're the best of me, you and your mountain man."

The kitten -- Cerridwen, he thought it was, though it might have been Hera -- chose that moment to stretch up, peek into Stephan's hand and rub her little cheek, adding her touch with a mew. Leo's chuckle filled the kitchen. "Someone grab the plates and someone else pull the bread out. Supper's on."

Stephan's fingers lingered for a moment longer and then a kiss was dropped on his head. "I'll get the plates. Those nice mosaic once Dehafra made, the pattern on them really is lovely."

Stephan moved with his usual grace, hands sliding over Leo as he passed his lover.

Topaz put the kitten into her basket with her siblings and went to wash his hands, grabbing the loaf of peasant bread and a ceramic tub of honey butter, sampling the pasta while his best friends lost themselves in a kiss.

Stephan looked more than a little dazed when they broke apart, setting the plates on the table with a soft smile and faraway eyes.

He started singing, something sweet and sexy he'd learned at some ren faire, teasing his friends as they got ready for supper. Soon his Gemini would be here, would see this, would come play. Soon.

Chapter Three

Stephan locked up the shop, pocketing the keys, and made his way down the block. It was early evening, a light breeze carrying the smell of lilacs on it. He stopped in the middle of the sidewalk and closed his eyes, breathing in deeply and listening to the evening birds beginning their song just below the sound of the street itself.

It was late enough that the bulk of rush hour traffic had left the downtown core and the people walking were out and about shopping, going for supper. Laughter and happy chatter and the smell of lilacs and the hyacinths in his basket.

Lovely.

He opened his eyes and continued his way on down to The Loft to pick up Leo and Topaz.

The front door was open, inviting the smells and breezes and passers-by in.

"Hello lovers," he called out.

The soft clack-clack of the loom answered him, Topaz's happy cry of "Daisy-love!" echoing through the tall wooden ceilings

Leo's lower rumble sounded, those rich almost-black eyes shining from the display where he was placing two new vases -- one bright green, one a delicious rose red.

"Oh, lover, I must have the red one for my peach roses!"

He made his way to Leo, reaching for the vase, eager to learn its textures.

Topaz's laughter was warm, so happy. "I told you, Ku! I knew he'd fall in love with it."

Leo handed the smooth, round vase over, the crackled texture fabulous and intriguing. His lover leaned toward him and offered a slow, deep kiss. "I thought of you as I formed it, your cries when you come."

"Oh..." A shiver went through him and he held the vase close so that he didn't drop it.

"I'm going to use it for my peach roses in the window and then I will use it as the base of a bouquet for lovers -- pass the happiness on, yes lover?"

He put the vase back and slid his hand along Leo's cheek, fingertips picking up the slightest hint of stubble.

"Yes, my Stephan-love." Leo's eyes were warm. "By then I will have made you another. How was your day?"

"Delightful. I do love spring." He gave Leo another soft kiss, licking the lovely lips before heading over to run his fingers over Topaz' latest masterpiece.

"A blue-eyed boy came in today. Asked if I could tell him anything about his secret admirer. The one who'd been sending flowers." He smiled at Topaz. "I told him he knew who it was -- he just needed to give it some thought."

Those honey eyes lit up and Topaz's thin cheeks bloomed with color. "Yeah? I dreamed about him last night, asked him to come to me."

"He will, Sunshine. If he's the right one, he will." He turned his attention to the loom. "Oh, Sunshine! This is absolutely gorgeous!"

Topaz beamed at him, fingers flying over the blue-green shimmering cloth. It was almost alive, so rich, so beautiful. "You like? It called to me."

"It's like a piece of the sky, Sunshine. Just perfect."

He got a grin, wild and free and wholly Topaz, the joy pouring from those eyes.

"Um... hello?"

He turned, eyes widening along with his smile as Quincy St-William walked into The Loft.

He beamed at Topaz. "There's your Gemini," he whispered, stepping back so he wasn't blocking Quincy's view

"Oh." Topaz smiled up at Quincy, cheekbones flushed crimson. "Quincy. Hello! You found your way! I'm so glad."

Quincy's expression went from hesitant to smiling and he came forward a few steps. "It was you then! The uh... flowers I mean."

"It. I..." Oh, how lovely! Topaz was lit up, glowing with pleasure. "Yes. Yes. You liked them?"

"I did." Quincy came a little closer. "The first day I was pleased and a little intrigued, but by today... I knew I had to find you."

"I didn't do the arrangements, Stephan did." So honest, their Sunshine. "But I meant them, Gemini."

Leo's hand slid down his arm, pulling him gently into that wide, warm body as they watched.

He leaned back against his lover, trusting that Leo wouldn't let him fall. He still had his basket, the sweet smell of the hyacinths gentle beneath the yarn and the clay and ash and heat of the store.

"Thank you... Topaz, right?"

"You are more welcome than flowers in May. How are you doing, Quincy? Having a good day?" Topaz's joy was infectious and he heard Leo's low chuckle, felt it tickle his spine.

"Yeah, I am actually." Quincy's smile grew. "In fact it's getting better and better all the time."

Oh, the boy was entranced with their Sunshine, and who could blame him?

"He's got a good smile, lover. And Topaz was right, those eyes are something else." Leo's whisper was soft, meant only for him, wide hands wreathing his waist.

He raised his head to whisper back. "Should we invite him for dinner? Take the pressure off, or will we cramp Sunshine's style?"

"Let's do dinner. We can retire early and let our Topaz have him." Leo nibbled his ear, teeth sharp and sweet. "I hope this is the one, lover. Topaz has been aching for him."

"I know. I worry for him, that he's casting his net into any waters rather than the right ones." He rubbed back against his lover and then stepped forward, both Topaz and Quincy turning toward him. "Well,

lovelies, if you two can stand the company of an old married couple, we'd love to have you join our hyacinths at the table."

Topaz gave him a soft, besotted grin. "Quincy, you know Stephan. This is his partner, Leonaka Mahaulu. Ku, this is the one I've been telling you about."

Leo nodded and smiled. "How do you feel about mahi-mahi?"

"Is that a kind of flower?" asked Quincy.

He laughed. "Oh, no. It is a most delicious fish meal that my Leo makes. One of Sunshine's favorites."

Quincy blushed. "Oh. I'm sorry. Maybe I should come and try it, so next time I'll know."

Topaz slid fine, thin fingers over Quincy's cheeks. "You should. We can pick up bread and some pasta salad on the way home."

"Wonderful! That's all settled then. Leo and I will take the short route and get the flowers arranged while you take the long way."

He took Leo's hand.

"Can you get something sweet for after and some cranberry muffins for tomorrow morning, little bit?" Leo pulled him close, lips on his jaw. "I'll get the grill warming."

Topaz nodded, putting the loom to bed for the night. "Bread, pasta, cranberry muffins and dessert. Got it."

"And butter." Leo nibbled a bit.

"Butter." Topaz was giggling. "Cat food, toilet paper, toothpaste?"

"Oh, we need all those," he murmured, fingers sliding through Leo's hair. If Topaz and Quincy shopped there would be time for a quick one on the table.

"You all live together?" Quincy was frowning, as if trying to work something out.

"We cohabitate. I have the garage and the apartment above. Ku and Daisy have the upstairs of the house. We share the kitchen and the living areas." Topaz chuckled, making a quick list on the palm of his hand. "The yards belong to Stephan and the cats."

"Oh, okay." Quincy's face cleared up, all smiles now.

Stephan smiled back, trying not to worry. Would they lose their Sunshine to this man? He wanted Topaz to be happy, but he didn't want to lose their lover either.

Topaz nodded and then came to give parting kisses, the touches familiar and warm, first his and then Leo's. "We won't hurry. See you at home, lovelies."

"Later, Sunshine."

The frown had resurfaced on Quincy's face, but Stephan let it go from his mind as he and Leo left the shop. Topaz would set Quincy straight and if there was a problem, better that it surface immediately rather than choke out the flower later. Although he had a hunch that it was already later for Topaz.

Chapter Four

Quincy watched as Topaz finished clearing up his space, the little man poking his head into one of the back rooms to let 'Liandra' know that the storefront was emptied out of people who could act as salesclerks.

Today Topaz was in royal blue, the material soft and flowing, clinging to the golden skin as he moved. "Are you walking or driving, Gemini? I have a bicycle with a basket, but there's a spare, if you want to ride and have I told you your eyes look happy today?"

He blinked at the quick shifts in conversation, but was still smiling by the time Topaz paused for a breath. "I'm walking and I don't think I'd fit in your bicycle basket and you just did," he replied, chuckling as he answered the questions in order.

He was gifted with a happy giggle and a soft, gentle kiss. "We'll walk together then. Oh, Gemini, I'm so glad you came."

He licked his lips, tasting the hint of something wild and sweet. "Are you?" he asked quietly. "I mean... you looked pretty well hooked up already is all."

"Hooked up?" Topaz tilted his head, blinking. "I don't... Oh! You mean Daisy and Ku! We're lovers, the three of us, but Stephan and Leo... they're partners, soul mates. I love them, they love me, but... there's something about your eyes I can't let loose, Gemini. There's something magical."

Oh. No one had ever called him magical before. He was going to fall for this one, just like he had for all the others. He just never did learn, did he? He gave Topaz a smile. "Lets go shopping."

Thin fingers slid into his and squeezed for a second. "Yeah. Let's. What's your favorite dessert of all time, Gemini?"

"Ever? Banana Split." He didn't even have to think about it. He didn't have one very often because it was a kiddy dessert, but it was still his number one favorite. He did surprise himself by admitting it though -- he'd learned to keep it, like his first name, to himself.

"Oh, cool! What kinds of ice cream? Just vanilla or three different ones? I like cherry nut ice cream best." Topaz led him outside, voice soft and happy, almond-shaped eyes watching him like he was fascinating.

Oh, Topaz was going to be hard to lose. And if he kept dwelling on the inevitable ending, he wasn't going to enjoy the ride.

"Yeah? For me it's always been the traditional split. A whole banana, sliced down the middle with three scoops of vanilla ice cream between them, strawberry sauce on one scoop, caramel on another and hot chocolate fudge on the one in the middle, chopped peanuts and a maraschino cherry on each ball of ice cream."

He was suddenly craving a good old-fashioned sundae -- it had been ages since he'd indulged.

"Mm... sounds good. We could get the stuff for them at the store." A wicked grin flashed up at him. "Or we could stop and split one now, a pre-shopping snack."

"Really? You don't think it's childish to still want to sit down in an ice-cream shop and have a sundae? I usually get all sticky," he warned, already heading them across the street toward Aunt Bevie's Olde Fashioned Shoppe.

"Did you know that 5 year olds laugh out loud an average of 400 times a day, Gemini? Adults only 15."

"We've got 385 laughs to catch up on just *today*." Topaz was grinning ear to ear. "I think a sundae's the perfect place to start."

And laugh he did, Topaz' bright smile and happy attitude infectious. "I've got to warn you -- I might hog the banana." He winked.

"Just so long as I get my share of nuts..." They were laughing as they ordered the ice cream -- with two spoons and a big glass of water. The little teenager behind the counter seemed to recognize Topaz, asking about the shop and something about a drumming circle. "That's tomorrow, Jennie. You tell your mom that I've got some new yarns that she might like, would you?"

He paid for the sundae and they went and sat at a table in the corner where they could see the street and still feel private. He didn't want to be rude, but now that they had the sundae in front of him, he couldn't wait to dig in.

So he did, cutting the banana with his spoon and adding some ice cream and a bit of each sauce to it before sliding the spoon into his mouth.

Sheer bliss. He moaned just a little.

"Oh..." Topaz watched him closely. "Do that again. Please."

"What? Eat the sundae? Don't worry, I will -- more than my share I imagine," he said with a chuckle.

"Oh, Gemini, watching you eat it is going to be a deep, involving religious experience." Topaz gathered some whipped cream on one finger, licking it clean. "Yummy."

He'd been about to make a joke about Topaz needing a TV or something if watching him eat was so special, but found his attention caught by that tongue working Topaz' finger. "Yeah. Yummy."

"Want some?" That finger dipped in again, offered over to his lips without so much as a blush.

He moaned again, body going tight. Leaning forward he opened his mouth and took Topaz' finger in, eyes never leaving the bright ones gazing at him. "Unquestionably a religious experience." Sweet and soft, Topaz's fingertip was smooth on his tongue.

He wrapped his lips around it and started sucking. He was hard, cock throbbing in time with the pulls he was taking on Topaz' finger. Those warm eyes flared, Topaz breathing with him, completely focused on him. A pale pink tongue slid out, traced over that full bottom lip.

Jesus, why were they in a store? Why were they in public?

He pulled his mouth off Topaz' finger and focused down on the banana split, trying to catch his breath.

Topaz took up the spoon -- his spoon -- and took a bite. "It's good. Very good. Did you know your eyes change color when you're hard? They get darker."

His mouth dropped open. "How did you know?"

"I was looking at them. They went from one color to the other, just like that." Topaz scooped up a bite of ice cream and popped it into his mouth.

He chuckled and blushed. "That's not what I meant."

As Topaz knew anyway, he reached down and adjusted himself so his pants didn't feel quite so constricting and then quickly started to eat.

"Oh? Oh! The hard part? Your breathing. That's one way to know, and the flush." Topaz ate another bite. "If we were sitting closer, you could probably smell me, feel that you made my skin hot."

"You're something else..." He wanted to touch, so he reached out and slid his fingers along the back of Topaz' free hand. Oh, that hadn't been a good idea because now he really wanted to keep touching and they were still in public.

Topaz turned his hand over and tangled their fingers together. "I'm just me. Would you be insulted if I told you I wanted to kiss you and taste you with the ice cream? I know we can't. I just thought you should know I want to."

Jesus. Fuck. He was going to cream in his fucking jeans any minute. And it wasn't just what Topaz was saying, it was the way he was saying it, the look in his eyes, the way he conveyed that every word was absolutely meant.

"I wouldn't be insulted at all. Of course you'd have to taste me some other time too when there wasn't any ice cream. Baseline comparisons are important."

Oh, he was flirting again, only this time it was leading to something and it felt good and fun.

"Absolutely. Although I love the way you smell, so you'll taste good to me. We'll have to try with honey and apples, too. *Excellent* for kisses."

He chuckled. "What about peanut butter?" Oh he was having such fun. "Would you stick to the roof of my mouth?"

He got a bright laugh, Topaz clapping. "I don't know! We'll have to have a test. Will I melt in your mouth or your hands?"

"Both if I'm doing it right," he murmured, almost breathless.

"Oh." Topaz's thumb brushed over his hand. "That is a lovely answer. I imagine your eyes would steal my soul if I looked in them while you came. You have good hands, though. My soul would be safe."

He closed his eyes, a shudder going through him.

Banana splits were never going to be the same again.

"Hey, want to see a trick?" He looked up as Topaz grabbed a cherry and popped it into that pretty mouth, stem and all. Topaz wiggled his nose and winked and then stuck out his tongue, stem tied into a knot.

His mouth dropped open again. "I thought that was just something they pretended to do in movies!" He reached for the cherry. "A tongue that can do that has some major potential."

"It's a handy skill." Topaz chuckled. "And I got the cherry, too."

"Maybe we could share it," he murmured, voice husky as he imagined eating half the cherry from Topaz' mouth.

"I would like that, Gemini." Serious again, serious and so sure.

He nodded. Yes, so would he. Very much.

"I think the ice cream is all melted," he whispered.

"Yeah." Topaz nodded, eyes unwavering. "I want you, Quincy."

He nodded, insides melting. If Topaz fucked as good as he talked? He was lost.

He looked around almost as if he expected a bed to suddenly materialize along with walls or something.

Topaz squeezed his hand, bringing his knuckles up to be kissed. "Come on. Let's go shop and go to the house. We know what we want and, if you want, after dinner you can see my bed. You'll look good in it."

"I'd like that very much."

He stood up and threw out the mess that had been their banana split.

When he turned for the garbage, Topaz's lips met his in a quick, chaste, sweet kiss. "Thank you, Gemini."

He stroked Topaz' cheek. "Thank *you*."

"Shopping and then home. I need a real kiss." He got a quick smile and a chuckle. "I'll buy peanut butter while we're out."

Chapter Five

The mahi-mahi was perfect, the weather cooperative, the patio the perfect temperature. The candles flickered and the hibiscus scented the yard.

Leo stretched back, watching Stephan with a tiny grin. They'd managed to wipe off any telltale assprints from table, counter and kitchen sink before Topaz brought the newcomer home.

Life was good.

Stephan was flitting from flowerbed to flowerbed, stroking each blossom, speaking gently to the buds, admiring and admonishing and coaxing. His lover was convinced the flowers listened and, given how well the gardens grew, he would not be surprised to find out it were true.

Topaz brought Quincy in through the gate and Stephan changed the course of his path, going to them and welcoming them in with a wide smile.

