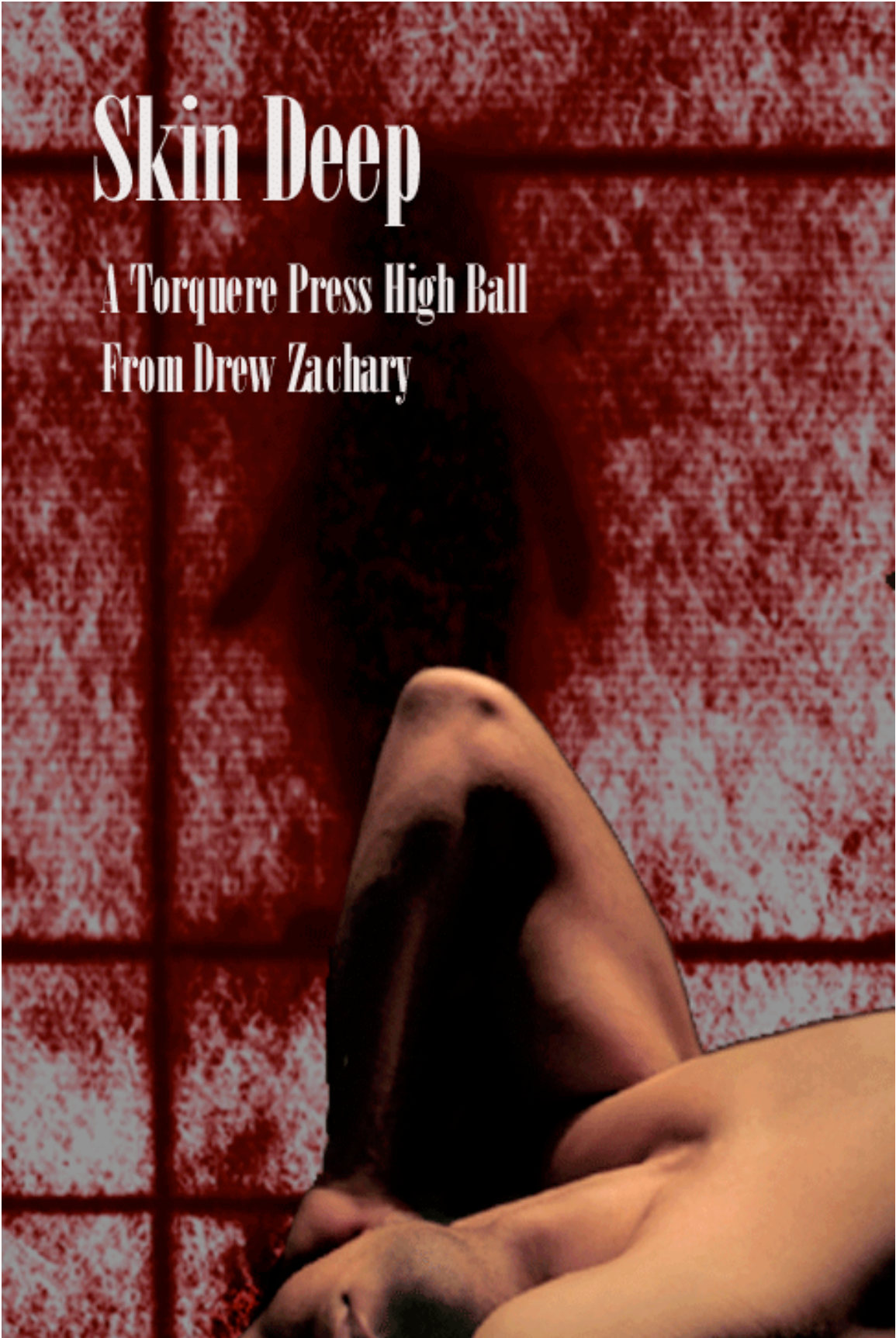


Skin Deep

A Torquere Press High Ball
From Drew Zachary



High Ball: Skin Deep

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Chapter One

Dannen Garnier pulled up into a parking zone across the street from 421 West Raven Road.

The area was one of the older neighborhoods and slowly going to seed. It was almost genteel the way the old buildings were slowly becoming dilapidated, like a lot of their older inhabitants.

He stayed in his squad car and pulled out his hand unit, reviewing the case notes. It hadn't been his case to start with. A simple robbery of one Edith Hansen in apartment 212 of 421 West Raven. The thief had gotten away with some nice stuff, most of it vintage, and had stopped to take the time to trash the place, which had woken Mrs. Hansen up and allowed her to catch a glimpse of the guy.

One of the other tenants at 421 had robbery priors and the detectives on the case had dragged the guy downtown for an interrogation. No, an interview. They were supposed to call them interviews now, no matter who they were talking to. Dannen rolled his eyes. He hated politics and hiding behind pseudonyms and fancy words. You interviewed a victim, you interrogated a suspect. It sucked that the pencil pushers didn't get there was a difference.

Anyway, this thief, one Derek Breller, had pointed the finger at another tenant. Dannen didn't have a name, just apartment 520, the other end of the hall from Breller. Apparently someone fitting the thief's description, which also fit Breller, had come and gone from the place around the time of the robbery. The case officer's notes didn't specify what Breller himself had been doing up at four am, looking out his door, but Dannen imagined the guy would have any number of excuses.

He was on the case because apparently Breller thought the guy going into 520 was 'hinky'. Dannen snorted. He'd like to know how anyone could see 'hinky' from the other end of a dark hall at four in the morning. And even if the tenant was extra-normal, that didn't automatically make him bad. Bigotry of that sort though was often shared, one of the reasons the Protectors had a special unit to deal with anything tagged extra-normal.

Dannen figured the officers on the case would have better luck 'interviewing' known fences and keeping their eyes on them to find whoever had pulled this one off. The stuff taken was just old enough to need a specialized fence to get rid of it.

He pocketed his hand unit, put on his hat and got out, hitting the locking mechanism on his belt before heading across to the double doors of 421. A sign above them proclaimed the apartment complex to be the Black Feather Arms and Dannen couldn't help but smile. He missed the old habit of naming buildings. It was one of the things that gave them the character that was lacking in the modern glass high-rises.

He let himself in with his universal pass and took the stairs up to the fifth floor. Using the stairwell gave him an opportunity to check out the thief's most likely route of escape. Only a fool would use the elevator for something like that. He didn't find anything, but the stairwell opened up to Breller's end of the hall, which allowed him to gauge how well the man might have seen someone at the far end.

He snorted again. Not well at all. Breller had definitely been throwing suspicion away from himself, which in Dannen's eyes made the man look guilty. Still, he'd follow up on the lead, just to tie it off.

As he approached the door to 520 he felt it.

Now, Dannen didn't have extra-normal powers himself, but there was a certain vibe that such powers left behind, almost like a signature, a slight vibration in the air that always made the hair on his skin stand up.

And it was standing up now.

So, their thief or not, someone in 520 was an extra-normal.

He knocked on the door.

"Yeah?" a voice yelled from the other side. "Who is it?"

"Protector, Sir. Badge number 734." He held his badge up to the old fashioned peep hole. "I just have a few questions for you, Sir."

There was a long pause before the door opened, but it did, slowly. A face peered out at him and looked him up and down, the bluer than blue eyes finally fixing on his shoulder patch. "Spook hunter?" The man's voice was silky smooth, light and airy if such a thing could be said about a voice. He had shocking white hair to go with the blue eyes, and everything about him screamed fear and suspicion.

"I'm with the extra-normal unit, yes. I just need to ask you a few questions about a robbery that occurred here last night."

That earned him a snort and the door opened wider. "Robbery, so naturally you come to me." He sounded like he'd heard it all before, like he knew he should be ticked off about it, but wasn't really. He'd also lost some of the tension across his shoulders, which was interesting.

"I came to you, because we had a report from someone else on this floor that someone fitting the perp's description was seen entering your apartment around the time the robbery occurred, Mr...." He tried not to get his back up, but there was an extra-normal unit of the Protectors to help the extra-normals, not to be assholes.

And he hated getting it from both ends.

"Call me Razi." Razi stepped back and swung the door the rest of the way open. "Come on in, no sense in letting the whole building know." He gestured with a sweep of his arm, pointing into the tiny living area. "Is this going to take long?"