"Hey Daisy-love. I found you that key lime pie you like. Smells like heaven, Ku. Pure heaven." Topaz sounded dreamy, lost, drunk and giddy.

He would worry more if it weren't so common.

Quincy looked a little shell-shocked, but Stephan was welcoming him, taking his arm and leading him to the table. "You must be starving! I know I am. Although the temptation is to have the pie to start."

Stephan glanced over at him, brown eyes dancing behind the glasses.

"And you, my lover, are too well-acquainted with temptation for comfort." He stood and shook Quincy's hand. "Can it be true? Did our spirit-led boy lead you on his odd dance he calls shopping and you survived intact? Stephan, this man is blessed by the gods."

Topaz's laugh filled the air, one bright orange gerbera daisy tucked behind one ear as he bowed. "Indeed he did and well, too. He's a natural."

"It was fun," declared Quincy. Oh, the man was already caught if he could say that.

Stephan laughed. "The words shopping and my Leo don't mix together well and he plans his shopping moments like a military strike -- in and out and any deviation from the plan sends him into utter panic."

His Stephan came to him, laughing up at him, hands sliding automatically over him.

He bent for a kiss, tongue pressing deep as Topaz's laughter sounded again, light and giddy.

Stephan melted against him and he could feel his lover's cock twitch, knew it would take little more to make Stephan forget all about their guests and the mahi-mahi.

A sliver of ice slid down the back of his pants and he jumped, growling at Topaz, who stood and grinned on the far side of the table. "You're being rude, Leo. Quit making out in front of Gemini without sharing."

He stuck out his tongue. "Why can't you go for the neck like a normal person, little bit?"

"Can't reach, mountain man. Should I get the tea pitcher?"

Evil little bastard -- Leo grinned and gave Stephan another quick kiss.

A soft rose painted Stephan's cheeks. "I'm sorry you two, Leo just makes my heart go and my mind disappear. Please, sit, be at home, eat."

Topaz chuckled. "No stress, Daisy. I'm just playing. You look so pretty when you blush." Leo watched as clever almond eyes flashed up at Quincy. "Do you? Blush for me, Gemini, and let me see."

Right on cue the poor man's cheeks flooded with color.

"Sunshine! Behave!" Stephan patted the man's hand. "Have some fish, Quincy."

"Wild, like sunrise, and rich." Topaz took a piece of fish in his fingers and fed Quincy. Leo looked over at Stephan with an arched eyebrow. Besotted.

Stephan smiled at him and guided him down to his chair. "Eat, lover -- you need your strength."

"Do I?" He sat, drawing Stephan down with him. "I thought I'd already earned my supper, lover."

"Oh you have, but what about dessert?" Stephan's eyes twinkled at him, the long fingers finding a piece of fish and offering it to him.

"Mm..." He nibbled at the firm flesh of the fish, lips teasing his lover's fingers. "Key lime pie. That is an incentive."

"Technically we brought the dessert," Quincy pointed out. "Oh. Not that I meant. I..."

Topaz giggled, leaning against Quincy's side. "Of course, we had our dessert already, didn't we, Gemini?"

Quincy's smile grew, the man appearing as besotted as Topaz.

"Oh?" Stephan sat up, attention turning from him to their dinner companions. "You must share what's put that look on your face, Sunshine."

"Whipped cream and cherries and bright blue eyes, Daisy." Topaz fit well in the crook of Quincy's arm.

"Oh, Quince -- he didn't show you his cherry trick already!" Stephan laughed, the sound bright. "You'll have all his secrets discovered in no time."

Leo nodded. "He can make balloon animals and cooks the best baklava on earth."

Stephan giggled. "And when he's aroused he smells like lilacs and sandalwood."

Quincy's color was back, but he didn't look scared off.

Topaz ate a cherry tomato, then a spear of asparagus. "You forgot the important stuff. I love pineapple juice and strawberry smoothies, I love to swim and rabbit fur makes me itchy."

"I like swimming, too," said Quincy. "There's a pool in my building. You should come sometime. Over I mean. To swim."

"I'd love that." Topaz stood suddenly, and held out a hand. "Come see my room, Gemini?"

Leo grinned, shook his head. Topaz held out longer than he'd thought. He owed Stephan a massage.

"Breakfast for four at nine, lovelies?" asked Stephan.

Topaz nodded, eyes still fastened to Quincy's. "Perfect, Daisy-love."

"Thank you for dinner," murmured Quincy, hand sliding into Topaz's. They might not have been there for all these two saw anything outside the color of each other's eyes.

"You're welcome," laughed Stephan, his lover's voice bright with happiness.

He nodded, grinning over at his Stephan. "Good night. We'll see you in the morning."

"Night," said Quincy, the dear lad still trying to be polite.

Then Stephan's shining eyes turned to him and Topaz and Quincy were forgotten.

"You never finished your mahi-mahi, lover -- you're going to give out half-way through my massage."

He laughed, tugging Stephan into his lap. "No one ate much tonight, did they? What do you think, lover? Is our Sunshine in good hands?"

Stephan's arms looped around his neck, fingers playing through his hair. "I don't know, Leo. That one carries a lot of hurt in his heart. It is too late now though, isn't it? Topaz has already given away his heart."

"He offers it around like it's unbreakable." He leaned his forehead against Stephan's. "I worry about him."

"And that is why he will be okay, lover -- we will never let him fall too far. His safety net as he soars, yes?"

"Yes, my love." He smiled, bringing their lips together. "So wise. So beautiful."

Stephan murmured, tongue sliding briefly into his lips. "You're just trying to get out of paying your debt."

"I will spend the rest of my life touching you." He ran his hands up Stephan's spine. "That debt is easily paid."

Stephan arched, body dancing for him. "Too many clothes, lover."

"Mmm... here?" He nodded, tugging Stephan's shirt off, fingers sliding over taut nipples.

"Oh... yes, Leo." Stephan stretched, reaching up for the sky, body moving gracefully into each touch.

He leaned down, teeth fastening over one peaked bit of flesh and tugging. His lover tasted of herbs and roses, fresh water and sunshine.

Stephan cried out, hands sliding over his scalp, belly rippling.

Perfect. He pulled harder, hands cupping Stephan's ass.

Stephan wriggled in his grasp, rubbing against his hands, so wanton and wanting.

"Love you. Stephan. Love." He squeezed, purring against perfect skin.

"Oh, Leo, yes! Love you so."

"Want you to ride me. Want to hear you cry out in the wind."

A shudder moved through the lithe body and his lover nodded. "Oh yes, Leo, please. I would like that very much."

He unbuttoned his trousers, freeing his cock. "Need you, lover. Need your heat."

Stephan's eyes glittered, the long, clever fingers sliding over his prick, tracing the veins, relearning the shape, collecting the liquid that slid from the tip.

"Stephan." His head fell back, throat working as his balls tightened.

"I love you," murmured Stephan, mouth closing over the pulse point in his neck, fingers circling his cock, stroking.

He whimpered and shifted, begging for more, for everything. "Love you. Stephan. Oh, I ache for you."

Stephan reached for his hand and brought it to his lover's mouth, sucking in two of his fingers. He panted, hips pulsing in time with that sweet mouth, cock throbbing in Stephan's hand.

"Wait for me, lover," Stephan murmured as his fingers slid out of Stephan's mouth. Stephan undid the drawstring pants, managing to push the linen out of the way and bring his fingers to the hot little hole.

"Stephan..." He curled his fingers, pushing into his lover. His body shuddered, his cry mingling with his lover's as heat washed over him.

Stephan danced on his fingers, eyes burning into him, a soft, joyous smile on Stephan's face.

"Forever. I want to watch that look forever."

Stephan only gasped, hand squeezing his prick hard. He leaned forward, taking a long, hard kiss. "Please. Now, love. Now."

Stephan rose up and his fingers slipped from the tight passage. Then his lover was guiding his cock to that hot hole, Stephan's body pulling him in.

"Oh, love..." Stephan's eyes rolled back and a shudder passed through the slender body.

"Yes." Leo wrapped his hands around Stephan's waist, mouth finding the smooth throat, tongue sliding over saltsweet skin.

"Leo." The moan was sweet and needy, presaging Stephan's moving up and coming back down again, his lover riding him with abandon.

He moved up into each thrust, the cushion sliding beneath him, toes gripping the ground as they made love, the night wind cool and sweet on his skin where Stephan's heat didn't kiss.

Stephan's hands wandered, pushing his shirt up, fingers playing over his nipples and tracing the scarring at his hips and along his sides. Sweet noises began to fill the air, the song of their love. Stephan rested in his hands, the most precious body in the world trusting him to love and support, to care. "Love you. My Stephan. Love you so."

Stephan cried out his love to the sky, seed splashing between them as the heat around his cock rippled.

He shuddered, letting himself go, letting his need fly free, eyes filled with stars.

Stephan collapsed against him, nuzzling into his neck, warm and pliant. He held his lover close, humming

soft and low. He rocked Stephan, focused on the sweet beating of that heart.

"I love you, Leonaka." Soft licks and kisses painted his neck.

"Mm... I love you, Stephan." He smiled as the lights went off in Topaz's rooms. "What shall we do for breakfast, lover?"

"Each other?" Stephan asked, eyes still glazed and full of love.

"You always have the best plans."

Stephan laughed softly and went back to nuzzling and kissing. His lover stopped suddenly several minutes later. "Did you mean to eat, with Topaz and his Gemini?"

Leo chuckled. "Yes, my love. Although your plan is much more appealing."

Stephan laughed. "Well do each other first then, lover, and then we'll go to the market and pick up fresh rolls to go with the muffins."

"Then we can come home, play in the shower and then eat?" He nipped Stephan's full lower lip, hugging tight.

"You see? I'm not the only one with good plans!"

"You inspire me." He stretched, sliding out of the heat of Stephan's body. "Let's put the food away and go take a bath, love."

"Yes, Leo." Stephan stood and stretched, letting his pants fall around his ankles. Stepping out of them, Stephan headed for the flowerbeds. "Let me just say goodnight to my pretties."

He watched the sweet curve of Stephan's ass for a second before beginning to gather the dishes, leaving his own butterfly to flit among the blossoms.

Chapter Six

He'd shown Quincy the loom, the wall hangings. He'd shown off the yarn room and the little niche where Moira and her kittens slept. He'd shown the long circular stairway leading up into his bower.

His room was a riot of blues and greens, a nest, really. The bed took up three-quarters of the room, piled high with blankets and pillows, surrounded by a hand-woven green netting, dried herbs woven into the cloth.

His clothes and books were kept in handmade baskets, strewn over the floor. The effect was peaceful, oceanic and quiet. Beautiful. His.

Almost as beautiful as those sweet eyes.

"This is my room, Gemini."

"Wow, it certainly is different -- colorful." Quincy wandered around, glancing into the baskets.

"It's a good place." He relaxed against the doorframe, watching Quincy look. The baskets on the walls held crystals and herbs, cds and candles, little pieces of pottery and his pincushion collection.

Quincy turned to him and smiled. "It suits you."

"Is that a good thing?" He smiled back, moving towards Quincy. "Can I have my kiss now?"

He'd been very patient and very good and he was very tired of waiting.

"Only if it can be more than just a kiss." Quincy's eyes were dark, lids heavy.

"As much as you want, Gemini. I want you." He moved into Quincy's arms, lifting up for a kiss.

Quincy's hand slid along his cheek into his hair, mouth lowering slowly, as if his Gemini were savoring the moments leading to their first real kiss. Finally their lips were together, Quincy's mouth pressing and warm. The softest sound left him, happiness flooding him in a warm, sweet wave. Oh. Oh, sweet heaven. Was this what they felt, Ku and Daisy? Quincy moaned, hands wrapping around his arms and pulling him closer. A warm tongue parted his lips, Quincy pressing into his mouth.

He pushed against Quincy's body, lips parting to give Quincy a taste. Strawberries. Quincy tasted sweet and tart and just like strawberries.

"Oh God, Topaz... you taste..." Quincy whimpered and pulled him closer still, the long body warm and welcoming. Quincy was warm and soft, hair tickling his fingers. They shared another kiss, this time Topaz got to explore, finding that those white-white bottom teeth only looked perfect, one tilted just enough to be fascinating.

He could feel Quincy's need blazing against his belly, felt the little whimpers before he heard them.

"Bed?" He reached out, pulled the netting aside. He'd have asked something more sensible, but he just... couldn't.

"I don't... I didn't bring anything with me."

"I have some." He smiled at Quincy, loving those eyes. "No stress, Gemini. I just want to keep kissing you and you make my knees jiggle."

"Oh... I want more than kissing Topaz, I just didn't want to start something we couldn't finish." Quincy was breathless and flushed. "Kissing you makes me... not jiggly."

Oh. Oh, good. He laughed, crawling back into his nest and drawing Quincy into the silken softness. "I want you. I want to know everything about you."

"I'm yours," whispered Quincy. "Do with me as you will."

"I just want to know you in my soul, Gemini." He moved into Quincy's arms, lips parting as their mouths met again. When Quincy deepened the kiss, he caught that hot tongue, sucking in counterpoint to the beating of their hearts.

Quincy's fingers moved to the buttons on his shirt, slowly undoing them, oh so slowly undoing them.

He moaned into Quincy's mouth, shivers rocking his body. He was hard and fluid all at once. Lost and focused. Needing and wanting. Magic.

At last Quincy pulled his shirt off, fingers beginning to explore, warm on his skin, leaving tingles wherever they touched.

When Quincy found the scar -- long and wide, running from his lower back, around his side and up to his rib cage -- those fingers traced it, following its path.

"What happened?" whispered Quincy, fingers so gentle.

"My kidney was malformed, rotten. That's why I'm so short." He smiled, pressing Quincy's hand over the spot. "It kept getting infected, so they took it out."

"So you only have one. Is that dangerous?" Quincy asked, lips sliding over his face.

"It's in good condition. I don't drink anything but juice, tea and water, stay healthy." He pulled back, letting Quincy see the design that was inked over the scar.

"Oh!" Quincy gasped, fingers tracing the tattoo now. "It's beautiful. It suits you."

"Oh..." He smiled, undulating under the touches. "Thank you. Oh... oh Quincy. That feels so good."

Quincy bent, tongue licking at the corner of his tattoo.

He arched, a soft cry pushing out of his mouth. "Oh... Oh, so... so good."

He was pushed down onto his back, Quincy's mouth moving over his skin.

His toes curled, sensation shaking him. "Gemini. Your mouth. Your sweet mouth." He was babbling, pleasure too big for silence.

Quincy murmured against his skin, tongue licking, tracing the line of his scar.

Topaz was gasping, body thrumming for Quincy. No one had done this, no one ever touched it but Stephan and Leo. No one made it sexy.

"It's beautiful," Quincy told him. "You're beautiful. Taste good -- like a banana split."

Quincy looked up at him, the blue eyes dark and happy.

"You taste like strawberries. Addictive." He reached for Quincy's shirt. "Let me see you?"

Quincy shivered and nodded.

He unfastened the shirt, wrinkling his nose at the fabric, stiff and false, keeping Quincy's scent from him. "You should let me make you some shirts so your skin can breathe." He pushed it off, leaning in to smell, moaning at the rich, tart scent. "Oh..."

Quincy's hands slid through his hair, his Gemini moaning softly.

To not lean in and taste was more than he could bear. His lips circled one nipple, tongue sliding over the soft skin, tempting and teasing.

A shudder went through Quincy along with a whimper. "Topaz... oh, it's been ages, so long."

He murmured softly, hands sliding to unfasten Quincy's slacks. Poor love, so hungry, so needy. Ready and hard. Hands trembling, Quincy returned the favor, undoing the button on his pants, sliding down his zipper.

They stroked and pushed and wiggled and then, blessedly, they were naked, skin rubbing against skin.

"Oh! Topaz!" Quincy whimpered and pushed him onto his back, following, rubbing against him so that their pricks slid together.

He stretched up, moaning at the heat. "Gemini! Love! So good."

"Oh, God. Oh God!"

Quincy started down at him, arm muscles working as Quincy ground against him.

Oh. Oh, those eyes. He forced his eyes open, breathing with Quincy, wanting to see. Needing to see. "Please. Show me. Come for me. Please."

Quincy's mouth opened on a soundless scream, the blue eyes remaining open but glazing over, going sightless as heat splashed against him.

"Oh, Gemini! I was right! You are beautiful!" He shook, nuzzling into Quincy's throat, mouth open.

Quincy gasped, panting.

The skin beneath his lips was salty and tart, flavored with the scent of Quincy's come.

He rocked slow and easy, purring as he licked and moaned. He was lost. Lost.

One of Quincy's hands slid beneath his hip, pulling him up against the long body, sliding his cock along heated skin. Sweet licks tickled the skin behind his ear.