Dannen looked around. Feathers. Everywhere. Big, little, real, fake, in every color he could think of, too. Kind of neat, kind of strange. Sort of like a lot of the extra-normals he'd met. And that hair standing up on his skin feeling was strong in here. Very strong. This was where Razi spent a lot of his time.

"As I said, I won't take up a lot of your time, Razi. I just need to know where you were around four this morning." Not that Razi, even down at the far end of a dimly lit corridor, could be mistaken for someone fitting the description of their perp.

"Four in the morning?" A delicately arched eyebrow lifted and Razi moved to stand in front of his window. It was all very artful, clearly designed to be pretty and distracting. "Sleeping, like all good boys, of course."

"Someone was seen coming into this apartment at four am, Mr. ah, Razi. Do you have a roommate? A friend with a key?"

"No, no one. I'm very much alone, Protector." Razi looked him up and down again. "Are you very sure of your information? I assure you, I was in my bed, and heard nothing. Of course, that's rather hard to prove, isn't it?"

He believed Razi, his gut telling him that Razi wasn't their thief. "Yeah, I'm afraid it is hard to prove if you don't have any corroborating witnesses. I don't suppose you'd let me look around? If I can't find any of the missing items here it would go a long way toward proving you're telling the truth."

Razi shrugged one elegant shoulder. "Help yourself," he said, folding himself into a chair next to the window. "Or would you rather a tour?" he asked, looking up at Dannen and blinking slowly.

Dannen felt himself get a little hard at that look and he shook his head, turning quickly before he became unprofessional. He didn't know what was wrong with him, getting turned on by a suspect to the point he went hard. He usually had better control over himself than that.

He wandered through the room, looking behind furniture, moving one huge vase of feathers after another. The feathers were starting to creep him out a little and he moved on down the narrow hallway.

Light steps sounded behind him. He'd missed Razi getting up. "The bedroom is at the end, and the bath before that. There's nothing else," Razi said with that too smooth voice.

"Kitchen on the other side?" Dannen asked, poking his head into the bathroom. Small, clean, nowhere to hide anything but the tub and a quick peek behind the shower curtain proved it to be empty aside from bottles of shampoo and bath oils and soap.

"Yes, and tragically empty of all but the most meager of things... tea and bread, nothing so much as a gold coin to be hidden anywhere." Razi led him into the bedroom and turned on the lights,

showing a room full of draped fabrics and a mass of pillows instead of a bed. "Furniture is so conventional," he said with a slight smile.

Dannen chuckled. "You don't strike me as the conventional type."

He made quick work of checking around and, as he'd suspected, there was nothing like what had been taken from the victim anywhere to be found.

"Well I'm sorry for taking up your time, Mr. Razi."

Razi shrugged. "It's your job." He turned and walked back down the hall, toward the door. "I hope you find who took-- whatever it was."

"I'm sure we will. Thanks for your cooperation." He took one of his cards from his pocket. "Here's my number. In case you see something pertaining to the case."

Razi took the card and held it between his thumb and first finger. "And what would that be? Someone looking like me? Someone in the corridor whilst I sleep?" His eyebrow arched again and he smiled a little. "I'll keep the card in a special place, Protector."

Dannen fought the color sweeping into his cheeks. "You do that."

He didn't quite run out, but he certainly didn't dawdle either. What on earth had possessed him to give the man his card? It wasn't even his case.

Shaking his head at himself, Dannen headed back down the stairs and to his car. He'd put in his report on the interview and close out his end of the case. Then he was going to put Razi and this whole incident out of his mind. He had real cases that needed his attention.

Razi leaned on the wall by the door and stared at the ceiling, trying not to shake. Of all the stupid things to do, goading a spook hunter was about the dumbest.

He had to count to thirty before he could move, going right to his bedroom and falling onto his pillows. He couldn't let go of the changes he'd made, not until he was sure that the Protector wouldn't be back; he was too close to drained to put it all back if there was a knock on the door.

All he could do, he told himself, was sustain it until he was sure the man wouldn't be back, and hope he got a full night's sleep. Just his luck to be playing all day with new colors and finery, depleting his energy. If he'd been a good boy and stayed home all day, or just read the stack of screens he had on loan, he'd have been fine. But no, he'd wanted to try something new...

Well, he'd done new. He'd done old, he'd done shades, he'd done organic and non, and now he was left as weak as a kitten, trying to keep it all together just in case.

He wasn't sure how long he lay there, but gradually it became clear that the spook hunter wasn't coming back any time soon, if at all, and he crawled to the mirror on the wall. He studied the delicate features, the curve of the lower lip and the color of his eyes. "That was fun," he said dryly. "Not so sure I want to be stuck with it, though. The hair... should have been blue, the eyes green. Or something."

He closed his eyes, committing the face in the mirror to memory, and sighed. When he opened them again he looked at his true self and sighed. "Ugly bastard," he whispered. "Be glad he saw you that way; he wouldn't have gotten hard for this."

He stared into mud brown eyes, his rugged and slightly discordant features familiar and loathed. Plain was hardly Razi's favorite word, but in all his years he'd never come up with a better one to describe himself. Plain and drab and somewhat less than normal.

Luckily, he wasn't normal, he reminded himself, curling around a pillow. Not normal at all, and in the morning he could play with it all again and appear however he wanted. With a smile, he waved a hand over the pillow and turned it from yellow to blue, then closed his eyes and went to sleep.

Almost a week later found Dannen pulling back up to 421 West Raven Road.

He got slowly out of the car and made his way to the doors, letting himself in with his universal key and taking the elevator this time.

He was just doing his civic duty, he told himself. Letting Razi know that the perp had been picked up trying to fence Edith Hansen's stuff. It hadn't been Breller, but a cousin of his. Or nephew, uncle...some relation.

A phone call would probably have sufficed. Hell, it wasn't even his case, Razi had never really been a suspect; Dannen wasn't quite sure *why* he was here in person.

Except that something about Razi drew him. Whether it was what was behind those impossibly blue eyes or the way the magic that filled the little apartment felt against his skin or just plain old-fashioned lust, he wasn't sure.

But here he was.

He knocked on the door, committing himself to giving the news in person.

He could hear steps behind the door, almost sense being watched through the spy hole, and then there was a pause before the door opened. "Protector," Razi said, sounding unsurprised. The door swung all the way open and Razi made room for him to enter. "More questions?" Razi was dressed in loose trousers the non-color of his hair, and Dannen could see bare toes poking out the bottom. Distractingly, Razi wore no shirt at all.

Dannen swallowed as he walked in, trying not to stare. That was a sweet little belly and Dannen's fingers itched to stroke it. "No, actually, the case has been solved. Closed. I thought you'd like to know."

"Is it?" Razi walked ahead of him, into the living room. He brushed a hand over one of the many feathers and looked at Dannen with curious eyes. "Was it an extra-normal? Or a plain old criminal?"

Dannen chuckled, eyes drawn to the various corners of the room and all its feathers. "A plain old criminal. I thought you'd like to know, you know? That it was solved. That no one was looking to you anymore. Not that they were after I filed my report, but it's official now, you know?"

"Until the next time," Razi murmured. "Would you like some tea? Something else?"

"You get bothered a lot, Razi? Because this wasn't some random, oh an extra-normal lives in the building, let's check him out; someone did finger you. Turned out he was aiming suspicion away from some family member, but we've got to check out all the leads, you know? I wasn't being malicious." He wasn't like that. It was one of the reasons why the Protectors had an extra-normal department, to keep prejudices and bigotry from turning extra-normals into suspects on the flimsiest of excuses.

Razi tilted his head. "Not a lot. Tell me, can you feel it? When you walk in here, does your skin react to me, what I am?"

He shot Razi a surprised look and nodded. "I can tell magic is used here. How did you know?" He'd never known anyone else who reacted like he did, not to the degree he did. A couple of the other Protectors in his unit had similar experiences, but it was less physical and more intuitive for them from what he understood.

"Your eyes. Your pupils dilate for a moment, then return to normal. I've only known two who felt it -- usually people just know something is different, that I'm different. I don't have a lot of company - normals dislike my apartment although they don't know why. They feel uncomfortable. Which leads to fear, which leads to hate, which leads to Protectors asking me about thefts or whatever else has happened around here."