"Your turn."

"Oh. yes." He whimpered, head tilting and offering Quincy more. "Feels like magic."

"You're the magician," Quincy murmured, tongue following the line of his neck. "I'm just a lonely Gemini."

"No. You're not just anything, Gemini. You fill my dreams." He whimpered, cuddling close, hands moving over Quincy's spine.

"Oh, Topaz... how am I going to keep myself from falling in love with you?" Quincy's gazed down at him, moving their hips together.

"You're not." He wouldn't lie. "We're already in love, we're just not admitting it yet."

"Oh... Topaz... Come for me so I can make love to you." He laughed, taking a happy kiss, shivering in his Gemini's arms as he came, melting.

Quincy held him, hands stroking along his sides, gentle and warm.

He relaxed, purring and moaning as he floated. "Oh, Gemini. Love me. Please. I want to feel you."

"Where's your condoms and lube, Topaz? I don't want to have to stop and find them later."

"In the little covered basket there." He stretched and pointed, nuzzling Quincy's chest.

Quincy reached over to the basket and pulled out several condoms and the tube of lube, placing them on the bed, by the pillow.

Then his mouth was taking in a gentle kiss, Quincy's tongue once again pushing in to taste.

Oh. Oh, so gentle. Such care. He trembled, undone by his Gemini's focus.

Quincy proceeded to explore, fingers and mouth traveling slowly over his body, lingering whenever he gasped or cried out.

Topaz twisted and laughed, purred and arched. Quincy found the spot at the edge of his scar that made him cry out, the line above his pubic hair that gave him goose bumps.

Quincy kissed each hip, lavishing wet, warm attention on them before slowly moving back up to his nipples.

"I... Oh, Gemini. You... It's so good." He didn't have the words, didn't have anything but honest need. He reached out and stroked Quincy's hair, fingers trembling.

Quincy only moaned and brought their mouths together again.

That sweet tongue entered him again, distracting him until slick fingers slid between his legs, stroking his balls, moving beyond them. His knees parted, stretching wide for that touch. Moaning, Quincy found his hole, circling it, pressing gently against it.

"I want you." He did, his body opened easily, Quincy's fingers sliding into him with ease.

"Yes," agreed Quincy, moaning, fingers stretching, sliding against his gland.

He gasped, hips rocking to keep the spikes of pleasure constant, zinging through him.

"I can feel your need trembling around me." Quincy's own need was hard and hot against his hip.

"Oh, you're making me fly." He was high on the sensation, the scent of Quincy on his skin, the taste of strawberries on his tongue.

"That's the idea." Quincy's fingers slipped away, the blue eyes so dark as they gazed down at him.

He could hear the plastic condom package being opened, heard Quincy gasp as it was applied and then

Quincy was there, at his hole, such heat pressing against him.

He tilted his hips, rocking against that heat slow and easy, feeling himself open, letting himself feel everything. "Make love to me."

"Yes." Quincy pushed in slowly, almost painfully slowly, the thick heat spreading him, giving time for each and every nerve to learn that cock.

He reached out, cupped Quincy's cheek. They breathed together, moaning as they joined. "You're magic. Oh..." Quincy nuzzled into his touch, trembling, not moving just buried deep inside him.

The kisses started then, slow, drugging touches that stole his heart, his breath, his good sense. By the time Quincy moved the first time, Topaz was seeing stars.

Quincy's thrusts were slow, too, almost all the way out and then back in, deep, cock brushing across his prostate again and again.

His world cracked, heart opening wide and Quincy pouring in.

Quincy's thrusts became faster, more urgent, those blue eyes dark dark as they watched his face in his pleasure. Strawberry scented breath slid over his face, coming quicker as Quincy's movements sped again.

Topaz reached down, fingers wrapping around his shaft and pulling in time, letting the physical needs be answered.

"God. Beautiful." Quincy whimpered and then shuddered. "Oh, God, soon."

"Yes, love. Please." He arched, hips rocking harder, grinding onto Quincy's cock.

Quincy cried out softly, eyes rolling back into his head as he shook and came. Topaz could feel Quincy's cock pulsing inside him, filling the condom with heat.

He watched Quincy's orgasm, watched every second of pleasure before finding his own, body rippling around Quincy's heat.

Quincy lay heavily against him, one hand still holding up some of his Gemini's weight, the other stroking through his hair. "God, Topaz that was... oh... yeah, good. Great. Yeah."

"It was magic." He pulled Gemini against him, cuddling. "Thank you."

Quincy slid out of him, catching the condom and tying off the end, letting it slide off the edge of the bed. "No, thank you, Topaz."

"Will you stay the night?"

Quincy smiled at him, eyes shining. "Yes, please."

"Oh, good." He arranged the pillows and blankets just so and opened his arms, blood singing through him, so happy. "Is it too early to ask you to stay forever?"

Quincy froze and then slid into his arms. "I have a bad habit of falling in love with the men I make love to, Topaz. It usually leaves me heartbroken after a few months."

Topaz nodded, holding Quincy close. "I have a bad habit of making love to men I've fallen in love with. I don't think I've ever broken anyone's heart. I promise not to start with yours."

He could feel Quincy's smile against his skin. "Then I'll stay."

He kissed the top of Quincy's head. "Goodnight, Gemini. Sweet dreams."

"I think maybe I'll just stay awake and watch you sleep."

Oh.

He lifted Quincy's face and took a soft kiss, tears filling his eyes. "I know you don't believe me, but I love you, Gemini."

"I think you'd be surprised Topaz, because I know I love you."

"Thank you." He whispered the words, stroking his lover, tears spilling silent in the darkness.

"Oh, God, don't cry, please don't cry." Quincy's fingers wiped at his cheeks, a soft kiss pressed to his forehead. "Don't cry, Topaz."

"Sometimes... Sometimes the happiness is so big, it's got to go somewhere."

"Oh. I guess I can live with that."

Quincy drew him in close, one hand softly stroking. "Goodnight, Topaz."

"Goodnight, love." His cheek found the spot that would become his on the warm shoulder and he closed his eyes, fading into dreams.

Chapter Seven

Quincy always woke up slowly, even when his alarm went off it would be several minutes before it really penetrated and then he'd grumble and hit the snooze button and drift back off for nine more minutes.

Today he was having the most wonderful dream. Sunk in a bed of soft materials and pillows, he was curled around his lover. Happiness lurked just beyond the opening of his eyes.

Oh, he could stay right here forever, never let go of this dream.

Except.

It wasn't a dream, was it?

His eyes blinked open and there was Topaz, curled up against him, head on his shoulder, breath warming his skin. Oh, he could get used to this.

Even the fact that he'd admitted to Topaz that he was in love with the off-beat weaver didn't send him into a panic -- he felt too good, too right lying here in Topaz's... well it was a nest really more than a bed and he could get used to that, too. He smiled, just lying there, happy.

Topaz purred softly, curling closer. "Mm... my Gemini. Love you. Smell so good."

His smile got bigger, big enough he thought maybe his face muscles were going to be sore. "Good morning, Topaz."

He tilted his head as a thought occurred to him. "Hey -- is that your real name? Topaz?"

Topaz blushed, shook his name. "Scott Richards, believe it or not. Terrible, isn't it?"

He looked at Topaz, really looked at him and then shook his head. "Not terrible so much as it doesn't suit you at all. Scott Richards is... stuffy."

"Yeah. I'm not so big on the stuffiness." Topaz stretched up against him, so slight, so warm, and gave him a kiss. "Morning, Gemini."

He murmured happily and held Topaz's head in place, deepening the kiss. He was horny, morning wood at the ready like it always was, but it was more than that. Topaz made him want.

Topaz moaned, rubbing slow and easy. Those soft lips parted, asking him for more, thin fingers sliding down his spine. He pressed his tongue into the warmth of Topaz's mouth, rubbing his cock against his lover.

"Mmm..." Warm fingers tickled down his belly, sliding over his shaft.

"Oh God... Topaz... make love to me."

"Yes, love. Yes, but first..." Topaz slid down, licking at his belly, his shaft.

Oh... He moaned and tried to hold himself in check, to keep from bucking and pushing his cock into Topaz's mouth.

"So sweet. So hot. Felt so good inside me last night, love." The licking and nuzzling continued, his balls

laved, the tip suckled.

"Uh-huh." He was just a little breathless, close to squeaking instead of speaking.

Those soft lips pushed down over his cock, suction slow and steady, almond eyes shining at him.

Oh, god, was that half whimper half keening noise coming from his mouth? It wasn't like he'd never been sucked before, but this was... really hot and tight and good. His balls were cupped, rolled, petted, hums vibrating his shaft.

His fingers slid through Topaz's hair, hands holding on as the sucking and humming and touching conspired to send him into the sky.

Topaz reached for the lube, still sucking steady as cool-slick fingers slid over his hole, pressing slightly.

Gasping, he let his legs spread wide, offering himself to Topaz.

"Mmm..." Those fingers pressed deep, stroking him as Topaz took him in, swallowing around his shaft.

He shuddered, coming convulsively down Topaz's throat as his body shook.

Moaning, Topaz crawled up his body, reaching for a condom. "Need you, Gemini. Please, love."

He nodded, body still thrumming. "Yes, Topaz. Yes."

It took nothing, just a few breaths, and Topaz was pressing inside him, eyes hot and sparkling down at him. He groaned, cock twitching, trying to come back to life.

"Feels good? You're good?" Topaz gasped, shuddered.

He nodded, gasped. "Yes. Don't stop."

"Oh, good." Topaz's lips covered one of his nipples, sucking as those hips started moving.

"Oh!" His hips bucked, hands holding Topaz's head in place as his cock started to fill again.

"Yes. Good." The sucking got harder, the thrusts firmer, Topaz hot and needy above him.

Oh god, how could he be so hard and desperate again already?

"Love you," he whispered.

Topaz shook, head lifting, thin cheeks flushed. "Yes. Love you, Gemini. Love you."

He bent forward, taking Topaz's mouth with his own, tasting the truth of the words.

His lover moaned into his lips, one hand circling his prick, cock sliding over his gland over and over and over.

"Topaz!" He bucked hard, the pleasure coming up from his toes and fountaining out his cock.

"Oh, Quince. God. I can smell you. So..." Topaz cried out, back arching with a low cry.

He stroked Topaz' back, floating in the sensation of being happy and sated. God, was when the last time he'd woken up next to someone and not had that awkward dash for the door?

The condom was discarded and then his arms were full of sated, warm weaver, bright eyes shining.

"I could get used to this," he said softly, using a single finger to stroke Topaz' cheek.

"I hope you do." Topaz chuckled, nuzzled into the touch. "You feel so good."

He nodded. "Yeah, you, too."

They shared a long, slow kiss, almond eyes shining at him. "Hungry, Gemini?"

"I just came twice, but yeah, I still am. You're something else, Topaz."

"Mm... Quincy. Kiss me."

"Yes, Topaz."

He took his lover's mouth, kissing Topaz deeply, feeling the need try to crawl back up his spine, his cock twitching. Topaz purred and cuddled, hands moving over his body, stroking, massaging.

He touched back, taking pleasure in the caresses for their own sake.

A series of soft mewls sounded, a trio of kittens slowly crawling along the bed and Topaz giggled. "The babies are curious."

He laughed, Topaz's laughter contagious. "They're yours?" he asked.

"No, they're Moira's babies, but I feed them and love them and Moira's been with me for eight years." Topaz pointed to the tortoiseshell beauty perched on a basket.

He laughed harder. "I knew they weren't your babies, Topaz."

Topaz blinked up at him for a second and then started giggling, holding onto him, laughter mixed with his own.

He brought their mouths together, tasting the joy on Topaz's lips.

Oh, God, the man was addictive. So joyous. So free.

He was doomed.

Chapter Eight

A feast was laid out on the table, hummus and tabouleh and pitas and spreads and three different kinds of fresh bread. Not to mention strawberries, melons, pineapple and cherries, avocado soaking in lemon juice and mushrooms floating in malted vinegar.

Leo had outdone himself in choosing and he had arranged it all to absolute perfection on the table.

To make up for the lateness of the hour it was laid out at. They had invited Topaz and Quincy to breakfast and it was well after noon before they were ready to serve their guests.

Stephan shot a heated look at Leo. Of course if their guests did not hurry, he was going to spread the apple butter all over his lover and race the ants in licking it off.

Leo lifted a strawberry and rubbed it against his lips. "I love you. Should we call them?"

He hummed, opening his lips around the berry and sucking on it before biting into the succulent flesh. "I don't know, Leo, would you have wanted to be called while we were in the shower?" He grinned wickedly. "Or in the bedroom. Or the kitchen. Or the hall."

His lover chuckled, shook his head, long black hair flying. "No, I suppose not. Well, not unless they were asking to join us, yes?"

"Oh yes!" He felt his cock stir at that. "We can always use more joy, can we not, my Leo?"

"Always, love."

Leo offered him a sweet, long kiss, only stopping when Topaz's laughter sounded. "So hungry, loves?"

He beamed up at his lover before turning and holding his hands out to Topaz and Quincy. "And wouldn't you be, if you had such a fine man to hunger for?" Oh, Sunshine looked happy, sated and hungry at the same time. Their boy was in love. Quincy was a little harder to read, but he hoped the light flush meant that the new man in Topaz's life was as smitten as Topaz himself. "In fact, my dears, we were debating whether or not to send a search party for you when we got... well... distracted." He laughed, leaning back against Leo. "Again."

Topaz took his hands, kissing his knuckles. "Sweet insatiable Daisy."

Leo chuckled. "Indeed. Our hungry flower. Good morning, Quincy."

"G...good morning." Quincy gave them a rather bemused smile.

"Come and sit," Stephan invited, eager to put the man at ease. "Topaz has come, I hope, to look upon what is ours as his, and Leo and I would be pleased if you would do so as well, isn't that right, lover?"

"Yes. Come and eat and tell us whether the kittens approved of you." Leo winked, pulling out a chair.

Quincy chuckled. "Actually, I think they did. They didn't seem to mind my petting."

"Moiré let them come right up into the bed. He's a keeper, Daisy. Oooh! Mushrooms!" Topaz snatched one, moaning at the flavor.

He laughed with delight and happiness. "Oh, Sunshine, you're a treasure. You make sure you hold on tight to this one, Quincy -- your life with never be dull again."

Topaz beamed at him, leaning over for a gentle kiss. "You're too good to me, Daisy."

He slid his tongue along Topaz's lower lip, tasting something new there -- slightly bitter, it could only be Quincy. The kiss was short, easy and then Topaz moved into Quincy's arms, lifting his face for another kiss.

Quincy hesitated a moment, looking from him and back to Sunshine again. Oh dear.

"You okay, Gemini love?" Topaz's voice was soft, pretty eyes looking up.

Quincy glanced back at him again and he tried to give the man a reassuring smile, sliding his hand into Leo's. They were no threat to this man, though he was one to them; he would really hate to lose their Sunshine. Really, really very much.

"I just... yeah. I'm fine." Quincy gave Topaz a quick, almost chaste kiss.

Leo drew him into a warm embrace, lips brushing near his ear. "Should we leave them alone, love? Should we say something? Our Topaz... he'll never get jealousy."

"I don't know." He looked up into his lover's beautiful eyes, worried. He didn't want to lose their Sunshine, but he didn't want to come between Topaz and Quincy either, not with the way their lover's eyes lingered on Quincy.

He glanced back over, Quincy looking awkward and not nearly as blissful as he had moments ago.

Sighing he gave Leo another kiss. "We deal with it here and now, lover. Flowers can't grow if they're choked by weeds."

Leo nodded, trusting him implicitly as always. "Come and sit, boys. Let's eat and talk."

They sat and Stephan watched them fill their plates, utterly unable to eat himself. He waited, as a polite host should, until they'd had a bite or two before broaching the subject. He didn't know if there was a right way or a wrong way to do it, so he just came out with it. "Quincy, has Topaz explained our relationship to you?"

Quincy froze.

Topaz slid one hand over Quincy's, petting. "'s okay, Gemini. No stress, love."

Leo's hand was on his thigh, warm and wide. Solid. Comforting.

"But have you told him, Sunshine?"

"He said you guys used to be lovers," Quincy put in, arm going around Topaz' shoulders.

"Used to be?" His heart fell as he turned his attention to Topaz, squeezing Leo's hand tight.

"No, Gemini. I said we were lovers and that Stephan and Leo were soul mates, a pair that loves me. Partners." Topaz looked up at Quincy, stroking his jaw. "A pair like us."

Leo's thumb stroked his hand, a soft, pained sound rumbling. Their Sunshine always believed the best, always trusted.

"Yeah, but now that we're together... " Quincy looked over at him and Leo and then back at Topaz a frown growing on the pretty face. "You're still gonna be fucking them, too?"

Topaz paled, light just fading from their Sunshine. "I..."

Those almond eyes swung towards Leo, begging for help and Leo's rumble increased. "We'll support you whatever you two decide, you know that, T."

"You'll support... whatever we... Jesus, what am I cramping your orgy style or something?" Quincy pulled away from Topaz. "So I'm special, am I? Or just one of how many?"

"You *are* special! I don't sleep around! I never have! Never." Topaz's eyes filled with tears, their Sunshine's hurt as evident as his joy always was. "I've been with Ku and Daisy for years while I looked for you."

He whimpered, wanting to stop this, to take it back and not have brought it up.

"And you're going to keep being with them, aren't you? Aren't I enough? You told me..." Quincy swallowed his words looking miserable. The man stood. "I'm sorry. I think I've made a mistake."

"Please." The single word was shattered, Topaz shrinking in his chair.

"I have to go," said Quincy, voice rough, eyes bright with tears.

Or maybe that was just the tears in his own eyes. Stephan could not have held back from going to their Sunshine for anything and he didn't even try, moving around the table to take Topaz in his arms.

Leo stood, voice rough. "Please, Quincy. Stay. He loves you. Please just stay and we'll talk. Or if that won't work, then you and Topaz talk."

"No, I think I've heard enough talk, thank you very much. I think I'm just going to go now. God, I can't believe I was such an idiot."

Stephan rocked Topaz, tears slipping down his cheeks as he shared his friend's pain. He didn't watch as Quincy left.

Eventually Topaz's tears dried and their Sunshine pulled away, hollow-eyed and empty. "I'm going to bed, lovelies. I'll see you tomorrow."

"Oh! Oh, Sunshine, lover, are you sure? You don't have to be alone." He looked up to Leo, begging his lover for help, wanting Leo to fix it.

"Come to our bed, pretty lover." Leo bent down and lifted Topaz up, cradling their Sunshine in huge arms. "You can hide with us and not from us."

Topaz sobbed and nodded, curling into Leo's chest. "Bring the berries, lover, and the aspirin, he'll need it."

He nodded, wiping at his cheeks, though new tears took the place of old ones. He gathered the berries and the aspirin and the twelve-grain bread that Topaz liked so much along with the orange juice and then followed after them.

He was so mad at himself. Why had he insisted on bringing it up? It was all his fault their Sunshine was hurting so badly.

"Stop it, Stephan." Leo's voice was low, sure. "Better now than later. You know our Topaz. It would have come up. He shares his heart, he always has. Come and I'll hold you. Hold you both."

He set his burdens down on the side table and crawled onto the king sized bed he shared with his Leo,

curling up against his lover's broad chest, reaching out to pet Topaz.

Topaz moved into his arms. "I'm a fool, aren't I, Daisy?"

"Oh, no, Sunshine, not a fool, never a fool." He stroked Topaz' cheek. "A dreamer, yeah?"

"A dreamer." Miserable eyes met his. "I dreamed of him."

"Maybe Quincy wasn't the one."

"No, Daisy. Maybe Quincy doesn't want me, but he's the one."

"Oh, Sunshine, he wants you, that's his problem."

He looked up at his lover. "Tell him, Leo."

Leo's melted chocolate eyes met Topaz's. "Little bit, he wants you. He wants you to himself."

"To himself?" Topaz shook his head. "Why?"

"Because... Because he doesn't want to share."

"He isn't like us, Sunshine. He doesn't understand how love shared is love increased. So many people in this world don't."

He leaned forward, kissing Topaz gently. "Maybe he just needs some time."

"Maybe. My head hurts. I love you." Topaz closed his eyes, slumping against Leo. "I'm sorry."

His Leo stroked Topaz's hair. "So are we, little bit. It's going to be okay. We're here. We're right here."

"Anything you want, lover." He pressed another kiss on Topaz. "Anything, you know that."

Topaz nodded. "I know. I do."

Leo closed his eyes, relaxing against the pillows. "Good."

Stephan nuzzled against his Leo, stroking Topaz's back, wishing he could make Quincy be different, could make him love the way Topaz needed to be loved.

Chapter Ten

He walked toward the grocery from the Loft, list in hand. Bread, milk, mushrooms.

Chocolate.

Hazelnuts.

His eyes caught the ice cream store stand.

No ice cream.

His eyes filled with tears. Three weeks. Three weeks and it still ached.

Someone bumped into him, knocking his list from his hand.

"Sorry!" Warm hands steadied him and then moved quickly away. "Topaz?"

He met Quincy's eyes quickly and nodded, bending to fetch his list. "Hello, Gem... Quincy. How are you?"

He couldn't meet those pretty eyes again, not without crying.

"I miss you." Quincy's voice was husky.

Topaz nodded, swallowing hard. "I miss you, too. I can't stop dreaming about you."

Quincy's hand touched his arm again and then slid away. "I want... can we go somewhere and talk?"

"Okay. Sure. Uh... the coffeehouse?" He folded his note and stuck it away. "It's quiet."

Oh, God. Oh. Oh.

"All right." Quincy's hand came back, stroking his arm before taking his elbow and guiding him down the street.

Topaz followed quietly. Leo and Stephan had been so good to him, making sure he didn't hermit away in his nest. Feeding him. Loving him. Trying to ease the pain.

Never once calling him a fool.

They made their way to the coffeehouse in silence, though he could feel the weight of those eyes on him for most of the trip.

They ordered a latte and a green tea, taking their drinks to an isolated table in the corner, Topaz settling in the corner. He almost laughed -- the second time they'd been together over a restaurant table and they'd fallen in love and broken up between.

"How... how are you doing?" Quincy asked after the silence had stretched out between them.

"I hurt. I dream about you. I work a lot." Topaz sipped his tea, letting it warm him inside. "How about you?"

"I've been dumped more times than I can count, but nothing's ever hurt like this."

"I didn't dump you, Quincy. I asked you to stay. I wanted you to stay." He put the cup down, willing his fingers not to shake.

"I know... I... I just thought I love you meant I love *you*, not you and Leo and Stephan and... I guess it just means more to me than sweet words."

His heart clenched, breaking quietly. "It meant everything to me."

"Then I just don't understand."

"What don't you understand, Gemini?" He shrugged. "I am in love with you. You... you're like a missing part of me, like my partner. Ku and Daisy are my lovers, but they're soul mates, they're a single unit. I... I don't understand how loving them and being in love with you is wrong."

"What about loyalty, fidelity?"

"I am loyal. I don't offer my body, my heart easily." Topaz could feel the tears gathering, feel them hot on his lower lashes. "I have been with Stephan and Leo for years and have only had two other lovers, both of whom are my friends, who care for me. Isn't that loyal?"

"I don't know. Yes? I don't know. Oh God, Topaz, please don't cry. I... fuck. You aren't like anyone I've ever known." Quincy's voice was thick with emotion, mostly pain.

He blinked hard, wiping his eyes. "I'm sorry."

Topaz didn't know what he was apologizing for -- the tears, the pain, the differences. All he knew was that he was sorry.

"Me too." Quincy's hand slid over his, warm and gentle. "I want to see you again."

"Do you? Really?" He turned his hand over, holding on.

"I do," whispered Quincy. "It hurts so bad, being away from you -- more than anything, even Tommy and he was... we lived together for almost two years. I can't say I understand or am happy about you and... and them, but that doesn't hurt near as much as not being with you does."

"It doesn't have to be me and them. If you decide to, it can be us and them." He reached out, stroked Quincy's cheek. "I wouldn't leave your bed to go to them, love. It's not like that."

"Us?" Quincy nuzzled into his touch, surprise and shock warring with need in those beautiful eyes.

"You didn't think for a minute that they wouldn't want you!" He kept touching, soothing his pain. "It's about pleasure, love. I wouldn't hurt you by not including you. I would never do that."

"It's very... different from what I'm used to, Topaz. I don't know... I don't know if I could do that."

Topaz nodded. "No one has to do anything they don't want to. I just miss you."

Quincy squeezed his hand. "Come home with me?"

"Yes." He nodded, tears threatening again. "Please. Please, Gemini."

Quincy's smile was brilliant. "Now? Come with me now?"

Another nod and he stood, grocery list forgotten. "Yes. Now."

Quincy stood too, taking his hand again and leading him from the coffeehouse. "I'm just a few blocks from here, in the opposite direction from your place."

"Okay. I'd like to see it." He straightened his clothes -- black on gray, for mourning -- and took a step back so Quincy could lead the way.

Quincy was quiet on the short walk through to the residential quarter of downtown. His Gemini lived in one of the new apartment buildings that were beginning to pop up all over the area. They seemed so empty, so soulless, those buildings. Still, he didn't say so. There was no reason to make things bad. Again.

"I'm on the ninth floor. It isn't very big, but it's got a nice view and... well, there hasn't been much reason to have more than a couch and a bed, you know?"

"Oh, up is good." He offered Quincy a quiet grin. "I'm sort of a packrat. Well, you've seen."

"It suits you," Quincy told him as they waited for the elevator. "All jumbled but you know where everything is, too."

"Yeah. Wrapped in a skein but not tangled, that's me." Well, not tangled until three weeks ago, anyway.

Quincy chuckled. "Maybe I can commission you to make me a piece. My bedroom needs... something."

"I'd love to make you a hanging." He forced himself to smile, but the whole thing felt so artificial, so false. His lover -- his ex-lover -- talking about paying him to make something he'd more than willingly give.

The elevator stopped and Quincy led him down the hall to the last door on the right. It was quickly unlocked and Quincy led him in, looking hesitant. "Here we go. It's kind of plain."

It was a little plain, but it smelled good, smelled like Quincy, made him smile. "It's good, Gemini."

"I'm just not here a whole lot. Working mostly. Or out at the clubs. The park sometimes." Quincy gave a little laugh. "Okay, not so much the park, but it sounds better than clubbing, doesn't it? Oh, and you have to see the view."

Quincy took his hand again and led him out the large French windows to the balcony.

The whole town was spread out before him, lights and cars and houses and everything. "Oh... Oh, how pretty!"

"Yeah, it is." Quincy hesitated a moment and then slid an arm around his waist and tilted his head up. His lips were covered, his Gemini groaning as their mouths met.

He whimpered, lips parting, begging for that sweet-tart flavor that he had fought to forget. Quincy devoured his mouth like a man starving, pulling him close to the long body. Strawberries. He sobbed, arms reaching up and holding on tight, lips fastening around Gemini's tongue and sucking. Yes. Yes, please.

Quincy's hands slid onto his ass, cupping his buttocks and pulling him in tighter. He could feel the heat of Gemini's need, even through their clothes.

His own need flared, love sweet and sharp and painful and so real.

So real.

"Oh God, Oh. Come to my bed, Topaz, please."

"Yes." The word was rough and he stumbled as they moved. "Gemini. I've ached for you."

Quincy's arm around him kept him from falling. "I know. I have too. I'm sorry -- I'm so sorry."

Stopping, Quincy took his mouth again, the kiss long and filled with need.

He met it with equal heat, hands unfastening clothes and finding skin. "Please love me."

Topaz had never meant anything so much. Not ever.

"I do. I will."

Quincy pulled him across the apartment into the bedroom, helping him with clothes. At last they fell into the bed together, naked and writhing.

He ended up straddling Quincy's waist, taking one hard, wet kiss after another, toes curled, body on fire. Quincy's cock slid along his crease, teasing and taunting, so tempting.

"Oh, God, I thought I'd imagined this," Quincy whimpered hands hot and hard on his back.

"No. I'm real. We're real, love." He arched up into the touch, moaning low. "Real."

"Real. Yeah. I can see that now. I can feel it. Oh, Topaz, I feel you."

"Need you. Please. Need you to take me." He licked at Quincy's lips, ass rocking and rubbing against that long prick. Quincy whimpered, lips trying to catch his tongue. His Gemini reached over to the side-table, fumbling. "I think I have... shit, I know I have lube at least."

"I don't have one on me. I don't carry them." He licked at the corner of Quincy's mouth, moaning.

"Fuck." Quincy groaned and shuddered, still poking around in the drawer. "Here, lube. No condoms. There might be one in the bathroom. Or my leather pants pocket."

"Leather pants?" He laughed, tickled, even as his balls ached. He was clean, but he didn't think Quincy would believe him. "I'd love to see that."

"Not now." Quincy told him, quite seriously.

Then his Gemini pushed him gently to the side and went to rummage in the closet, moaning and whimpering. "Shit, I have to have one here somewhere..."

Topaz watched for a second and then got up and turned Quincy, kneeling before the long body and taking him in and sucking hard.

"Oh fuck!" Quincy whimpered, hands dropping to his hair, hips pushing with small pulses. "Oh, Topaz... Oh!"

He closed his eyes, head bobbing, hands on his Gemini's hips and encouraging them to rock, to move.

Quincy made a soft sound and started moving, letting his hands guide the slide of the long cock in and out of his mouth. "Topaz."

His name was whispered, spoken over and over again.

He focused on what he was doing. He'd never made love with someone thinking like it might be the last

time ever. It made everything bigger, more important.

"Oh, Topaz!" Quincy shouted his name, hips jerking hard as heat shot down his throat.

One tear slid down his cheek as he swallowed his Gemini all the way down, bittersweet pleasure filling him. Oh, he did love this man, he did.

Quincy slid down, bringing their mouths together in a far less urgent kiss.

"Thank you," murmured his Gemini. One hand slid between them, wrapping around his prick and pumping while the other grabbed his ass, fingers trailing along his crease. Whimpering, he moved, hips rocking in between those touches, breath caught in his chest.

"I love you, Topaz," Quincy murmured, sucking his bottom lip in between his Gemini's lips.

Oh.

Oh..

"Tell me again, please."

"I love you. I love you more than I've ever loved anyone."

"I love you, Gemini. I do. All of me." He shivered, gasping into Quincy's lips. "Love you."

"Oh, Topaz." Quincy's lips found his again, kissing him hard as his Gemini's hands worked to make him come.

He shorted out, let himself go -- all need and ache and want all rolled up together. When he came, it felt a little like falling into the sun.

Quincy whimpered and gathered him close, sitting on the floor with him in his Gemini's lap. Quincy was rocking him, humming something soft and gentle. He rested, refusing to think, just feeling and listening to that beating heart.

Quincy's arms were like bands around him. "I don't think I can let you go again, Topaz. I don't care who else you fuck, I need you and I'm not letting you go."

"I don't..." He sighed and looked up. "Quincy, I don't fuck around. I don't."

"But you..." Quincy shook his head. "I'm sorry. It doesn't matter, I just want to be with you."

It did matter. A lot. But he didn't know what to say or what to do, so he leaned in. "I want to be with you, too."

Ku and Daisy would help him make Gemini understand. They would.

Quincy gave him a happy little smile. "It's going to be okay. We're going to be okay."

"I... what now? I mean... Not forever now, just right now?"

"Are you hungry? We could order in." Quincy chuckled. "I've got to admit that I don't want to let you out of my arms just yet."

"I am. I was going to the store for peanut butter and stuff when I bumped into you." He took a soft kiss. "Chinese?"

"Oh, we could feed each other." Quincy laughed, the sound light and happy. "And then take a shower after -- I get messy enough feeding myself with chopsticks."

Topaz giggled, nodding. "Or a bath. I'll scrub your back."

"I hope that's not all you'll scrub." Quincy gave him a hard kiss. "God, you make me happy."

"Do I? I want to. I want to, Gemini." He grabbed Quincy's hand, kissing the palm. "I do."

"You do," Quincy murmured, blue eyes gazing down at him. "You do, sweet love."

"Oh. We need to find a drug store that delivers too, Gemini."

Quincy's cheeks flushed, but he didn't think it was from embarrassment. "That we do, Topaz, that we do."

He laughed, light and free, pushing up into Quincy's arms for another kiss and another. "Love you!"

Quincy's reply hummed against his tongue, filling him with the words and the emotion.

Topaz snuggled into those arms, happy. He was a fool.

He was.

He knew it.

Still, he was a fool in love and sometimes you had to take it where you found it.

Chapter Eleven

They hadn't seen Topaz all night or all morning and Leo knew where he'd gone.

Poor little bit, hurting so bad.

They might have to beat Quincy to death if he hurt their Sunshine again.

He handed Stephan a muffin, marmalade smeared on. "He'll be okay."

Stephan's fingers lingered on his and then his lover began to pick at the muffin. "Do you really think so, lover? Or are you just trying to make me feel better?"

"I'm just trying to make us both feel better." He sighed. "He's going to get hurt, lover."

His flower put down the muffin, giving up the pretence of eating and curled into him with a quiet sob.

"Now, hush. Hush." He rocked Stephan, looking up as the door opened and Topaz hurried in, groceries in hand.

"Daisy? Daisy love? What's wrong?" The bags were dropped, his little bit hurrying over.

"Oh, Sunshine!" Stephan opened his arms and gathered Topaz close.