"Yeah, well I am sorry about that. Like I said, I've got to check out the leads." He checked his watch. He could clock off at any time. "I wouldn't mind that tea, as long as you don't mind that I'll be off the clock." He couldn't accept anything if he was still on duty. It would be wrong.

"Not at all. Would you like something stronger than tea?" Razi offered, almost floating past him on the way to the kitchen.

"No, tea is fine." He followed Razi into the little kitchen. Funny, he'd thought it had been mostly brown, but today he saw it was done all in blues.

Razi moved easily, getting a kettle and filling it with water, then producing a tea pot and a container of loose tea leaves. "I hope jasmine is all right?" he asked, facing the counter and dumping leaves into the pot without waiting for an answer.

Dannen chuckled. "Yeah, it'll be just fine."

He leaned against the counter and logged himself off duty on his hand unit. "So what do you do, Razi?"

The figure stilled for a moment, just long enough for Dannen to note it, and then Razi was moving to the stove. "Oh, you know. I fill in for people, here and there, and I model once in a while. I... make some wishes come true, now and again." He didn't look at Dannen, the kettle apparently fascinating.

Dannen's eyebrows went up. "You make wishes come true?"

"Depending upon the wish." Razi turned to face Dannen, smiling with his mouth and not his eyes. "You haven't asked me about my... extra," he said. "Aren't you curious? Ah, but then, you're here."

Dannen felt the heat go into his cheeks again. "I could have called. I'm not sure why I came in person," he admitted.

Razi's smile suddenly appeared in his eyes, the blue shining. "Aren't you?" he asked, taking a slow step forward.

That had Dannen blushing harder, but he didn't back away. "You are attractive, Razi. Especially in your eyes."

The smile dimmed a little, but a slim hand lifted and came to rest on Dannen's chest. "Thank you," Razi said with apparent sincerity. "I try. Does my magic feel stronger if I touch you?"

"Not stronger," he said, voice rough from the way it tingled. "Different. Like I can feel it inside me." He took a breath, trying to focus his eyes somewhere else, trying to ignore the way his cock was hard inside his pants. "What do you do?" he asked, meaning Razi's magic this time.

"I... I create beauty." Razi was looking thoughtful, his lower lip caught between his teeth as he moved his hand slightly, brushing over Dannen's nipples. "I create pleasure for the senses."

The whistle on the kettle blew and Razi turned from him. "Milk and sugar?" he asked lightly.

Dannen cleared his throat, body still caught in Razi's touches, in the vision of Razi biting his lower lip. "What?" Dannen asked.

"Do you take milk and sugar in your tea?" Razi asked, plainly amused. "Or would you prefer to use my bathroom for a few moments?"

He frowned, a little offended. Okay, maybe a lot offended. So he found Razi attractive -- he would have thought that was a compliment, not a reason to be a jerk. Unless of course Razi didn't find him attractive, was only being nice because he was a Protector and Razi figured he had to.

"Actually, I've just remembered something I was supposed to do. How about a raincheck?" He pulled up a grin and held out his hand to shake Razi's.

Razi looked at his hand and then at his face before carefully turning off the kettle. "I apologize," he said stiffly. "I'm not used to your sort being unaware of the draw. You don't even know why you're here do you? Which means..." He shook his head. "You'd best leave. No raincheck needed."

Dannen was more confused than ever, but he could tell he wasn't wanted and frankly, he didn't want to be here anymore either, not like this.

He fell back onto his training, his Protector manners as he called them. "I'm sorry to have been a bother, Mr. Razi." He nodded and turned, heading for the door as quickly as he could without it looking like he was running.

"It's no bother," Razi called out to him, his voice more music than not. "I'll see you tomorrow."

The door closed behind him and he frowned. "See you tomorrow? What the...?" He turned and looked at the closed door, wondering what the hell had just happened.

He shook his head, shook himself and headed for the stairs at the far end of the corridor. He needed to move, to not be still. He'd go to the gym -- he needed a work out anyway.

So that's what he did, trying hard not to think about Razi and the way he felt drawn to the man.

Razi swore softly and dropped his glamours immediately. He avoided his reflection as he poured the hot water into the teapot and tried to think.

Magic sensors weren't terribly uncommon, and were even useful as Protectors. Usually, however, the sensors knew what they were and how to ignore and filter sensation. Those who chose to follow their instincts with a magic user were usually just looking for the feedback loop to send them into the stratosphere.

He'd assumed that's what Dannen wanted, a sense overload to rival just about any other. But apparently he'd read it wrong and the man didn't have any clue what he was doing. What Razi had thought and reacted against.

Razi might have been a lot of things, but he wasn't a whore, and he didn't get Protectors off with his magic.

He sipped his tea and made a mental note of the time. If Dannen had been one of the others, one of the ones who turned up every once in a while for a supercharged orgasm, Razi would expect him again in a week. But for one who just didn't know... hadn't even seen that Razi was a Glamour... a day at the minimum before his curiosity got to him.

Razi sighed and turned his kitchen yellow, then back to blue. He didn't really want to make Dannen go away, but he didn't really want to coach Dannen through this, either.

It would all just be so much easier if Dannen didn't seem to be one of those rare creatures -- a nice person. It was harder to hide from nice people, and Razi had to hide what he was, what he really was. What he could do with his magic was the only thing that made him worthy of anything, and the lies bred lies; it was a lovely paradox.

Razi sat in his kitchen and watched the clock and waited for Dannen to come back.

Chapter Two

Dannen was miserable.

It had been two weeks since he'd been to see Razi and he'd had to fight the urge to go back every day since. His curiosity was eating him up, but worse than that was that strange urge, whatever it was, that drew him to Razi, kept working on him, making him want.

The man hadn't been *that* attractive he told himself. And yet here he was, driving down West Raven Road again, slowing as he approached 421. Dammit, he didn't have any reason to be here and he wasn't going to be that guy, the Protector who used his position to get what he wanted.

So why didn't he come as simply a man then?

An hour later, and he was back on West Raven Road, this time in his own little car and in street clothes. He parked and went over to 421, finding the button for 520 and ringing it.

"Hello?" Razi's voice sounded thin and metallic over the intercom. "Who is it?"

He cleared his throat. "Uh. Hi. This is um. Dannen. The Protector? But. Well, not a Protector today." Damnit, he was screwing this up -- he wouldn't let himself in at this rate. "I'd like to come up and talk to you, if that's okay."

There was a short pause and then an amused, "You're very late, Dannen," before the door buzzed and unlocked. "Come on up."

He was late? Okay, so the thing about Razi confusing the fuck out of him? That was still going on. He was hoping some answers would let him let go of this... this weird obsession.

He took the stairs, happy to use up the nervous energy and soon found himself in front of 520 again. He knocked.

Razi opened the door with a flourish. "What do you think?" he asked. His white hair was now a vibrant purple with a metallic sheen. "Too much?"

Dannen laughed, feeling a little more at ease. "I like it. Very flamboyant."

"Very," Razi agreed. He stepped back so Dannen could come in, and rested his hand on Dannen's arm. "Do you prefer this?" he asked, and Dannen felt a surge go through him as Razi's hair turned silver.

He gasped, his whole body zinging for a moment from the magic. "You... glamour. Your magic is glamour." He blinked, backing away a little, trying to catch his breath, his balance.

Razi nodded and let him go. "I'll put some tea on. You can go sit down, get yourself balanced again. Then we can talk." He gave Dannen a gentle shove toward the living room and vanished into the kitchen.

Dannen found the couch under its pillows and feathers and sat. Oh, it was comfortable. And soft, he thought as he slid his hands along the material. Best to not think too much on what had just happened. Razi had seemed unsurprised; hopefully the man would have answers for him.

He took a few deep breaths, getting himself under control.

From the kitchen he could hear water being poured and china rattling, then Razi walked in with a tray. There wasn't a table, so the tray was set on the floor and Razi knelt next to it as he poured. "Better?" he asked, handing Dannen a steaming mug. He appeared utterly calm and quietly expectant.

"Yeah, thanks." Dannen held onto the mug, the heat warming his fingers. He decided to just jump in with both feet. "So um... you seem to know what the hell's going on here."

"Yes. And you don't. I apologize for my assumption the last time you were here -- I thought you were like the others, after a magic thrill. When I offered you my bathroom, it was to tell you that I don't do that, to state my limit. I didn't mean to insult you." Razi tilted his head. "Or rather, I was insulting you unnecessarily. Have you talked to anyone about this?"