Topaz went easily, hands sliding through Stephan's hair. "Here. I'm here, Daisy. Shh. Shh, now."

He held them both, rumbling. "You okay, little bit?"

Topaz nodded. "Yeah. Quincy found me last night. I spent the night with him. I should have called, but..." Their lover shrugged. "I was afraid I'd upset him."

"Oh," said Stephan, the sound small and lost. His flower looked up at him, brown eyes full of pain. Stephan turned back to Topaz. "We would never come between you and your Gemini, would we, Leo?"

"No. No, we wouldn't." Even if it was for the best.

"Don't, Daisy. Please." Topaz shook his head, taking Stephan's face in his hands. "Please, don't. I love you both. Please don't shut me out."

"Oh Sunshine! Never!" Stephan leaned forward, bringing his and Topaz' mouths together in a desperate kiss. "We will always be here for you. Always."

His flower looked up at him and then back at Topaz. "But if you do not come to us, we will understand." Stephan's voice cracked a little. "We won't be happy about it, but we will understand."

"I love you. I love you both." Topaz held Stephan close, shaking. "I won't do without you. Quincy will have to learn to understand. He *will*."

Leo sighed, hands stroking two heads. "Take it as it comes, little bit, my flower. Don't worry so."

Stephan nuzzled Topaz, kissing his cheeks, his nose, his lips. "Oh, Topaz," whispered Stephan, I can taste him in your mouth."

"Is that bad, Daisy?"

"I don't think so, Sunshine."

Topaz lifted his face to Leo. "Do you think it's bad, Ku?"

He leaned down and took Topaz's mouth, tongue sliding deep. The flavor was odd, unusual, tart, but not bad, not wrong. "No, little bit. I don't think so."

"Oh, you two are so beautiful together. Do it again." Stephan was breathless, voice colored with familiar need.

Topaz smiled at him and leaned forward, lips meeting his, sweet almond eyes warm and happy.

"Yes, lovers, yes." Stephan's graceful hands slid over him and Topaz, moving to work open their buttons.

He took Topaz's head in his hand, tilting that sweet face until the kiss could be deeper. Stephan continued to work off their clothes, sweet voice murmuring words of love and praise.

He was hard, wanting, needing to keep their lover here and theirs. They couldn't do without. Wouldn't. They loved him.

"To bed, lovers," whispered Stephan. "These old chairs won't hold up."

"Need new chairs then, Daisy." Topaz's laugh sounded, happy and rich and so missed, so necessary.

"I'll look into it, Sunshine, but I'm not sure we'll find any to properly support our mountain man."

Leo chuckled, reaching out to pinch and tickle his lovers. "I'll show you proper support, you two!"

The laughter bounced up the stairs, towards the bedroom.

His lovers moved ahead of him, naked bodies glistening in the sun shining through the windows. There was such joy shared between them.

There was no way he could give this up, not after so long.

He growled playfully, pouncing them as they hit the bed, skin on skin on skin. Stephan shrieked dramatically, the sound fading into giggles that tickled him. Topaz's laughter bounced all around them, little hands pinching and stroking.

Stephan's touches were lighter, sneakier, moving in and striking over more sensitive skin.

He was just busy trying to taste and lick and love as best he could.

Stephan became caught up in their mouths, first Topaz and then him, back and forth like a tennis match where the score was always love-love.

They settled together in a pile, both his flower and little bit in his arms, straddling his thighs. "So sweet."

"You are," laughed Stephan, eyes shining brightly with love and need.

He took a long kiss from one mouth, then another, purring into his lovers' lips. "You are temptations, both of you."

"Oh, I do hope you give into temptation, Leo." Stephan laughed and leaned to lick at his neck.

He took Topaz's lips, tugging his Stephan close into his body. Topaz purred into his lips, wanton and

happy.

Stephan's lips and hands continued to move on him, warm and familiar and right. Stephan knew exactly where to touch both himself and Topaz, to draw out the most pleasurable of noises.

Topaz slid down, purring as his lips nuzzled Stephan's balls, making Stephan cry out, eyes blinking up at Leo with need.

Stephen's hand reached up to him, sliding over his chest, fingers flickering across his nipple. "Kiss me, lover," Stephan begged him.

"Until the end of time, lover." He bent his head, moaning against Stephan's lips, tongue pressing deep.

His lover's arms came around his neck, Stephan filling his mouth with sweet moans and breathless pleas. He spread Stephan wide for Topaz's lips, for that tongue, thumbs stroking the long, hard cock. Stephan's hands clung to his skin, the lithe body writhing beneath their ministrations.

"Lean back, Ku. Want to suck him while he rides you." Topaz's words made him ache, made him shudder and he leaned back, shaking.

"Oh, Sunshine!" Stephan whimpered, hands stroking him, so gentle against his cock.

"Yes. God, yes." He watched them kiss, watched Topaz's fingers get his flower ready for him, watched Topaz take his cock and feed it into Stephan's hole. Oh. Perfect.

Stephan's body rippled around him, so hot, so tight, so good.

"Leo," gasped his flower, reaching out for his hands.

"Yes. Love. Take him, Little Bit." He took Stephan's hands. "Want to see."

Brown eyes glittered down at him and he knew the moment Topaz' mouth slid around Stephan's prick.

"Oh..." Leo arched, hips tilting, pushing into his Stephan, his cry splitting the air.

"Oh! Lovers!" Stephan's voice was breathless, on the edge of pure pleasure.

He grabbed Stephan's hip, eyes fastened on Topaz's head bobbing on that sweet cock. Stephan's back was bowed, hands holding onto his arms, opening and closing as his sweet flower rode his cock, Topaz' mouth making it all the more intense.

"Love you. So fucking beautiful. I love you." His eyes rolled back, body shivering.

"Love!" Stephan screamed, body rippling around his cock, squeezing him tight.

Topaz's groan sounded as he shot, pushing deep, toes curling. Stephan was making those little gaspy, breathless noises of his, the ones that meant oh, loves, so good, hands opening and closing convulsively over his arms.

He slumped onto the pillows, breathing hard. "My lovers. Oh... So sweet."

Topaz moaned, lips fastening around one of his nipples. "Love you. Love you both."

"Oh, yes, Sunshine, our bed has missed your joy."

Stephan latched onto his other nipple, sucking lazily as his flower reached out to run slender fingers along

Topaz' face.

Topaz purred, pretty eyes closing. "Oh, Daisy... My Daisy."

He could feel the joy growing, the sweet sensations and love that they shared now even more beautiful than the joy they generated during lovemaking.

He held them both tight. He couldn't let them go. Not even Topaz.

Please.

Chapter Twelve

Quincy didn't know what to wear.

He and Topaz had been back together for almost a month and it had been the most wonderful month. Loving and fucking and sucking and snuggling and sleeping together in his bed.

He'd happily avoided the subject of Topaz's other lovers, but he could tell it bothered his lover that they never went to Topaz's, that he never wanted to talk about Leo and Stephan.

So tonight he was going over there. It was Friday night, it had been a brutal week at work and he'd barely seen Topaz at all, his lover choosing not to sleep over so they'd only had what felt like stolen moments here and there.

He finally settled on his best pair of black jeans and a white silk top, plain and simple, but elegant.

He picked up a box of Hedgehogs for Topaz on the way, figuring chocolate would be better than flowers for a man who lived in the house of a florist.

Lived *with* a florist, he corrected himself with a sigh.

When he got there, he went past the main house and rang the bell by the garage door.

"Topaz is in the hot tub." Leo came around the side of the house, dressed in wet jeans and a t-shirt. "He had a fall and wrenched his back and is soaking."

"Oh no! is he all right?" He headed toward Leo, biting his lower lip.

"I think so. He's sore. He's been talking about you. Stephan's making him tea." Leo looked uncomfortable, unhappy.

He frowned, stopping partway along the path. Perhaps Leo and Stephan were as unhappy about him being in Topaz' life as he was unhappy they continued to be in Topaz' bed. "May I come in? See him?"

He got a surprised look, discomfort easing. "Quincy, you're welcome here. Always. Of course. Please. He misses you."

He nodded stiffly. "I miss him every moment we're apart."

"I know. So do we." Deep brown eyes met his square on. "I hope that one day we'll all find an answer."

Leo's gaze was unnerving and he looked down at his shoes. "I do, too," he murmured.

"Go on, Quince. He's hurting and he's waiting on you."

He nodded and went around Leo, hurrying into the yard. "Topaz?"

"Gemini?" Topaz sounded miserable, those almond eyes pained. "Oh, I've missed you so! Come kiss me."

He all but ran to the hot tub, bending to kiss Topaz softly.

Topaz opened to him, humming, lips flavored with peppermint and honey.

He wanted nothing more than to deepen the kiss, lose himself in the sweet flavor of his lover. Instead he

pulled back from the kiss, fingers stroking through Topaz hair. "Are you all right? Leo said you had a fall."

"Yeah. Tripped and slid down the stairs." Topaz blushed. "Leo popped me in here and Daisy's making me tea and now you're here. I'm good."

He stroked Topaz' hair and kissed him again. "What can I do to help?"

"Mm... what are our plans for tonight, Gemini? You going to give me a massage? You coming in?"

"I'm not very good at it, but I could give you a massage. And I've love to join you, but I didn't bring my suit."

"Oh you don't need a suit," said Stephan, coming out from the house with a tray. "Just strip on down and jump in!"

He found himself blushing. "I don't know..."

Topaz turned slowly, admiring. "You look fabulous, love. I'd hate to ruin the blouse. Come in. No one will peek. I promise."

"All right, for you, love. Um..." He looked over at Stephan.

Stephan rolled his eyes and put down the tray. "I'll just go see about another cup and something sweet."

"Oh! I brought you chocolates," he told Topaz, holding up the box of Hedgehogs.

"Oooh!" Topaz's eyes went wide, grin huge. "Gemini!"

Leo and Stephan's soft chuckles were cut off by the screen door.

He grinned. "So it's a good present then?"

He gave the box to Topaz, glanced back toward the door and stripped quickly, leaving his folded clothes on one of the lawn chairs before slipping in.

"Oh, that's nice!"

Topaz was nibbling, nodding, eyes watching him avidly. "Can I sit in your lap?"

His mouth dropped open and he looked back toward the house. "I thought you were hurt."

"I am. That's why I want to sit in your lap." No bullshit, no games, just those sweet eyes and full lips with a hint of chocolate smudged on them.

"Oh. I thought." He blushed again. "Of course you can. Just ignore the uh... enthusiasm."

"The... Oh! No, that'll feel too good to ignore." Topaz swam over, settling into his arms with a soft purr. "Missed you."

"I've missed you, too, love. Been a long week." He nuzzled Topaz' neck, licking the water off the pale skin.

"Yeah. Too long." Topaz cuddled close. "You smell good. Thank you for the chocolate."

"You're welcome." He kissed Topaz softly. "Oh, it tastes really good from your mouth."

"Yeah? Taste some more?" Topaz moaned, snuggling.

He laughed and happily complied; his interest definitely showing, nudging against Topaz's backside.

A soft splash interrupted them, Leo and Stephan sliding into the water. He would have pulled away, but Topaz was smiling for him, loose and easy in his arms. So he ignored the other two and lost himself in the bright eyes and sweet mouth, holding his lover close.

"Mmm... Gemini. Love you." Topaz leaned down, resting a smooth cheek on his shoulder. "Rub my back?"

Stephan was curled in Leo's lap, nuzzling the thick neck, hands tangled in the long braid.

"Of course." He slid his hand down Topaz' back, fingers pushing into smooth skin. He kept an eye on Stephan and Leo, but they seemed oblivious. Maybe this wasn't gonna be so bad.

"Oh, right there." Topaz shifted, turned, legs wrapping around his waist. "More."

He bit back his groan, really turned on, and kept rubbing.

His lover was plastered against him, relaxed, happy, not tense at all. "Love you, Quincy."

"I love you, too, Topaz." He turned Topaz' chin up and licked at the soft lips, turning the gentle caress into a kiss.

Leo and Stephan were making soft sounds, almost echoing them.

He glanced up, finding the two of them kissing, seeming oblivious to everything but each other. He could return that favor, and happily.

Still rubbing Topaz' back, he focused on the way their mouths were joined, on the way Topaz tasted on his tongue. His lover's hands were everywhere, stroking slow and lazy, soft, sweet moans sliding over his tongue. Topaz tasted like bliss.

"God, Topaz, you make me so hot. All the time -- I feel like a teenager again."

"It's because you were made for me, for my arms." Topaz sounded so sure. "I love you."

"I love you, too." He closed their mouths together again, his passion sending his tongue deep. He felt Topaz melt, felt the heat and hardness on his belly, felt those thin fingers tighten.

"Are you gonna be okay if we do this?" he asked, fingers stroking over Topaz's back.

"There's nothing about you that I would be ashamed of." Topaz smiled at him. "I love you."

He blushed at that -- he supposed he'd deserved it. "I meant your back, lovely man."

"Oh!" Topaz's giggles were sweet, pure and happy. All for him. "I'd forgotten!"

"Oh, cool. I guess that means it's feeling better." He took Topaz' mouth, taking in the giggles, swallowing that happiness into himself.

He heard Stephan's laughter, Leo's low, amused chuckles. "Looks like the pain relief you suggested worked, lover. Quincy fixed him right up."

He blushed hard, but didn't stop kissing, hands moving over smooth skin.

Topaz leaned forward, whispering. "The water feels good, I'll be sore tomorrow. Need you now. Please Gemini, I want you."

"Condoms are in my pants, love."

A soft whimper sounded. "I'll grab them."

"K. Hurry." He kissed Topaz and let him go, panting.

"Condoms?" murmured Stephan. "Sunshine is clean as a whistle."

Leo chuckled. "Cleaner, even, with all that high fiber bread."

Topaz blushed and didn't say a word, just carefully stretched out for his pile of clothes.

"And what about you two? And the people you fuck?" he snapped, face flushing. The truth was, he wore a condom for Topaz' sake more than his own; while he was a one-man man, that meant one at a time, not just one altogether.

Leo frowned, arms circling Stephan. "What do you mean? We don't sleep around. We trust Topaz. He wouldn't bring anything home to us. We didn't mean to upset you, Quincy."

His cheeks heated further and he looked down at the water lapping at his skin. "I'm sorry, that was rude. I guess I'm a bit touchy about the... well the you two and Topaz issue."

Topaz settled back in the water, hiding an ugly scrape on that thin-thin hip, eyes still and quiet. "I'm sorry. Should I turn the bubbles back on?"

He pulled Topaz close, leaning for foreheads together. "I'm sorry," he murmured. "That was really rude."

To his surprise and pleasure, Topaz just relaxed, body going easy against him. "It's a weird situation. I love you, Gemini."

"Oh... I love you, too, Topaz." He smiled and kissed his lover, focus narrowing to just this man in his arms. It felt good. to have Topaz cuddle into him, to have those lips parted, those pretty eyes focused on him.

He got the condom on somehow, the water fighting him every step of the way. Then he was holding those sweet hips in his hands and pulling Topaz down onto him, groaning at the pleasure of it.

"Oh..." Topaz purred for him, loose and easy in his hands. So pretty. So happy. He lost himself in Topaz' eyes, Topaz' body. "So good. Love you." Topaz licked at his lips, breathing against his jaw. "I do."

"I know." He played with Topaz' tongue, hands moving his lover slowly up and down on his cock.

It was so good. So good.

He heard Leo's low, soft groan. "Beautiful. Fuck, they're lovely, Stephan."

"I know my love, like a sunrise over a garden of yellow tulips."

He ignored them, ignored everything but Topaz, focusing on the love they shared between them.

Topaz ducked his head, purring. "My Gemini. Sweet. Feel you. Deep."

"God. Yeah. Oh..." He moaned, bucking up harder.

"More. Love you."

Whimpering, he pulled Topaz into his thrusts. He bent forward, mouth wrapping around a bare shoulder and working up a mark.

Topaz's cry sounded as that tight-tight body rippled around him.

"Oh!" He jerked, filling the condom as he came.

His lover settled down, humming soft and low, holding him tight.

He got the condom off, just as awkwardly as it had gone on and then he gathered Topaz close, letting his eyes close.

"Mm... Quincy. Love you." Thin fingers stroked his hair, pet him. "'s good."

He nodded, nuzzling into the touch. "Love you, Topaz."

There was a low groan from across the hot tub and then Stephan screamed, the look on his face ecstasy.

Topaz giggled. "Wait, you'll hear Ku next."

Sure enough, a low, musical, oddly-soft noise filled the air, the water stopping its rocking.

He buried his own giggles against Topaz' skin. They laughed, hilarity growing louder, stronger and then, to his surprise, two more giggles joined theirs.

Oh, it felt good to laugh, especially given the awkwardness they'd shared earlier.

A splash of water caught Topaz in the neck and those pretty eyes gleamed. "Oooh! Water fight! Be on my team?"

"No where else I'd rather be," he murmured. Leaning in, he took another kiss, using it as cover to gauge the best angle. As the kiss ended, he sent a spray toward Leo and Stephan.

Stephan's laugh was sweet, almost as happy as Topaz's and the war -- wet and filled with easy laughter -- was on. He shielded Topaz as best he could, aiming most of his spray at Stephan, which seemed to be keeping Leo from doing much more than trying to protect his own lover.

Finally they all settled, breathing hard, laughing harder. "I think we won, Gemini."

He chuckled. "How can you tell?"

"'Cause he said it first." Leo grinned over at them, rolling his eyes. "He's bad that way."

"Hey, love, you're right -- we won." Grinning, he bent to give Topaz a kiss.

"Yep." Topaz opened to him easily, tongue sliding deep.

He had to admit, the evening was going far better than he'd expected.

Chapter Thirteen

Topaz woke up in his bed, curled around Quincy for the second time.

Sweet.

This time, he'd brought muffins up when they'd gone to bed. Lots of muffins. Juice, too.

He stayed put, nuzzling and licking Quincy's shoulder. Yes. Staying here.

Quincy made a snuffling noise and the hand at his back petted sleepily.

He giggled, cuddling closer. Loved this man. His hands stroked Quincy's hair, easing his lover awake.

Quincy groaned a little and nuzzled against him. "Wha' time's it?"

"Dunno." He smiled. "I just can't stop touching you."

"Do I have to go to work?" Quincy asked, starting to sound a little more awake.

"Uh... no. It's Saturday." Topaz giggled. "We're off 'til Tuesday. Three-day weekend, yeah?"

"Oh, cool." Quincy rolled, putting him underneath the warm body. "I guess I can wake up then."

"Mmm... warm. Love you. Good morning." Topaz stretched, rubbing and grinning.

Quincy smiled down at him, blue eyes shinning. "Good morning, love."

Oh. Oh, that felt nice. "Say it again?"

"How about I say I love you instead?" Quincy licked at his lips, one hand sliding along his side and over his hip.

"Oh, okay." He moaned, lips parting. "I like that."

"Oh, good. I love you." Quincy kissed him, slowly. "I love you." He got another kiss, too.

Oh, he was melting inside, all warm and happy and home. "You make me so happy."

"I like how you look when you're happy, Topaz. I like how it makes me feel." Quincy rubbed against him. "I like the way it smells in here. Like you."

"I love the way you make the sheets smell." He took another kiss, then another. "Quincy..."

"Yeah?" Quincy asked, voice distracted, eyes going dark.

"Want you, love." Topaz purred, shifting, rubbing, hard and so happy.

"Oh..." Quincy moaned. "Yeah. Yeah, love, I want you, too."

Quincy reached for the condoms and lube, giving him the condom, nipping at his lips. "Put it on me, love?"

Topaz nodded, unfastening the package and easing it down onto Quincy's cock with only a little awkwardness. He was getting better at this part.

Quincy moaned. "Oh, god, Topaz... feel's good."

His Gemini's fingers were shaking just a little as Quincy opened the lube. Then they were sliding against him, teasing as if Quincy weren't almost shaking, eyes dark with lust above him.

"Yes. Good." He met Quincy's eyes. "Love the feel of you, filling me, sliding inside. Love holding you."

Quincy nodded, moaning.

The fingers at his hole pushed in, first one and then two and then one again, Quincy stretching, playing, slicking him up. He arched, knees parting, showing his need, letting Quincy see everything.

"Oh, God... love..." Quincy kissed him, the flavors of strawberries and need and want filling his mouth.

Whimpering, he nodded, hands sliding over Quincy's shoulders, petting and stroking. Loved him. Needed.

Quincy finally pulled his fingers away, the blunt heat of his lover's cock replacing them immediately. "Want me?" Quincy asked, love and laughter coloring his Gemini's voice.

"With all I am." He could bathe in that sound, wrap himself tight inside it. "My love."

Quincy sank into him with a moan. Stretching him, filling him, loving him.

"Oh..." His own groan filled the air, sliding around Quincy's and mingling.

"Oh, love you," whimpered Quincy, setting a gentle rhythm, taking him with slow heat. The motion was becoming familiar, welcome, an external heartbeat as necessary as his own. Quincy closed their mouths together in a kiss, tongue thrusting lazily.

They rocked together for what seemed like hours. Hours of kisses and touches and thrusts and happiness.

"Ung... coming," groaned Quincy, thrusts becoming quick, graceless jerks. "Oh..."

Topaz focused on it, watched his Gemini's face in passion. So good. The pleasure made Quincy's face flush rose, the blue eyes so dark and sightless. So pretty. He arched, hand pumping his cock. So beautiful. His love.

"Oh, I love you." Quincy nuzzled his neck, tongue licking at his skin.

"Love. Oh, Quince!" He arched, offering more skin.

"Mmm..." Quincy murmured against his skin, licking and nibbling.

"Come for me, love, come on my cock. Let me feel you."

Oh! He jerked, lips falling open, arousal slamming through him.

"Please, love, now, want to feel you now." His entire body came, muscles rippling around Quincy's prick. Quincy moaned, shuddering softly, hands petting him. "God, love, if I hadn't just come you'd have pulled another one out of me."

"Oh..." He blushed and grinned, moving under Quincy's hand. "Make me feel so sexy."

"Oh, you don't need me for that, Topaz. I don't think I've ever known anyone sexier."

Quincy kissed him, distracting him as the long cock slid out of his body. He shivered, moaning and happy and home. Quincy curled up next to him, still nuzzling his neck, warm fingers sliding over his belly and tracing small circles.

He giggled, watched. He was pretty sure he couldn't be too much happier. "I brought muffins up."

"What kind?" Quincy asked, fingers playing over his hips, teasing the line of flesh where his curls began.

"Uh..." He squirmed, laughing harder, cock threatening to fill again. "Blueberry? Blackberry? I don't... Quincy!"

"You don't Quincy? Oh, but you do, love, you were Quincy-ing just a few moments ago." His Gemini managed to say it with a straight face and then the laughter burst through.

He rolled with laughter, fingers finding Quincy's ribs and tickling. Loved this man so much. They rolled on the bed together, fingers digging into ribs and searching out other places that tickled.

At last Quincy rolled onto his back with a sigh. "Oh man, my sides hurt. I haven't laughed like that in a long, long time, love."

"Felt good. Felt so good." Topaz snuggled close. "Thank you."

"Mmhm. I love you." Quincy's stomach growled loudly and his lover laughed. "I think maybe we should eat those muffins now, love."

He nodded. This was what he'd needed, what he wanted -- laughing and kisses and breakfast in bed.

Quincy sat up and leaned over the bed, finding the basket with the muffins in it. "Are we allowed to eat in bed?"

"Mm-hmm. No squishing the muffins in the sheets."

Quincy pouted. "Damn."

Topaz giggled and stole a muffin -- cranberry, it looked like. "I'm so mean."

"Yep, the meanest." Quincy was smiling at him though, eyes warm.

"Yeah." He settled on his butt, nibbling. "What do you want to do this weekend?"

"Is staying here and making love until we're two dried out husks an option?"

"Uh-huh. In fact, I could so handle that. We'll have to buy more condoms and some lube though, we're running low."

Quincy nodded and his skin flushed a light rose. "I've been thinking about that actually."

Topaz arched an eyebrow, just a little worried. "Yeah?"

"Yeah, I... well I want to be able to make love to you skin on skin, you know? To really feel you around my cock, to be able to shoot inside you instead of into a condom."

"Oh..." He shuddered, cock throbbing as he nodded. "Oh, yeah."

"So I was thinking. We need to get tested. You and me and Stephan and Leo. 'Cause... you know if

you're fucking them, I basically am as well -- you know that's how it works and don't be upset, okay? It's only prudent. I've been with a lot of guys, I get tested regularly, but I think it needs to be a recent now test. To be sure. Okay?"

He hated that -- he wasn't just fucking Ku and Daisy. He wasn't.

"I'll talk to them. There shouldn't be a problem. We've been together for a long time, could test again."

"That'd be great." Quincy reached out and stroked his cheek. "I really want to bareback with you, Topaz, I want it all."

He dropped a kiss in Quincy's palm. "I'll get Daisy to call Tuesday. He's okay at appointments and keeps track of the schedule stuff. Sorta." Topaz offered Quincy a wry grin. "There's none of us good at it." "You need a secretary," Quincy told him with a grin, hand sliding back along his cheek, into his hair.

"I'm not sure any one person is up to the job of organizing two nutty artists and a... A..." He bit at his bottom lip. "A Stephan."

That made Quincy laugh and then his Gemini sobered again, fingers still stroking his face. "Thank you, Topaz."

"I love you, Quincy." He gave his Gemini a smile. "I just love you."

Quincy nodded, eyes happy. "I love you, too."

He took another bite of muffin and nodded. He knew.

Chapter Fourteen

Stephan sighed and took all the flowers out of the vase, beginning the arrangement again. "I'm still worried about him, Leo."

"Hmm?" Leo looked up from a catalogue where he was ordering supplies for the shop. His lover looked rumpled and distracted and edible. "Worried about what, lover?"

"Topaz and his 'soul mate'."

He glared at the flowers that would not come together, the irises refusing to sit with the daisies and the tulips. The only thing that settled happily with all of them was the baby's breath. "Did you see his eyes when he told us about the tests? Quincy still does not trust him."

"Quincy doesn't trust us, either, love." Leo shook his head and sighed. "We're going to have to wait it out, Stephan. He'll either learn to accept us or leave."

"That would break Sunshine's heart!" The stem of the iris he was holding snapped beneath his fingers. "Oh no! Look what I've done!"

"Stephan." Leo stood, rumbling softly, cupping his face in those huge hands. "Topaz loves us and we love him. He would not stay forever with someone who couldn't understand that. He couldn't believe in that. You know our Sunshine."

"I know if Quincy can't understand that it is going to hurt Topaz dreadfully -- why do you think I'm worried about him. Quincy is so..." He bit his lip, searching for the right word. "Straight."

Leo chuckled and nodded. "And still Topaz wants him. We have to trust in that, trust in Topaz." A soft sigh sounded. "Trust in us to put him back together after, if we have to."

"You know -- no one's even asked us if we like Quincy," he noted with a sniff. "Maybe *we* don't want *him*."

"Oh." Stephan saw Leo pale at the single word, saw the reflection of Topaz's beet red face in the dark eyes.

He turned around, holding his hands out to Topaz. "Oh, Sunshine, lover, I didn't mean it! I didn't, truly!"

Topaz stepped back, shaking his head. "I... I've been terrible about all this, haven't I? I'm sorry, Daisy. I didn't mean to. I..." One tear fell on the dark cheek. "I'm so sorry."

Then Topaz opened the backdoor, tiny and huddled into himself. "I came to tell you Rosa called and wants to see the new yarns. I'll bring home dinner for us."

"Oh, Sunshine, don't go away upset." He went to the door, stroking Topaz' cheek, wiping away the wet track. "Please."

He was near to crying himself and he wanted to just kick Quincy -- so much trouble and heartache for the sake of a single man.

"I'm okay, Daisy. I..." Topaz took a deep breath. "I've been just horrid, messing with everybody's life. Yours and Leo's, Quincy's -- all I've seen is my own stupid self."

A soft kiss fell into his palm. "I need to do some meditating, more praying and less fucking, yeah?"

The coarse word sounded false in their Sunshine's voice. "You've never fucked anyone in your life, Sunshine." He pulled his lover in for a hug, holding Topaz tight. "I love you, Topaz. I just want you to be happy and healthy. Wait before you go!" He went back to his vase and picked up one of each of the flowers and a handful of baby's breath, wrapping the broken stem around them to hold them altogether. "Here. To brighten your way."

Stephan got a smile, slow and tired, but real. "Always, Daisy. You two are my home. I love you."

Then Topaz was gone, thin body winding the bright purple basket down the road.

He watched until Topaz rounded the corner then he turned back to Leo with tears in his eyes. "Oh, lover, I am a terrible person."

"Bah. You just have lousy timing." Leo held his arms open, eyes warm, loving. "No matter what, this, you and me, we won't change."

He went to his lover, pressing close, letting the warmth and acceptance and love he found there soothe him. "Never, my love, never."

"No, beautiful lover. Never." Hands stroked his hair, loved him, eased him.

He tilted his head back, looking up into beautiful eyes that were rich like dark chocolate. "Make love to me, Leo? Make me forget everything but the power of your body, of your love."

"Yes." The door was locked and he was led upstairs into their soft, warm bed, until long after supper.

Chapter Fifteen

He was frowning when he opened the back door, looking for Stephan. "Lover? You home? You checked the messages?"

Nine days. Nine days since he'd seen Topaz -- here or at work. Just a note -- *feed the cats. Love you. T.*

Leo had seen that Topaz had been hurt by Stephan's comment. Well, and the fact that they were in bed making love when Topaz brought food and left it still wrapped up in the refrigerator...

Still.

Nine days was a long time not to be at the loom, even for Topaz, and if he was going to move in with Quincy, he should just say so.

Stephan came in from the back, hands black with earth. "Leo! No news from Sunshine yet. I don't suppose he called in at work?"

"No. Maybe we should call Quincy's house?" He leaned in for a kiss.

"I don't know. I hurt him worse than he let on." Stephan gave him his kiss and then leaned against him. "It's not like him to punish us like this though, to run to Quincy and not say a word for nine days!"

Before he could answer, the garage doorbell sounded. They both went to the door, both looked out. He frowned deeply when they saw Quincy there.

Leo stepped out. "Quincy? Why are you ringing the bell? Where's Topaz?"

Now Quincy was frowning. "What do you mean where's Topaz? Isn't he here?"

"No. He's not with you? He hasn't been with you?"

Oh, shit.

Quincy paled. "I take it that means he's not here. Please don't tell me he hasn't been here for the last nine days. Oh, I assumed he was upset with me over the whole testing thing and was staying here with you both!"

Leo shook his head. "Stephan, go call Rosa. Find out if she sent him on some weird assed religious thing to cleanse himself, yeah?"

As soon as Quincy was in and the door shut, Leo shook his head. "We agreed to the testing, Quincy. We went already. Stephan and Topaz had a little misunderstanding last Wednesday. We thought he was with you."

"Oh dear. Oh no." Quincy looked stricken. "That's over a week ago!"

"This is all my fault," Stephan said. "I'll call Rosa."

His flower bustled off, still talking to himself, blaming himself.

"No, it's Rosa's fault. She gets him all worried and then he's off to cleanse this or discover that and it'll take three weeks before we get him to eat right again." Leo growled and rolled his eyes. "Come in. We'll ferret out where he is and then kick his ass."

"Does he do this a lot?" Quincy asked.

"Not for a long time, no." Leo sighed. "He's stressed out and worried about hurting all of us." He gave Quincy a wry grin. "For being the most loving man on earth? He's a bit of a dingbat."

Quincy chuckled and then sighed. "For being someone who claims to love him, I've not made his life easy, have I? I'm just... Well, not used to the way the three of you live your lives and I'm afraid I've been very judgmental."

"And we've been scared to lose him. Jealous as hell." Leo nodded. "Let's see if we can't find him, then we'll beat on him, yeah?"

"Sounds like we should let him beat us a little too, for putting him through it."

"Yeah, but that comes after." He dug out two beers, handing one over and herding Quincy to the kitchen table. "Have you met Rosa yet?"

Quincy shook his head. "We've been kind of ah... focused on the, you know, bed part." The man took a swig of the beer and tilted the bottle toward him. "Thanks."

"She's his grandmother. Looney and lovely and utterly convinced that spirits tell her what to do." Leo lowered his voice. "She's right more often than she's wrong, too, but she gives Topaz the weirdest advice about sweat lodges and crystal healers and psychic horses..."

"Psychic horses?" Quincy blinked and started getting that uptight look again.

He grinned. "Don't ask me. It apparently told Topaz to only work in earth tones for a year. Topaz is... special."

That got another smile out of Quincy. "Yeah, he is."

Stephan came in then, fussing and muttering.

He looked over, arching an eyebrow. "Does Rosa have him?"

Stephan nodded, grabbing himself a beer. "He's in the woods at Dali somebody or other Lama's voodoo camp. I think he's trying to be a leaf. She figures he won't come back until he can photosynthesize." Those sweet brown eyes looked over at him. "It doesn't sound like they're even feeding him, lover. We need to go rescue him. And then deprogram him."

He arched an eyebrow. "Photosynthesize. Topaz. Christ, he's tiny enough. Did she say where?"

"Yeah, just outside of town off Highway One. Apparently we can't miss the sixty foot high paper mache Dali whosit."