Dannen shook his head. He wasn't in the habit of talking about sex and wanting and strange things with people. "A magic thrill? You mean like what happened when you changed your hair?"

Razi nodded. "You're what's called a sensor. I'm a user. Usually, sensors figure out the thrill long before they're adults and know how to deal with it. You didn't come across a lot of magic users when you were a child, did you?"

He shrugged. "I don't know if I came across any more or any less, but my grandmother taught me to make sure I gave magic users their privacy, their space."

Razi looked vaguely startled. "Oh. Well, okay." He blinked slowly and picked up his own tea. "The thing is, some magic sensors really like the feeling they get. They... well, if they can find a magic user to fuck, things get pretty wild. Some don't bother asking first, some don't fuck, just ride the feeling... It can be an issue. For users, I mean."

Dannen frowned. "That doesn't sound right. Is that why you thought I was here? To use you like that? I mean it felt good, but you're not some machine to be used."

Razi's laugh was without humor. "You'd think, wouldn't you?" He stood up and spread his arms. "Think about it, though. I glamour. I can look like whatever you want. Period. I can change, just at the right time, and send you into a whole other plane of existence. Come on, Protector -- you know there are people who'd take that, one way or another. Pay for it, hurt for it. I could be filthy rich if I wanted to be."

"But you don't want to be and that's the important thing. I'm a Protector, Razi. My job is to make sure people don't just take stuff one way or another." He shook his head. "I'm not saying I'm not curious, I'm not saying that jolt wasn't better than just about any sex I've ever had, but that doesn't make it right to expect you to just do that for me." He took a breath. "But I guess now I know why I was drawn to you." And wasn't that pretty shitty, that he was here for the thrill, a thrill he hadn't really even known about. "I'm sorry, Razi and I appreciate your patience. I should go now, though."

"Why?" Razi looked curious. "I'm not going to hurt you."

"I don't want to use you. If I'd known that's why I was being drawn to you I wouldn't have come."

"And how are you going to control it the next time you happen across a magic user?" Razi asked softly. "I know you don't want me. It's hardly a surprise, after all, but what will you do next time?"

"I won't touch them, like my grandmother said -- give them their space." It was simple enough. "And I didn't say I didn't want you, because I do. I said I didn't want to use you." Dannen managed to blush a bit again. "And I don't think I like what's in your eyes because you're an extra-normal."

"Ah yes, don't touch. No one touches." Razi turned around and faced the window. "You're wrong, you know. You don't actually want me -- you want this particular shade. I could find a better one for you, you know. Taller, fitter, darker. Maybe with scars, or something else."

When Razi turned around his eyes were green. "Is it still in my eyes?"

Darren looked into Razi's eyes and he nodded. "It's not your eyes themselves, it's what's *in* them." It was the best way he could describe it.

Razi blinked slowly. "Really?" he sounded doubtful and his eyes turned lavender. "Now?"

"It's not the color, Razi." And it wasn't, it wasn't.

And if Razi was surprised about that... maybe this wasn't just about the magic rush. A rush he hadn't even known about when he was first drawn to Razi. "Are you sure about this magic rush thing, Razi?"

"The thrill is real," Razi said carefully. "It's... intense." He looked vaguely troubled.

"But I've never felt it before. Well, never felt it before today." Dannen sighed. He was still fairly miserable, he wanted to be here, to be with Razi, but he wouldn't use the other man.

And if that's all this was, he needed to go.

"But you knew I was a magic user," Razi said, turning to face the window again. "You could feel the magic in this room. But if you didn't come back the second time to feel more..." He turned and stared at Dannen. "Why did you come back? Tell me."

Dannen shrugged. "Well I came to tell you about the case being closed. Okay, so that was just an excuse." He frowned a moment. "Well, partly an excuse, I did want you to know that you didn't have anything to worry about. It's... well, it's not something I usually do, but I didn't want you worrying about it. And I did it in person because I wanted to see you again."

"Why?" Razi said, stepping forward. He was almost vibrating, and Dannen could see tension in his arms and across his shoulders. "You liked my feathers? You thought the pillows were amusing? I was polite?"

Dannen laughed. "You weren't polite." He shrugged. "I'm not really sure, Razi. Something about your eyes, I guess."

Razi stood in front of him looking up, and slowly the blue in his eyes faded away to a muted brown, flecked with gold. "My eyes," he whispered. "Even the color."

"Oh." Dannen nodded and it felt suddenly as if a puzzle piece slipped into place. "Yes, that looks right. The other colors are pretty, but you have to look beyond them to really see you and like this you don't." He sounded like a loon, he knew he did. But it was the truth as he felt it.

Razi smiled up at him. "Do you know what this means?"

"That I'm a sap who likes your eyes?"

"That while you might get a hell of a kick from the feedback, you're not using me. And you're a sap." Razi beamed at him and winked, his hair turning pale blue. "More tea?"

"I haven't drunk my first cup yet," he admitted, looking at Razi's hair. "That's a pretty neat trick." He liked that smile, too. It made him feel good.

"I have a lot of them," Razi said, his hand landing on Dannen's arm, either by accident or design. "Hair, clothes, eyes," Razi said, his hair color deepening and his clothes smoothing into a tight shirt and trousers. The magic sang in Dannen's blood.

"Oh, God." His cock went hard and his whole body shivered. "That's... "

"Good," Razi purred. "Isn't it?" He moved his hand to Dannen's waist and did something subtle, something Dannen didn't see, and the surge grew a little before falling back.

"I'm not sure good even comes close." Dannen was panting, a little overwhelmed by the sensations. "I think maybe I should sit down."

"Of course." Razi smiled and moved him back to the couch, easing himself to the floor while Dannen landed in the pillows. The tea tray was moved aside and Razi smiled up at him. "Shall I stop for a moment or two?" he asked, catching his lip in his teeth in a mockery of coyness.

Dannen reached out and pulled Razi's lower lip from his teeth. "I didn't come here so you would give me magic orgasms."

"I know. Does that mean you can't have them anyway?"

He blinked. "Well. No, I suppose not." He stroked Razi's cheek. "Does it bring you pleasure, too?"

Razi's eyelids slid closed and he moved into the touch. "It's not quite the same, but yes. Energy shifting, touching... It's better when we touch."

That made Dannen chuckle. "Pleasure usually does involve touching."

Razi hummed and nodded slowly. "Touch me," he said softly, dreamily. His eyes flew open and he stared. "Sorry. That was selfish."

Dannen shook his head. "No. Not when you're offering me... that rush."

Razi's hand moved over his leg, up his thigh. "This," Razi whispered, changing the color of Dannen's own pants to gray, the magic pouring over him.

His eyes rolled, the magic lingering as his pants stayed gray. "Oh, Razi... it's mindblowing."

"It gets better," Razi promised, crawling onto the couch with him. "It can make you feel like... like water or the sun or a bird or a dragon."

"Stop a minute. I want a kiss first. Just a normal kiss from you. Please?"

Razi nodded slowly, his brown eyes hesitant as he turned Dannen's trousers back and his hair lightened. "Better?" Razi asked, leaning forward.

"I just want to taste you as you are first, before it becomes overwhelming."

He met Razi's mouth with his, the kiss slow and soft. With a low sound, Razi's lips parted and let him in, the kiss sweet and growing warm as Razi moved over him on the pillows. He moaned softly, hands sliding down along Razi's back, just enjoying the sweet warmth.

Razi's weight settled on him, legs sliding on either side of his hips so he could feel how hard Razi was. Razi's hips rocked gently, and the man fed him a low groan. "Touch me," he whispered against Dannen's mouth. "Please."

Dannen nodded, fingers sliding down to tug Razi's shirt out of his pants. Finding skin, he stroked it gently.

"Oh," Razi moaned, shuddering. A flare went through Dannen as the nearest pillow turned into a purple feather. "Oh, yes."

"That's amazing," Dannen whispered, fingers dragging up along Razi's back and then sliding down his spine to cup the sweet ass.

"I can--" Razi stopped talking and writhed on top of him. "I'll spoil you. I promise," he said, going back for another kiss.

"You don't have to," he murmured, hand pushing into Razi's pants so he could grab that ass, skin on skin. He was more than happy with this, with the warm glide of flesh that was growing heated.

"I know. That's why I'll do it." Razi plunged his tongue into Dannen's mouth, tasting of jasmine tea and something spicy.