"Sixty foot..." He sighed and finished his beer. "You see, Quincy? This is why we kick his ass."

Quincy shook his head. "You've got to be making that up."

Stephan shook his head. "I wish I was, Bluebell, but knowing Rosa and Topaz, it's going to be even worse than we imagine."

"Let's get in the car. Somebody grab the aloe vera, somebody grab some hummus. Quincy, go get something to wrap him up in." It was almost funny.

Almost.

"We're going to go up there and... well, kidnap him?" Quincy looked like he was about to protest, but then the man nodded and got up. "I'll get one of the blankets from his bed."

"Think of it as rescuing. Topaz wants to come home six times out of ten." He got a bowl of hummus and some grapes.

"Six times out of..." Quincy laughed and hurried off.

Stephan got the aloe vera, in case of sunburn, plus a thermos of green tea and a toothbrush, liquid soap and big towels. Right, the last time -- in his 'man is a compost heap' workshop -- the stench was terrifying.

Quincy came back with a couple of blankets. "He'll be all right, right?"

"He will. Between all of us? He'll be just fine." He offered Quincy an honest smile. Hell, this was the most fun they'd had together in days.

"All right then. Let's go rescue our man."

Oh, yeah. The Dalai Somebody or Other had nothing on the florist, the glassblower and super secretary. Nothing at all.

Chapter Sixteen

The car ride back from the Center For Meditation and Natural Study was quiet. Leo was driving, Stephan sitting next to him, craning his neck around his seat every few minutes to check on Topaz. Who was fast asleep, curled up in his lap.

Quincy breathed a sigh of relief as they pulled into the driveway.

He'd honestly been imagining all sorts of *Ticket To Heaven* type scenarios and when they were able to just walk in, ask where Topaz was and waltz back out with him it threw him and he'd been convinced the entire way home a van full of Dali Pashi Lama crazies was going to start chasing them.

"What do we do now?" he asked. "Bed? Shower? Food?"

"Shower, first, then food and water. He looks dehydrated." Leo stood and opened the door. "Can you manage the shower part? I'll cook and Stephan can bring you towels."

He nodded, passing Topaz up to Leo and then taking his lover back into his own arms once he was out of the car. "We'll be good."

"Come on into the main house. The bathroom's bigger and easier to deal with."

He nodded. "Lead the way."

Between Leo and Stephan, he got them both into the tub, Topaz still mostly asleep and snugly.

The bathroom was filled with plants, green and beautiful, hanging from every available surface. He had Topaz soaped up quickly and then backed them both up into the spray, holding Topaz upright.

A soft giggle sounded. "Mmm... my Gemini."

He grinned and hugged Topaz tight. "My Starchild."

"We home?" Soft lips brushed his neck. "Missed you."

"Yeah, love, we're home." He bent to kiss Topaz. "I missed you, too," he whispered against his lover's lips.

Topaz was melted against him, skinny frame light in his arms. The kiss lingered until the door opened, Stephan bringing towels.

He turned the shower off and helped Topaz out of the tub, not even thinking to be embarrassed about his hard on until they had Topaz wrapped up in a fluffy towel and Stephan was handing him another for himself.

He colored a little, but Stephan gave him a quick once over and then a "hey sailor" look, making it plain he liked what he saw. That made him blush harder, but in a good way, and he focused his attention back on Topaz after wrapping the towel tight around his waist.

"Told you he was luscious." Topaz was swaying, tongue sticking out at Stephan.

He laughed, Stephan's bright giggles sounding as well. "Oh, Sunshine, welcome back!"

Topaz blushed, leaned back into his arms. "It's good to be home. Feels like forever. I'm so hungry."

"Leo's got a feast ready for you! For all of us, really," Stephan murmured. "Come on, Sunshine, Bluebell, let's not keep him waiting."

Topaz took a few steps on his own, then stumbled. "Gemini? Help me?"

"Always." He picked Topaz up, his Starchild an easy burden. Thin arms wrapped around his neck, Topaz relaxed, settled. Sure. As comfortable as he had been those first days. He kissed his lover softly and then brought him to the kitchen.

Leo was still rumbling, fussing -- it was sort of strange to see the big man as huge mother hen, but that's what Quincy was reminded of.

Stephan pulled out a chair at the table for Topaz and he sat in it, not quite willing to let go of his lover just yet.

Topaz cuddled happily, one eye on Leo. When his lover's belly rumbled audibly at the smell of French toast, one of Leo's eyebrows raised. "What? You didn't manage to photosynthesize?"

Topaz blushed dark. "It was a cleansing thing, Leo."

"We have three bathrooms and a hot tub, Topaz."

"I paid for the whole two week workshop, Ku. Rosa said..."

Leo held up one hand. "I don't want to know what Rosa said. You're home and clean and we all love you and you're going to eat."

"It smells great, Leo. I hope you made enough for everyone."

He got a warm smile and a nod, Leo almost blushing. Topaz's lips slid along his jaw. "He's very proud of his cooking."

"Yeah, well if it tastes half as good as it smells he should be."

A huge plate of French toast, buttered and syruped landed in front of them, along with some fruit and some scrambled eggs. "Eat. Quince, you make sure he eats."

"Pushy mountain man."

"Silly airhead."

"Grouch."

"Skinny."

Stephan was giggling madly as Leo put the milk and orange juice on the table.

He kissed the top of Topaz' head, feeling good, feeling right, enjoying the company of not only his lover, but Stephan and Leo, too. For the first time since the beginning it wasn't awkward.

The easy insults went on until Stephan grabbed a fork and speared a bit of pineapple. "I'll feed mine if you feed yours."

He chuckled. "Deal."

Before Topaz could protest, he pushed a piece of melon into his lover's mouth.

Leo and Topaz made exactly the same noise -- Leo's low, Topaz's high, but both pure bliss.

He and Stephan shared a grin and then they all concentrated on the task of eating. Leo's French toast was the best he'd ever had and he almost didn't want to share with Topaz. He did though, the happy moans and blissful face better than anything.

Topaz licked and nuzzled, stealing one bite after another, eating a fair amount before settling close with a soft moan. He ate until he was stuffed and then sat back with a sigh, holding Topaz, sliding his hand beneath the towel to touch warm skin.

Leo looked up, smiled softly. "I put cushions out in the front room. Let's rest there until the sheets are out of the dryer."

He nodded. "Sounds good."

He got up again, Topaz light and right in his arms. It seemed the most natural thing in the world to lie down among the pillows with Leo and Stephan. Topaz stayed in his arms and Stephan climbed into Leo's, and he himself leaned against the big man.

Topaz was sound asleep in seconds, relaxed and quiet, a look of peace covering the sweet face.

He smiled, his own eyes beginning to drift closed. It was warm and good and very comfortable, not at all strange or odd.

It was Leo's snores that chased him into sleep.

Chapter Seventeen

Stephan was warm and cozy, lying on softness with heat surrounding him.

His Leo was pressed up against his back, curled around him. In front of him was... he blinked and opened his eyes. Quincy. The man was wrapped around their Sunshine, but pressed back against him.

Oh, how lovely!

He knew Quincy was as likely to go back to being standoffish as soon as he woke as not, but for now Stephan could enjoy the warmth and coziness and pretend everything was perfect.

Topaz's hand was wrapped around Quincy's waist, fingers moving idly, periodically stroking his skin, Leo's arm.

Oh, it was wonderful. Just wonderful.

He let his fingers stroke Topaz's. Those thin fingers curled around his, holding on tight.

Quincy stirred between them.

Topaz gave a lazy, soft purr, face lifting to Quincy's. "Gemini."

"Mmm..." Quincy nuzzled against Topaz' face and then gave him a soft kiss.

So lovely together -- he'd thought so when they'd all shared the hot tub. He'd said no one had asked him and Leo what they thought, but the truth was that he found Quincy quite handsome and with Topaz... Well, the fact that he was now hard and his prick was nudging at Quincy's ass was a good indication of what he thought.

He tried to shuffle back some, but Leo was a solid wall behind him.

Then Leo rumbled softly, rubbing against him, hand sliding over his hip, brushing Quincy just a little.

Quincy gasped, froze, and Stephan did as well, his fingers holding tight to Topaz's, waiting. Then Quincy moaned and deepened the kiss with Topaz, not quite rubbing against him.

Topaz groaned, melting into Quincy, one thin leg sliding up over his side.

"Oh, God... Starchild. Love you." Quincy's hands were sliding over Topaz's skin, sweet murmurs sliding between them.

Leo's hand found his cock, wrapped it in familiar warmth. The slow tugs caused the tip to just stroke Quincy's skin. A soft shudder went through Quincy and a moan sounded.

"Oh, Gemini... Your eyes..." Topaz's head disappeared beneath the light sheet, soft moans floating up.

"Oh! Topaz!" Another shudder went through Quincy, body rippling, sliding against him.

"Yes, love. Need you. Please." The fingers holding his tightened, even as Leo began rocking behind him, nudging him against Bluebell slow and easy.

Quincy matched the movements, rocking back against him and then forward again, no doubt into Sunshine's mouth. Wanting to see, he risked the balance they found and slid the sheet away.

Oh! So beautiful, Topaz' face shone. Topaz moaned, taking Quincy deeper, humming as they found their pleasure. Quincy's hands slid into Topaz' hair, soft moans and whimpers coming from him.

Leo kept rocking him and Quincy was pushing back, all of them finding a rhythm, energy moving between them. So good.

Topaz's hand slid over his waist, so familiar, so warm.

Loving him.

Loving them all.

Quincy was making noises now, little gasps and whimpers that were coming closer and closer together.

Leo growled, arching behind him. "Oh... Oh, good..."

"Oh!" Bluebell called out, hips pushing hard into Sunshine's mouth.

So beautiful, such bliss on both faces. With a soft cry, he came as well, seed splashing against Quincy's ass.

Topaz was the first to move, sliding back up into Quincy's arms. "Love you. Morning."

"Morning, Starchild."

"Yes, good morning, my loves!" He boldly slid his hand over Quincy's arm to Topaz, giving them both a gentle squeeze. "How wonderful to have our Sunshine back from the wilds."

Topaz blushed prettily. "Good to be home. Lord and Lady, somebody stop me next time."

Leo chuckled. "No more going to Rosa's alone. You have to take one of the three of us with you."

"And no more taking off without letting me know where you're going," admonished Quincy. "I thought you were mad at me."

"Mad at you? Never!" Topaz took a hard kiss. "Never."

"No, if our Sunshine was mad at anyone, it was me." He stroked Topaz's arm in apology.

"I wasn't mad. I just needed some focus." Topaz took his hand. "I... I was hurting the people I love most."

Stephan made a soft noise and squeezed Topaz's hand. He wanted to refute Sunshine's statement, to say it wasn't so, but he wouldn't lie, not to Topaz. And the truth was that he and Leo had been hurting and Quincy as well, he imagined.

"Yeah, well I was being an asshole about you guys." Quincy made a funny little sound. "Feels a little silly now, seeing how we're all... sticky. But I see now how much you all love each other and how it doesn't, well how it doesn't have to take away from what me and Topaz have. I'm sorry, Starchild. I think I was the one being selfish, wanting you all to myself."

Topaz offered Quincy a soft kiss. "I need you. I need all of you."

"I'll try not to be too jealous," Quincy murmured.

"Oh, Bluebell..." he swallowed and squeezed Topaz's hand again. "He's yours, anyone can see that. Besides... you don't have to be left out at all, you know."

Leo rumbled, nodded against his shoulder. "You're welcome here. Wanted."

"I... thank you." Quincy paused and took a breath, voice quiet when he continued. "I'm not sure... it just seems strange to me. Which considering how many different men I've slept with is probably hypocritical - it's just that it was only ever with one at a time. And then there's that bad habit of mine of falling in love with the men I make love to..."

"Is that a problem, Gemini?" Topaz kissed Quincy again, hands sliding through his hair.

"I'm not sure you all want me like that." It wasn't exactly a question, but Quincy sounded unsure.

"Oh, Bluebell, our Sunshine's heart is true, if he loves you, that means we could, too, doesn't it, Leo?"

"Yes. Yes, Quincy." Leo reached out, stroked Quincy's hip, body rolling up toward Stephan.

"Oh... I'm not sure. I."

Despite his words, Quincy was pushing back against him, accepting the touch of Leo's hand with a slight breathlessness.

"So lovely, Gemini." Topaz scooted closer. "Love you."

"I love you, Topaz," murmured Quincy, kissing their Sunshine with enthusiasm.

Oh, it looked like maybe this was going to work out for all of them.

He lay between his soul and a pair of soul mates, happy to greet the day.

Chapter Eighteen

Topaz bounced happily as the elevator... well... elevated.

He had his swimming suit in a basket on his elbow. His swimming suit, roses and strawberries from Daisy, a quartet of cobalt glasses and a dozen blueberry muffins from Ku and an ocean-colored wall hanging plus table linens from him in a fine basket. They'd go have banana splits later. It was better than cake any day.

He rang the bell, humming under his breath.

Well, at least until he figured out the hallway had a great echo. Then he whistled.

His Gemini opened the door on a smile. "Starchild! You're early. Cool."

Quincy took his hand and pulled him into the plain apartment. As soon as the door closed, Quincy was kissing him. Topaz melted, lips parting immediately, free arm wrapping around his Gemini's neck.

Quincy kissed him for a long time before pulling back, blue eyes so dark, so happy. "I missed you. I think we should make it a rule to never be apart for more than eight hours -- it's too hard."

"Okay." He nodded happily, more than willing to live with that rule. "Oh! I brought goodies from Ku and Daisy and me!" He handed over the basket, stealing another kiss. "Except for the swim trunks. Those are mine."

Quincy laughed -- oh how he loved that sound -- and opened the basket. "Oh, Starchild! This is wonderful. Thank you."

"We thought you would like them. Happy Friday, my Gemini!" They settled on the couch, looking and admiring and feeling and kissing.

After everything had been taken out and examined closely, the strawberries fed to each other one by one, Gemini gave him a soft kiss. "You want to go swimming now or save that for later?"

"Mmm... how will you distract me if we wait for later?" He put the basket aside and slid into Quincy's lap, fingers working at Quincy's buttons.

Quincy laughed again. "Oh, I think you've an idea or two of your own that are worth... exploring."

"Me? Ideas?" He leaned forward, licking idly at the hollow of Quincy's throat.

"Umm, yeah." Quincy's head went back, giving him more neck to work with. Warm hands slid around his waist, Quincy's thumbs stroking his back.

He pretended he was one of Daisy's butterflies, licking and nuzzling, tongue lapping in tiny circles.

"Oh, feels so good, my sweet Starchild."

Quincy's hands moved to tug at the buttons on his shirt, fingers lingering over the exposed skin.

"Mmm... Love you." He cuddled close, fingers finding Quincy's nipples and stroking over them.

Quincy gasped, hips pushing up against him.

"You like that." Topaz giggled, repeated the motion.

"Yes!" Quincy's hands pushed his shirt open and found his waist, holding tightly.

"Have you ever thought of decorating them? Making them hard and tight all the time. Making them so sensitive." He scooted until he could get a nipple in his mouth.

"Oh God! I don't think I'd be able to concentrate on anything else." Quincy arched up into his mouth. "Would you like that?"

"I would like seeing if it made you hard, made you want." He nipped a little, moaning. "Would you like it?"

"I don't know. Maybe. It sounds... kinky." Quincy's hands tightened and moved over him restlessly. "I'd do it for you."

"I'd only want you to do it for you." Topaz moved back up, licking at Quincy's lip. "I could do one of mine, if you want. See what you think."

"Oh... oh, that would... yeah." Quincy nodded, fingers finding his nipples and tugging. "We could each get one. For each other. Like. Well." Quincy blushed. "Or not."

"Like what?" He arched, back bowing at the sensations. Oh, he loved this man. So much.

"Well. I don't know, like a promise kind of. Like rings if we were straight. And one of us was a chick."

"Oh!" He met Quincy's eyes, heart leaping. "You... you mean like a long-term promise?"

Quincy nodded. "I know we haven't been together that long, Topaz, and I know the biggest reason I've been dumped in the past is coming on too strong and too needy, but... well you're special, Topaz." Quincy smiled softly. "I want you to know that."

"Oh... Oh, Quincy. Yes." Topaz nodded, the decision easy and immediate. Quincy had held his heart from the beginning. "You always let me know."

"Cool. Lets do it then." Quincy's eyes danced with happiness.

Oh. Oh, there. That was how those eyes were meant to look.

Beautiful and bright and perfect.

"Love you."

Quincy nodded. "Yeah. I love you, too, Starchild."

He laughed, his joy so big he couldn't hold it in, then settled into Quincy's arms, singing softly. "Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments. Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds, or bends with the remover to remove: O no! it is an ever-fixed mark that looks on tempests and is never shaken; it is the star to every wandering bark, whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken."