Dannen closed his eyes and didn't worry about it, just sank into the sensations of kissing Razi, of rubbing together and touching the warm, smooth skin.

"Touch," Razi said again, his mouth traveling from Dannen's lips to his neck. "Touch and feel."

Dannen felt himself falling, pulled by a shoulder as Razi rolled to the floor and dragged Dannen down, so he was over the slight body. Razi grinned up at him and hooked their legs together, then bucked up as once more Dannen's pants changed color. "Feel."

Dannen cried out, the surge going through him and settling in his balls, making his cock so hard it hurt. "You're going to kill me," he murmured. It wasn't a complaint though. He bent, nuzzled into Razi's neck, licking the warm, spicy skin. God, it had been a long time since he'd made love to anyone and nothing had ever been like this.

"I doubt that," Razi said breathlessly. "Oh. Good." His head was tipped back and his eyes were closed as his body arched under Dannen. With a wiggle Razi pushed a hand between them and started tugging at fabric. "More, please."

He pulled off Razi's shirt and then his own, pressing down against the slight body and rubbing. Oh, skin on skin was warm and electric in a way that had nothing to do with the glamour and everything to do with two bodies giving each other pleasure.

Razi moaned, the sound like it was coming from deep in his chest, and shuddered violently. "Yes," he hissed, his hips picking up a strong rhythm. "Dannen -- touch. I crave it."

Dannen nodded, he knew the feeling, though perhaps not with quite the vehemence he could hear in Razi's voice. His hands started to explore, sliding on Razi's silky skin, fingertips searching for Razi's nipples. When he found them, he teased, flicking just his fingertips across the little nubs and then, once they'd hardened up, seeming to reach for his touch, he pinched them lightly, tugged and twisted.

Razi cried out, the sound sharp and full of wonder and need. Under him, Dannen could feel Razi swell further, and the rhythm attained new levels of urgency. "No," Razi whimpered, "Not yet. God, not yet!"

He reached down and started undoing the buttons that held Razi's pants closed. "You can't get it up again?" He was barreling toward orgasm himself, but it had been long enough since he'd come with another warm body instead of his hand that he was pretty sure that wasn't going to be an issue for him.

Startled eyes met his. "I... You'd stay?" Razi sounded more surprised than anything else, like the idea had driven anything else from his mind. But then Razi's body reasserted its needs and with a jerk the man's cock all but leapt into Dannen's hand. "Oh God!"

"I'm not here for a wham bam thanks see you later." Dannen shook his head, wondering for a moment if no one had really ever cared for this man, but then the heat in his hand and the need building between them sent all thoughts out of his head. Groaning, he brought their mouths back together again, hand working Razi's cock, palm and fingers learning the shape of the long, hard prick.

For his part, Razi seemed to be beyond words, almost beyond thought. His hips worked, shoving his prick through Dannen's hand with enough force to shake them both, and his hands moved without purpose over Dannen's ass. Or seemingly without purpose; the shifting in sensation swarmed through Dannen again as Razi used his magic, sending jolts right through him.

Oh God, he had to get his pants off, he didn't want to come in them like a kid. He couldn't quite work out the logistics though, refusing to give up his hold on Razi's cock and needing his other hand to keep himself up. He settled for groaning into Razi's mouth and trying to focus just on the pleasure he was giving so he didn't shoot off.

Razi's kiss grew sloppy and wet, almost dirty in the best possible way, and the legs framing him spread wide as Razi planted his feet on the floor and started fucking Dannen's hand quickly, apparently giving himself over to base need.

Dannen suddenly wanted to know what Razi tasted like. "Your shots up to date?" he asked, squeezing the base of Razi's cock, wanting to make sure Razi didn't come just yet.

Whimpering, Razi thrashed under him, but nodded finally. His eyes blazed as he said, "Yes. *Please*. You don't know what this is like, can't know--"

Dannen left that puzzle for another time and just moved down. He wrapped his lips around Razi's cock, drops of precome exploding flavor on his tongue.

Instantly, Razi was still, almost like stone, and the harsh sounds of his panting became the only real indication that he was there in the moment with Dannen. Before the stillness could become more than a worry, however, Razi started to move, his hips and lower body undulating like he was a dancer. Every motion was fluid; every movement pushed and pulled Razi's cock between Dannen's lips.

The spice and salt and heat was magnificent, Razi's passion felt even better and Dannen just let Razi go to it, making sure his lips were plenty tight and that Razi had all the suction he could want.

"Oh," Razi whispered. "Oh, yes. So... much. I can't... oh, can't wait, can't stop--" The words broke off and Razi's hands scrabbled on the floor, clutching for purchase as his hips started jerking. The dancing fluidity of his movements was gone and the only sounds he made were cries of pleasure and impending release. "Dannen!" Razi managed, the sound of his name like a song or benediction as Razi started to come over his tongue.

Dannen swallowed it down, the flavor hard, sharp in his mouth, overwhelming his senses for a moment.

Razi trembled and moaned, twitching as the last of his orgasm took him. He didn't say anything, but his hands left the floor and petted over Dannen's head sending tingles over and through him. The touch was light, sensual. He could almost feel Razi's satisfaction.

He sucked just a little longer, enjoying the feeling of Razi in his mouth and then he pulled off and grinned up, trying not to be too smug.

Still panting, Razi was staring down at him, his eyes their true color. "Thank you," he whispered. "That was..." Another shudder rolled through Razi and he moaned softly. "Come here. Let me touch you?"

"Oh yeah." Dannen nodded and moved back up, leaving kisses on Razi's body, the sweet belly, each nipple, and then Razi's mouth.

"I'm gonna be pretty quick off the mark myself," he warned, still hard enough to be hurting.

"I'll make it good," Razi promised with a smile. He settled a little as his hands wandered over Dannen's crotch and squeezed. "Very." A jolt of magic coursed through him as Razi's hair turned to white and his fingers made quick work of Dannen's buttons.

Dannen whimpered, there was no other word for the sound. He had no doubt it was going to be amazing. Really, really quick, but amazing.

He lay on his side facing Razi, not trusting his arms to hold him up with that kind of sensation moving through him.

"Show me... oh, so lovely," Razi purred, tracing the line of his cock with one finger. "So hard, so pretty." Razi wiggled and twisted and then he was there, mouth scant inches away from Dannen's erection.

"I want to see," Razi said, wrapping both hands around Dannen. "Tell me if you like this." His magic poured over Dannen's cock, tingling and vibrating as Razi's hands started to move.

He was going to say 'you don't have to just because I did', but then the magic touched his cock and all his thoughts, all his words, just flew right out of his head. What came out of his mouth was half shout, half moan and his whole body shuddered and jerked, hips pushing his cock into Razi's hand. More, he wanted more.

"Yes?" Razi asked, the casual tone belied by his smile of delight. "I said I could spoil you," he said happily, stroking Dannen again. He dipped his head and dragged his tongue over Dannen's balls, the flood of magic intensifying as his hair color changed again and again and yet again. "Come for me, please," Razi requested, his voice muffled between Dannen's legs.

Razi didn't have to ask. Dannen's hips were bucking, pushing, a low, guttural cry coming from him as he poured out his pleasure, come splashing over Razi's face.

Razi hummed, his voice sounding like the joy still spinning through Dannen's body, and made his way up kiss Dannen on the mouth. He wiped at the streaks of Dannen's pleasure on his cheeks and smiled happily. "Just so," Razi said with a smile. "I do as I say, yes?"

Nodding, Dannen shifted onto his back, panting and pulling Razi into his arms.

Curling around him, Razi sighed happily. The feeling of Razi's magic faded away gradually, the buzz becoming almost like background noise as they lay quietly. "Thank you," Razi said once more, the sincerity of it ringing with truth. "That was... intensely wonderful."

Dannen nodded. "I've never felt anything like it. But I was enjoying it before you started making it something extra-normal, you know that, right?" It was important to him that Razi knew he wasn't using the man.

Razi's hesitation was palpable. "I know," he said finally. "But I wanted to... give you something special. *Because* you didn't ask or demand anything more. A gift, if you understand what I mean."

Dannen nodded and smiled. "Yeah, I get it. Thanks." He stroked Razi's cheek, his arm. "Actually, I was hoping for another gift."

"Oh?" Razi stiffened in his arms, not physically drawing away but retreating nonetheless. "What could that be, I wonder?" he asked slowly.

Dannen bit his lip and worried. He didn't want to insult Razi or upset him. "I'd like... I don't want to upset you and if I do, please tell me so I can apologize. I'd like..." He took a breath and just said it. "I want to make love to you how you really are. The real you. Without the glammers."

"No." Razi rolled away from him and stood up, looking away as he fixed his clothes and bent to pick up his shirt. "I'm sorry, but no." He sounded almost panicked, but under the surface was a sadness so deep it could help but leak through.

"I'm sorry," Dannen said. "I didn't mean it as an insult. You're very beautiful with your fancy hair and your colored eyes. And the magic is something else -- no one's ever made me feel like that. But

it was what I saw in your eyes that attracted me and I wanted to see the rest. I didn't mean to be insulting, honest." He sat and reached for his own clothes, unhappy at himself for upsetting Razi. "Please, let me hold you?"

Razi took an unsteady breath and looked down at him, meeting his eyes for only a bare moment. "It's not insulting," he said softly. "Just... too much. I can't do that, I'm sorry. I... *can't*." He didn't move any closer, but Dannen could see fine tremors shaking the lithe body.

Closing his pants and putting on his shirt, Dannen stood and reached out, fingers petting the sleek belly. "Maybe one day? When you trust me?"

Razi shook his head, long white hair hiding his face. "I don't think so. I'm sorry."

It hit Dannen like Razi had punched him in the stomach. He hadn't been lying when he'd told Razi he wasn't here just for some sort of magical high; he wasn't here just for the sex either. He was drawn to Razi, to the look Razi thought he hid behind those glamorous eyes. It hurt knowing Razi wasn't as drawn to him, didn't seem to really want anything from him aside from what they'd already shared.

He nodded though, and did up the buttons of his shirt. "I... I should go. Thank... Thank you, Razi. For an experience I'll never forget."

"I'm sorry," Razi whispered, still not moving. "It's better this way." Razi lifted his head and Dannen could see the trail of a tear down his cheek. "It's better you not see."

Dannen shook his head and wiped one of Razi's tears away, ignoring the way Razi's magic made his cock start to fill again. "I don't agree, but it's your choice." He bent and kissed Razi softly, then turned and strode for the door, muscles tight, his whole body tight.

"It's not a choice," Razi said. "A choice can only be made between two acceptable alternatives. Showing you all of me would only result in you going away, disgusted, and that's not acceptable. Thus, I have no choice and you leave, hurt. I'm sorry."

"I don't believe I'd go away disgusted, Razi. But I imagine you've been hurt enough that you believe it." Dannen sighed. "Maybe... maybe we can meet somewhere for some coffee or dinner? Somewhere neutral."

Perhaps there was hope that Razi would eventually see that Dannen wasn't like the people who'd hurt him in the past.

Razi looked at him, clearly fighting himself about something. "All right," he said softly. "I *like* you, Dannen. I don't want to hurt you. I don't want you to leave like this, feeling lost and sad. I wanted you to remember me with a smile."

"I wish I could, Razi, but I think it's sad that you're scared to show me your real face." Dannen reached out and touched Razi's cheek again. "How about The Meeting Tree at six on Friday?" The

Meeting Tree was friendly to both normals and extra-normals, rather than catering to just one or the other.

Razi nodded mutely, his lower lip not quite steady. "Friday. Six."

Dannen nodded and forced himself to leave, though he hated going, knowing Razi was upset. And if he'd honestly thought there was anything he could do, he'd have stayed.

He would just have to wait for Friday and see if they could make any progress using 'conventional' methods.

Chapter Three

Razi sat at a table against the wall, trying not throw up. The Meeting Tree was filling up as offices emptied, and it was getting close to six. Razi had been there since five, afraid that if he wasn't actually there he would be able to talk himself out of going at all.

He turned his glass around and cursed himself for ordering his usual licorice drink; the inky black liquid was highly reflective, and every sip reminded him that he was sitting in public, bare to the world. Himself.

He told himself that he'd done it so he could conserve energy; at six, he would slip on a glamour and become real. If Dannen arrived before then, he would be able to just walk right past him, unrecognized, and go to the bathroom to change. In the meantime, he could make a study of the way people reacted to him.

He was mostly invisible, he decided. People didn't look at him, or if they did glance his way their gazes simply slid over him, away from him as they sought better things to see. Those who paused to actually see him were uniform in their reactions--a slight distaste, a flicker of their expressions which saw, measured and judged before they turned from him.

He wasn't going to be sick, he decided. He was merely going to cry.

"Ugly," he whispered harshly to himself. "Stupid and ugly, and yet you dare to dream. Stupid, stupid, stupid." He could hear the self-loathing in his own voice and it roused him to the point where he knew he had to do something. He had to change, right away or drown in his ugliness.

He stood up, almost knocking over his glass in his haste to get away from the table, from himself. But he was too late, he saw with a moment of panic. Dannen was there. He stilled, not drawing any more attention to himself. If he could get to the washroom, he could change--or he could just walk out now. He hung there, not sure which way to flee.

Dannen looked over the whole restaurant, gaze lingering first on one silver head and then another before focusing on him. Dannen tilted his head and smiled a little, coming toward him.

Panic won out and Razi dropped his head, slipping between tables toward the door. "No," he whispered. "No, no, no."

He didn't know if Dannen was following him or not, but a peek from under his hair proved that Dannen was standing in the middle of the restaurant, a frown on his face.

Razi almost moaned, aching for Dannen. He didn't want to hurt Dannen, but this exposure was too much, far too much. He hesitated for a moment, long enough for a man to bump into him, and then saw his chance. The man and his companion turned, placing themselves between Dannen and himself, and Razi almost smiled as he felt they were extra-normal. "Thank you," he said, pulling his glamour over him. Now he could face Dannen.

Vaguely startled the man blinked. "Nice hair," he said, walking away.

"Thank you," Razi said again, adding pink to the ends of it. He took a step toward Dannen, hoping he'd pulled off the switch undetected.

Dannen was looking around again, the frown on his face brightening into a smile as he saw Razi.

"Hey," Dannen said as he came up. "I thought I saw you at the other end of the restaurant, but I guess you're just getting here?"

Evading an outright lie, Razi smiled and said, "You thought you saw me? I thought I was so original."

Dannen grinned and held out his arm. "You are. There was someone I hadn't seen before though, who I thought had your eyes. Where do you want to sit?"

Razi tried to calm himself with a deep breath, resisting the urge to press Dannen about his impressions of the man who had his eyes. No good could come of it, however, and he was quite able to make up his own adjectives. Still, the thought that Dannen could recognize him through his eyes made his heart stutter, and he quashed rising hopes ruthlessly. "I think I see tables along the wall," he said, looking around them. He still wanted to run away; it was best to sit and soon, or he might actually walk out on Dannen.

"Are you one of those people more comfortable with your back to the wall?" Dannen asked before winking. "I have to admit, it's a bit of an occupational hazard with me." Dannen led him right to the table he'd been sitting at originally.

Razi blinked at his glass and set it aside. Not his, not his. Belonged to that other guy, the one with the eyes... He forced himself to smile at Dannen. "Actually, I rather like to be on display in the middle of the room," he said playfully.

"Oh, I imagine we can find you a table to show you off." Dannen looked around and then grabbed his hand and led him to a table that afforded Dannen his back to the wall spot, but allowed Razi to be sitting, well, not on display, but definitely not hidden away. "Will this do?"

Razi blinked and then preened, throwing himself into the role he'd chosen. He hadn't expected Dannen to be so... accommodating, so easy about things. The tension he'd expected of the date was absent, aside from what he'd created for himself.

"Nicely, thank you," he said and turned his hair a deeper pink to celebrate and show off.

Dannen blinked and a little ripple went through him, the magic passing between their hands. "You look wonderful."

"Thank you," Razi said lightly, deliberately ignoring the fact that the more wonderful he made himself look, the worse his natural state would seem. "And you look wonderful as well." Dannen

did, the very line of his garments making Razi itch to rid Dannen's body of them. He looked delicious.

Dannen sat, smiling at him. "Do you like how you look? Or are you giving me what you think I want?"