"Oh... that's not the first time you've quoted me poetry." Quincy put a kiss on top of his head. "Such a romantic."

"I'm a fool, but I'm yours, if you'll take me."

"Not a fool," Quincy murmured. "But mine -- I'll have you."

"Good." He smiled up into those stunning eyes. "Wanna make love?"

"Yes. More than pretty much anything."

"Oh, good." He stood and reached for his soul mate. "Come to bed, Gemini. I need you."

Quincy took his hand and took a kiss. "I need you, too, Starchild."

"Then let's go." Laughing, they ran, clothes flying, bouncing together on the bed, smiling mouths pressing together.

Quincy lay back on the bed, pulling him down on top of his lover's body. "Make love to me, Topaz. Without anything - just you and me, skin on skin."

"Yes, Gemini." Shivers rocked him as he nodded. He slid down, moaning as he licked his way down Quincy's breastbone, Quincy's belly. He continued, nibbling at sharp hips and velvet-soft ball before pushing behind, wanting to taste his Gemini, to ready his lover.

"Oh God!" Quincy shuddered, legs spreading for him.

"Mmm... love." He relaxed onto the sheets, holding Quincy open with his fingers, tongue sliding around the tight little ring of muscles. The intimacy and heat made him moan, made his body ache. Quincy's muscles shifted beneath his hands, his Gemini whimpering for him.

He licked and lapped until the tight ring eased, then he pushed inside, tongue sliding in over and over, making love with all he had. Quincy writhed and whimpered, hands fisting into the sheets, heels digging into the mattress as his lover pushed up into his penetration.

Oh, so luscious. So good. So fine. He cupped Quincy's ass in his hands and kept going, driving his lover higher and higher. "Gonna... oh Topaz! Yeah. Gonna come."

He moaned, lips vibrating against Quincy's skin, gripping his lover hard, tongue pushing as deep as it would go. Quincy screamed his name out loud, flesh gripping his tongue hard as his lover came.

He was shaking hard, lips sliding up to caress Quincy's balls, inner thighs, cock sliding against the sheets. "So beautiful."

Soft shudders moved through Quincy. "Oh God. That was... oh God."

"Mmm... yeah. Yeah, love." He nodded, licking slowly, cleaning his lover's belly and cock.

Quincy moaned softly, hands sliding through his hair. "You're amazing, love. Just amazing."

"I'm just Topaz, Gemini. I just love you."

"And that's just amazing." Quincy tugged him up until their mouths met, the kiss long and deep and sweet. He was held close, straddling his lover's waist, drinking deep from the joy and passion in those sweet lips. Quincy slid a hand down between them, stroking his cock. "Are you ready to take me, Starchild?"

Whimpering, he nodded. "Please, love. So...so hard for you."

"I know. Face to face or hands and knees?" His Gemini's voice was husky, full of growing need.

"Face to face. 's easier to reach and I can have your nipples." He scooted back, rubbing his throbbing cock against Quincy's hole. "Are you slick enough, love? I don't want to hurt."

"Oh, God, Topaz, just take me. Please." The dark blue eyes gazed at him, Quincy's love and need offered freely.

"Yes." He pushed inside with steady pulses, breathing hard, trembling as that tight grip pulled him in deeper and deeper. Quincy's legs wrapped around his waist, his lover holding him close.

"Oh... I can feel you. Just you, love." He moaned softly, leaning forward to nuzzle at a hard nipple.

Quincy shuddered, prick so hard between them. "So good, Topaz. Right."

"Yes. Right. Oh, Quincy. Oh..." He started moving, he had to. Needed to.

Whimpering, Quincy met his thrusts, body moving with him. So beautiful. His lips wrapped around one nipple, tugging and pulling in time with their thrusts.

The fingers that slid down to flick across his nipples were trembling, Quincy making sweet, soft noises.

"Oh..." Topaz cried out, balls drawing up tight. "Close, love. Close."

One of Quincy's hands slid between them, wrapping around his Gemini's prick. The flesh around him tightened, rippled.

"Gemini!" His hips jerked, shoulders bunching as he came, pouring out his love and need into that beautiful body. Quincy cried out, body arching as heat splashed between them, the grip on his cock increasing until Quincy suddenly relaxed back against the bed.

"Oh... Starchild. Love you."

"Love you. Quincy. Love you." He slumped down on Quincy's chest, trembling.

Quincy's hands slid along his back, sweet and slow.

"Mmm... you make me feel so good, love. So right." His voice sounded sing-songy and dozy, sated and almost sweet, even to his own ears.

"Yes, love. It's so good."

Quincy shifted, pulled a blanket up over them.

His cheek found the perfect spot on Quincy's shoulder and his body cuddled in close, moaning softly as he fell into a sweet dream where he was laughing and telling his Gemini he wasn't sleepy at all.

Chapter Nineteen

Quincy wasn't sure if Leo and Stephan were wooing him, but that was what it felt like. Ever since the three of them had "rescued" Topaz together and he'd woken wrapped in their midst, things had changed. At first it had been little gifts sent through Topaz, but now it was more than that.

Almost every day there would be something new arriving at the office. Flowers. Fruit. Candy. Fine glass objects that he knew Leo had made himself, such fragile things from such a huge man. Those big hands must have an incredibly delicate touch.

It made him wonder what Leo's touch would be like when making love.

It wasn't just gifts from them either, some days there would be something from Topaz. A quilt for his room. A shirt. Random pieces of cloth tied together to form a bouquet.

His co-workers teased him, but he would just smile and at the end of the day take his gifts home. There was always something new for him in the morning. It made him feel special, treasured. He spent his days feeling happy, anticipating going home and seeing Topaz, hearing how Leo and Stephan were doing.

A few weeks after it had begun, he found himself at the flower shop, the soft bells tinkling as he came in, the cool air and a light aria greeting him.

Stephan was helping a customer, fine fingers arranging flowers together and wrapping them in the bright paper Stephan favored. As Quincy watched, a wave of arousal went through him. Need. Want. To feel those fingers on him, to have that focus turned to exploring him, to bringing him pleasure...

Before he could decide whether or not to stay or flee, Stephan caught sight of him. The warm brown eyes lit up behind their glasses.

"Bluebell! So good to see you! We've missed you these past few weeks, Leo and I."

"I..." he colored, caught hard and wanting. "I have strawberries," he said, holding out the basket.

Stephan waved off his customer and came happily over to him, taking the basket. "Oh there's a note!"

He nodded as Stephan put the basket on the counter, graceful fingers plucking out the small card. "Quince, luscious and ripe, these berries should not slide past your lips alone, Leo."

Stephan beamed at him. "Such a poet, isn't he, Bluebell?"

He nodded, watching as Stephan's fingers moved delicately over the fruit that surely must have been handpicked, each one perfectly ripe and luscious.

"Topaz told us how you tasted like strawberries," Stephan told him. "Will you have them with him?"

"I thought I would, but they've been in my office all day, the smell taunting me and I must have a taste." He was amazed at his own boldness, his sudden need.

He picked one of them up, following the impulse that moved through him. He bit into the fruit, moaning as the juices flowed over his tongue.

"Will you share it with me?" he asked, holding the fruit out to Stephan.

Color rose in Stephan's cheeks, the brown eyes lighting to a glow.

"Oh! I... yes." Leaning forward, Stephan drew the berry from his fingers, mouth warm against his skin, tongue sliding, moving to lick all the juices from his fingers.

He moaned softly, cock throbbing, watching the heat growing in Stephan's eyes. Those eyes never left his, even after the last lick of that delicate tongue.

"You have juice on your lips," Stephan told him. "May I?"

He nodded, leaning in, meeting Stephan half way. That clever tongue slid over his lips, licking at the corners of his mouth. The fullness of his bottom lip was sucked in between Stephan's lips, drawing another moan from him. Stephan drew back slowly.

"Would you like to share another?" he asked, wanting that mouth back on his.

"I would," replied Stephan, fingers moving over the strawberries again, picking one and slowly putting it between red lips. Stephan brought their mouths together again, an open mouthed kiss full of the berry. His tongue slid into Stephan's mouth automatically taking some of the berry for himself.

He could taste Stephan along with the fruit, a spiciness and a hint of something green. The kiss continued long after the berry was gone, Stephan's tongue gentle, flitting like a butterfly within his mouth. If not for the bells on the door chiming, the kiss might have melted into another and then another.

Stephan's lips clung to his a moment longer and then the brown eyes looked beyond his shoulder. "Sunshine! My Leo!"

Oh. He froze, cheeks flooding and then slowly turned to face his lover.

Topaz's eyes were twinkling, a happy crow sounding. "Oh, he did like the strawberries, Ku!" Then Topaz came over, bounced into his arms, face lifted for a kiss. "I want a taste!"

"I'll need another stra--" His words were cut off as Stephan popped a berry into his mouth. Grinning, feeling unbelievably good, he bit into the strawberry and bent to kiss his lover.

Topaz pushed up into the kiss, tongue sliding in and stealing little bites. Beside him, Leo had pulled Stephan up into a warm, welcoming embrace, one large hand sliding up his arm in hello.

He got lost in the kiss with Topaz for a moment, smiling down at his lover when it was done. Then he turned to Leo. "I should say thank you properly." He was blushing hard as he looked up to meet the dark brown eyes.

"Oh, that sounds most appealing, Quince." Leo leaned down, the dark hair brushing his cheek as their lips met.

Leo tasted rich like chocolate and his lips were so soft, so gentle. It made him melt. Well, most of him, his cock was still hard and he suddenly wanted things that he'd been denying since he'd met Topaz. Kissing Leo was like falling, the man's passion so deep, so innate, that you didn't know you were lost until the winds were rushing all around you.

He would have literally fallen except that Stephan and Topaz were there to catch him, hold him between their bodies. He moaned, shuddering, hands opening and closing on Topaz' arms.

"We should go home, lovers. We need. We all need." Topaz's words were soft, sure, hands seeming tiny in contrast to Leo's.

He nodded, trembling, on the verge of this thing that seemed at once so huge and so easy and simple and right. "Please," he said softly. "Take me home and love me."

It was his Starchild that took his hand, took a sweet kiss. "O lover mine, where are you roaming? O stay and hear, your true loves are coming. Trip no further, pretty sweeting; journeys end in lovers meeting."

"Oh..." He gave Topaz another kiss.

"I love you," he said, meaning them all.

Topaz nodded and tugged. "They love you, too. Come home."

"Yes. It's time to come home." Stephan was pushing him.

He nodded. Home. With the three of them.

He liked the sound of that.

Chapter Twenty

He had no idea how they'd gotten to Leo and Stephan and Topaz's. Home. No idea how they'd gotten home. All he knew was he was trembling and wanting, so needy. As if now that he'd accepted Leo and Stephan as his lovers too, his body couldn't wait to know them. Part of him was scared though, a little voice inside his head that asked what happened if they didn't like him once they were all naked and touching.

Quincy looked into Topaz' eyes and pushed that little voice over a cliff.

They walked into the house and he stood there awkwardly. Now what? Just go at it on the nearest flat surface?

Leo looked at Topaz. "The bed? It's the best, nice and big."

Topaz nodded. "Room to play and snuggle after. Come with me, Gemini. I need you."

His hand was taken and he was led up the staircase into the big bedroom with its own personal garden of flowers. The bed was huge, covered with a bright throw and with pillows piled high.

Stephan came up behind him and nudged him gently toward Topaz. "Kissing, lovelies, there should be lots of kissing!"

He was smiling as he bent, lips meeting Topaz's.

Topaz wrapped thin arms around his neck, warm body snuggling close. "Mmm... Kissing. Oh, yes. Nakedness. I vote for naked kissing, Ku."

"Naked kissing is nice." Leo's heat appeared behind him. "And touching, Topaz. There should be touching."

He had to agree as Stephan and Leo worked to get him and Topaz naked, fingers warm on his skin. Oh, it felt so good, being touched by so many hands.

Leo's hands were huge and dark, such a contrast to his Starchild's little ones flitting over his skin and finding the hot spots. He was drowning in their touches and if it wasn't for Stephan guiding them all onto the big bed, he might have sunk right down onto the floor.

Once he was spread out in the middle of the bed, Stephan was kissing him, the long-fingered hands joining Leo's and Topaz's on him. So many touches, so much to focus on, to arch into. In the end he just let go, let them have him.

Topaz's mouth sank over his cock, Leo's fingers, slick and wide, pressed into him, touching him deep. It was amazing, caught between two needs, one yielding, the other pushing him higher. He cried out into Stephan's mouth, body shaking.

His Starchild's hand slid over his inner thigh, then it was taken in Leo's grip, a thin finger added to Leo's, stretching him further. Leo's tongue laved his balls, Topaz purred around his shaft.

He keened loudly, pushing the sound into Stephan's mouth as he came down Topaz's throat. When his head cleared, Leo was kissing Topaz, licking *his* flavor from his Starchild's mouth.

"Oh God," he whispered. He reached out, one hand sliding along Stephan's skin, the other moving over the sweet lips that were joined.

Two tongues slid over his flesh, Leo stealing his fingers, Topaz licking at palm and inner wrist.

Oh. There were so many permutations and possibilities. It had never occurred to him the different ways they could pleasure each other, he'd been so focused on how wrong it was.

Topaz purred as Stephan stroked the thin spine, hands almost petting, making Topaz shiver and shake.

"What do you want to do next, Quincy?" Stephan asked, brown eyes shinning without his glasses.

"I want... I want to hold Topaz while one of you takes him."

Topaz shuddered, a sweet, desperate moan sounding, his lover's cock jerking.

Stephan's laugh was full of joy. "Oh, I think that's a yes, Bluebell."

Stephan kissed him and then Topaz and finally Leo. Topaz cuddled into his arms, snuggling close, sweet ass in the air. "Love you, Gemini."

"Love you, too, Starchild." He kissed Topaz, hands sliding over the thin back to his lover's ass, wanting to feel them get Topaz ready. He felt Stephan's and Leo's fingers pushing close in the same heartbeat that Topaz's cry filled his mouth.

Whimpering, he looked up, wanting to see, amazed at the way Topaz rode their fingers, body writhing in his arms. "Oh... Oh, good. Oh, I need." His sweet wanton was burning in his arms, that tongue a brand.

He slid his hand between them, wrapping it around Topaz's cock and stroking slowly. He knew how to keep his lover on the edge, keeping those sweet eyes shining with need.

"Are you ready for me now, Sunshine?" Stephan asked, voice husky.

"Please. Yes. Please." Topaz stared at him. "I need, Gemini. I need."

"I know, I can feel you." He squeezed Topaz's cock, kissing his Starchild lightly before going back to watching as Stephan pushed into Topaz' body.

Leo stretched out beside them, chuckling. "So wanton, our Topaz."

He nodded. "He's beautiful."

"He sure is, lovelies," murmured Stephan, beginning to move, pushing the long cock in and out of Topaz.

Topaz cried out at each thrust, face beautiful in its hunger, hard cock rubbing against his belly. He watched, caught between Topaz's face and ass, hand wrapping around Topaz's prick again, pulling in time with Stephan's movements.

Then Leo moved, sliding behind Stephen, thick thumbs sliding in with Stephan's cock, spreading Topaz wide.

"Oh, my God," he moaned, cock twitching hard, filling just like that. Topaz was gasping, body shaking hard, heat pouring off his lover. "I want to see you come, Starchild. Want to feel it on me."

"Oh! Oh, yes. Please. Please, yes. Yes." Those honeyed eyes rolled, hips jerking and hot spunk spraying over his belly. He kissed Topaz hard, hand still moving gently over his lover's cock.

"Oh... Oh, love. Love." Topaz shuddered, purring against his shoulder.

He stroked Topaz' back as Stephan continued to thrust into his lover's body, watching as the bright brown eyes glazed over, Stephan screaming as he came.

Leo was moaning, rubbing furiously against Stephan's ass, huge body rippling. Stephan reached back, hand sliding up around Leo's neck, rubbing back against him like a cat.

"My love..." The sound was raw, rough, dripping with sex.

"God, Topaz, look how beautiful they are."

"I know, and they're ours, Gemini. Our friends, our lovers. Ours." Topaz kissed him hard, smiling beatifically. "I love you."

"I think I'm beginning to get that now." He kissed Topaz back. "I love you, too."

Leo cried out against Stephan's skin, the scent of sex fresh again.

Oh... nice...

He kissed Topaz again, losing himself in his lover's lips.

Leo settled beside him, Stephan snuggling atop the big man. "I think we need more strawberries, Stephan. Lots more."

Stephan laughed, the sound bright and happy. "Yes, my love, whatever you want."

Quincy chuckled, burying his face in Topaz' neck.

"Mmm... so glad you're home, love. So glad." Topaz kissed the top of his head.

"Me, too, Starchild. Me, too."