"I like the body," Razi said honestly, without thinking. "I like that it's small and light and hard. I think the hair could use some work, and I'm really not sure about the face. But it's what you know, and on some level it made you come back." He shrugged, trying to hide how aghast he was at what his reflexive honesty had revealed. "I usually don't talk about it," he said lamely as he struggled to stop talking.

Dannen reached out and touched his hand, just a soft comforting stroke before picking up a menu. "So none of it is really you? I'm glad you're happy with the body. I don't want you to do what you think'll make me happy -- make yourself happy with your glammers. I'm not here because of them, okay?" Dannen paused and shook his head. "Okay, that's not entirely true. It's a part of it. But just a part, okay?"

Razi nodded. "Okay," he said simply. "If you'd like, I could try something else -- although, maybe not here. Even places who like extras might have issues with clients suddenly looking completely different. It makes them worry about the check, among other things."

Dannen chuckled. "Yeah, I can see that. And I don't want you changing because *I* want you to. I want you to do what you want." Dannen shook his head again. "I worry about the people you've been hanging out with, Razi, that you think you have to do things just to please me."

Razi couldn't help his lips twisting. "It's a life of conditioning, Protector. Everyone wants something from the freaks. It is -- occasionally -- the only way to stay safe. Not always, of course, and there are laws, but people fear what they don't understand. It's the first lesson we learn."

Dannen nodded. "One of the reasons I joined up with the unit I'm in, isn't it? I don't like bigotry and racism, no matter what form it comes in. My granny was a gypsy. She was a wonderful lady and people judged her falsely before they ever knew anything else about her."

"The trouble is mostly with people who have things of their own to deal with," Razi admitted. "The normals who don't have to worry about much of anything can afford to just live and let live. But people who struggle, those who are constantly looking for some advantage... those ones scare me. I've been asked to do many things, because of my skill."

"What kind of things?" Dannen asked.

Razi shrugged. "What you'd expect. Theft would be easy, robbery easier. I could kill and slip away." He sighed and shook his head. "I don't, of course. And I shouldn't be telling you this, either."

"Well, I'm not here as a Protector. Though I think you should turn in people who ask you to do that kind of thing." Dannen shrugged. "Even without the badge I believe we're all responsible for keeping the world safe."

It was a nice thought, even if it was impractical in Razi's world. He'd be dead inside a week if he started turning people in. "You're a good man," he said softly.

Dannen shrugged, looking a touch uncomfortable. "I try to live a good life. I think most people do."

Gods, was the man really that naive? "You *are* a Protector, right?" Razi asked. "How do you live like that and not get lost?"

"Well, sure, if all I did was look at the people who do bad things, I'd think the world was a shitty place, but even the people I come in contact with aren't all bad and I know there're a lot of other people out there." Dannen shrugged again. "I'm part of my community, I volunteer with some organizations. There're a lot of people out there helping other people."

"Where do you live?" Razi asked, honestly curious. "Things just don't work like that where I come from." He hadn't really thought places like that existed outside of books. He still wasn't sure, but there wasn't any doubt that Dannen believed it. He'd learn differently if he worked Razi's part of town for a while.

"I have a place in the Accolades. You know those big buildings? We all help out. You should see our community gardens. There's kind of like an unofficial competition among the buildings for who can come up with the nicest one." Dannen grinned. "Old Mrs. Potter? Man, she's a nazi when it comes to litter."

Oh. The Accolades. Razi had once been primed to do a job there, at a dinner party; he'd turned it down of course, but aside from moral issues he was fairly sure he'd never be able to fit in, no matter what he looked like. "We call them Neverland," he murmured. "A bit of a fairytale, where everyone is nice and healthy and there's nothing bad." He shook himself and made himself smile again. "I'll bet you can't even see my part of the world from your window," he teased.

"It isn't a better place, Razi, privileged or anything. People just care. My rent's probably cheaper than yours -- I certainly can't afford a place in center town, not on my salary."

"And are there a lot of extra-normals there, Dannen?" Razi asked softly. "A lot of strangers?"

"No one's a stranger for long, Razi. Not if you make an effort to get to know your neighbors. And we have a couple of extra-normals. But we only have one artist, too -- it's not like we work to keep them out." Dannen frowned. "You make it sound like we're being exclusionary, deliberately keeping out people of one sort or another."

"Am I?" Razi wondered about that for a moment. "I live in a part of town where you can tell what block you're on by the color of people's skin. The population of extra-normals is higher than the average elsewhere, and about four times higher than out in Dashield. Extra-normals are the most

marginalized segment of society today, including those who chose to pass as normal. I suspect that you and I simply have too much to separate us to ever think the same way." For some reason, that made him sadder than he'd expected, the longing for communion falling hard on reality.

"We don't have to think the same way to be friends, Razi. And we won't ever have a meeting of minds if we don't talk." Dannen grinned at him. "I've decided I'm not going to be easy to shake."

Razi blinked. "Oh." He blinked again and changed his glamour. He sat there, four inches shorter with curly black hair and a distinctly female body, and grinned. "Good luck with that."

Dannen laughed and winked. "I know where you live, Razi. You won't be able to give me the slip for long."

Razi laughed, delighted. He looked down at his chest and then up at Dannen through long eyelashes. "Like this better?" he asked. "Or do you prefer the male model exclusively?"

Dannen blushed a little. "I'm not really into breasts." There was a pause. "Or innies."

Razi snorted and tried desperately to turn the sound into something more dignified. His eyes watered. "Dannen!" he said, honestly shocked. He couldn't stop laughing after that, and with a contented sound he switched his glamour back to the one he thought of as Dannen's.

Dannen ducked his head, chuckling. "Well, it's true. What about you? Your orientation, I mean." Dannen blushed a little harder and cleared his throat. "I mean I know you like guys. Or just me? Or... Yeah."

Razi tilted his head and smiled, feeling almost shy. "Normals only. Men, yes. You, definitely."

"Only normals?" Dannen looked surprised.

"The feedback is awkward with two magic users," Razi explained. "Most like it. I don't. It makes me feel seasick."

"Oh, that makes sense." Dannen nodded and smiled as the waiter came by for their order. "I've forgotten to look at the menu. What's good here?"

"Licorice tea," Razi said without thinking. "And. Um. The sandwiches are all good and the pastas are wonderful." He stared at the tabletop for a moment before asking the waiter for plain iced tea and linguini with clam sauce.

Dannen glanced at his menu and asked for the shrimp Alfredo and a glass of water. "I'll splurge over dessert," he told Razi.

Razi nodded, grateful that Dannen had missed the connection between the licorice tea at the first table and himself. If he had, anyway -- it was hard to tell with Protectors. "The raspberry chocolate

mousse is good," he said. "If you like raspberry. Or chocolate." He was flustered and he hated that. "Excuse me a moment?" he asked, standing up.

Dannen stood as well. "Is everything okay?"

"I think so," Razi said, feeling his cheeks heat. He adjusted his glamour to hide the blush and took Dannen's hand. "I'll be right back."

"Okay." Dannen sat as he moved away and he could feel the man's eyes on him as he went toward the restrooms.

He walked into the relative quiet of the restroom with something close to relief. He had no idea what was going on with him -- he'd lost his usual composure and distance, and was left uncomfortable, unsure of himself. Dannen seemed so sincere, so nice, it was hard to believe.

"Nice changes," a voice said next to him, and Razi jumped. He had thought himself alone.

"Thank you," he said calmly. "It amused my friend."

"Can you do anything else?" The man moved to the sinks and started washing his hands, watching Razi in the mirror.

"No," Razi said, going toward a stall. It was best to keep these conversations short. Most people had no idea that they were asking intensely personal questions, that they were prying. That they were making him feel like a sideshow.

"Too bad," the man said, shaking water from his hands. "Although, I bet what you can do rocks in bed -- it'd be like fucking someone new every time." He grinned and left and Razi fought back the urge to scream.

It was everywhere. All the time, even in public bathrooms. And it never, ever stopped.

Except Dannen didn't want to fuck someone new every time. Razi sighed and pushed the thought away, made himself add on 'yet' to the thought. With another sigh he washed his hands and checked his look in the mirror, then went back to the table. With luck, he wouldn't lose his dignity right there in the restaurant.

Their drinks were already there and Dannen gave him a warm smile as he sat. "Our waiter said the food would be along soon. I told him to take his time, I hope that's okay. I'd just like to have some time to talk, you know? Get to know you."

That hit a little close to the target and Razi found himself blinking rapidly against stinging eyes. "That would be nice," he said, sitting down hard. He reached for his iced tea, unsurprised to see his hand shake. He willed it still and hoped Dannen didn't notice. "So. Did you always want to be a Protector?" he asked quickly.

Dannen was frowning a little, but let him get away with the diversion. "Yeah. I guess in a way I did. Ever since I found the Bagley brothers beating up Jason Silory, who was half their size."

Razi smiled. "I can just picture you. Big and strong and with the power of right behind you. I'll bet you took care of everyone, ran off all the bullies."

Dannen shook his head. "I took home my share of bruises. Hell, those Bagley brothers were both bigger than me, too. My Granny was so mad when I came home with two shiners the day before the family photo. But I knew I was right and what they were doing was wrong and she'd taught me that you're not going to win something just because you're in the right, but that doesn't mean you don't fight for it."

Razi had been taught how to duck and run. "I'm glad for it," he said softly, suddenly wanting to touch Dannen, to be close to him. He wasn't sure if it was smart or safe to admire the man, but he did. Slowly, he extended his arm across the table, hand held palm up, inviting Dannen to hold it, if he wanted.

Dannen beamed at him and slid a hand into his, obviously unconcerned about any comments that might be made about the public display of affection. His hand was given a squeeze. "What is it you do, Razi? You've been rather vague about how you make a living."

He smiled again and shrugged one shoulder. "For money, I mostly model for artists -- I can pretty much be whatever they want. And I kind of... go places with people, if they suddenly need a guest. Again, I can fit in a lot of places." There weren't really a lot of other things he could do, as he hadn't finished school and couldn't be bonded because of his extra. Security risk, according to his file.

"Do you like it?" Dannen asked.

"It has its moments. I like the parties, but it feels very false. Modeling, I get to play, to try new things... and they make me feel like I'm useful." They made him feel beautiful.

"If you could be anything you wanted, what would it be?"

Razi felt his heart skip painfully. "I have no idea," he admitted. "Normal, maybe. Beautiful, naturally. But what I would do... I just don't know. No one has ever asked."

"And you've never thought about it? I mean when you were a little boy, didn't you dream about being something in particular when you grew up?"

Razi closed his eyes against the memory of a pale yellow room with torn paper, the sound of his mother telling her friends what Razi could do, and then parading him out to show off for them. "I dreamed of being alone," he said finally. "Where I could be what I am, for me. Not them. I dreamed of traveling and of silence. So, to answer your question, no. Not the way you mean. I'm sorry."

"I'm sorry, Razi," Dannen said softly, squeezing his hand. "What's your favorite thing to do?"

Pushing everything but the here and now from his head, Razi smiled. "Play." He turned Dannen's shirt a flattering shade of green. "I play with color, texture, shape... I make things beautiful, then I add glitter and light." A line of gold followed the seam up Dannen's sleeve and then down the front before fading away. "It's fun," he added with a wink.

Dannen swallowed. "I can feel it when you do that -- where the colors change on me and where our hands are connected." Dannen's voice had gone low, husky.

"Should I stop?" Razi asked, sending another tendril of color along the seams of Dannen's clothes, through his shirt and trousers. Silver this time, which he changed to white when he sensed the color had crept through the threads around Dannen's inseam.

Dannen's eyes went wide and his hand jerked away. "Razi... you're going to make me come if you don't stop."

"And that would be... bad?" Razi was teasing, and he hoped Dannen knew it. He wouldn't make the man mess his pants in public -- that was to be done in a far less crowded place. Or perhaps a much more crowded one. "Do you like to dance?" he asked suddenly.

Dannen pursed his lips, considering the question. "I like it better than I can do it." He got a rueful grin. "I'm all left feet."

"Can you sway nicely?" Razi pressed. "Or stand propped up against a bar in a crowd of people while I dance for you?"

Dannen grinned and smiled, nodded. "I can even come step all over your feet if you like. I usually embarrass the people I'm with more than myself."

Razi shivered as a thrill of anticipation went up his spine. "I promise not to be embarrassed," he said archly. "Although I might make a spectacle of myself."

"Well, then I'd know people are watching you and not me."

Their food came then and Dannen asked for extra cheese, please. The waiter was flirting with them both, obviously he'd seen them hold hands and was hoping to pad his tip.

"And then you can relax," Razi pointed out with a smile, ignoring the waiter entirely. All his focus was on Dannen. "You'd be free to feel and watch." He beamed at Dannen and leaned over the table. "Basically, I want to tease you. I don't even know why, I just want to. You can say no."

Dannen's eyes went wide. "You want to tease me? What do you mean?"

Concentrating, Razi brushed his foot along Dannen's under the table and sent a fine arc of magic up the man's leg, right to his ass. "That," he said, letting the magic fade to nothing, just as quickly as he'd sent it. "For as long as you can take it."

Dannen swallowed, eyes on his, food entirely ignored now. "Oh."

"In a crowded place full of light and noise and music and people. Lights and color and magic and always people there, people who won't know, people who won't care." Razi very nearly lost himself in the thought, his cock hard and suddenly aching. He took a deep breath. "But you can say no. It's just an idea."

Dannen's breath left him in a whoosh. "We could always see how it goes. After we've eaten. If you wanted."

"Really?" Razi bit his lip and tried not to make his shifting in his seat too obvious. "You don't mind? I don't usually... blindsides people like this; the images just came so fast and hard and it would be so very--" He wiggled in his seat and didn't hide his blush. "Oh God," he moaned. "Eat."

"You expect me to eat after that?" Dannen asked, eyes on him, color high in his cheeks.

Razi nodded and then shook his head. "We might need our strength," he said finally, his flushed skin still feeling hot. "And I need to calm down a little." He smiled at the admission and resisted the urge to send another playful wash of color over Dannen.

Dannen smiled and nodded, taking a long drink and looking around at the other patrons. "It's so big. I'm surprised no one's noticed."

Razi looked down into his own lap and giggled. "It's covered," he teased, hoping Dannen would blush but not choke on his drink.

And blush Dannen did, eyes going wide. "Razi!"

"But thank you for noticing," Razi went on blithely, having fun now that he'd stuffed his insecurity back where it belonged. He was pretty. He was in control. He could play.

Dannen laughed softly and the tension, sexual and otherwise, relaxed between them. Dannen picked up his fork and spoon and started to eat.

"Is it good?" Razi peered at Dannen's meal and then at his own. He had a more than pleasant buzz of arousal and anticipation making his stomach flutter, and he wasn't sure now that he'd be able to finish his meal. He nibbled anyway, and willed his cock to relax a bit so he could be comfortable.

Dannen nodded and the next forkful was held up to him, Dannen offering him a bite.

"Thank you," Razi said, leaning forward to take the offered food. He kept his gaze on Dannen's eyes and slowly used both tongue and lips to draw the food into his mouth. As seduction techniques went it was rather silly, but the flavor of the pasta exploded through his mouth and his moan of appreciation was heartfelt. "Very good," he agreed.

Dannen moaned softly. "Oh, Razi... you're... Gods."

"Not calming down, are we?" Razi said ruefully.

Dannen shook his head. "I don't want to make our time together just about jumping each other's bones, you know? I want to get to know you, Razi." Dannen chuckled ruefully. "My dick keeps getting in the way."

Razi chose to avoid, yet again, the entire issue of Dannen getting to know him. It would be dealt with, he was sure, but a busy restaurant wasn't the place for it; there were far more pleasant things going on with both of them. "Not in the way," Razi corrected him, "just being insistent. I can hardly complain, and I hope you don't think you're alone." He pointedly looked down at his lap again.

Dannen blushed again and smiled. "I know I'm not alone. I'm here with you."

"And perhaps we should go somewhere else?" Razi looked down at his mostly full plate and rolled his eyes. "I'd rather play than eat, honestly. I'm hard and I want, and I can't seem to find room in my stomach for food."

"Oh. Okay. We could take it with us for after." Dannen raised his hand, catching their waiter's attention.

Razi nodded and tried not to wiggle. He had to stop himself from primping, deepening colors and fixing his hair; he'd need his energy later. Firmly, he told himself not to get lost in the playing -- if he didn't pay attention he'd run himself down before he was ready, risking Dannen seeing him. He wasn't ready for that.

The waiter came over, all concerned that they were leaving, but Dannen assured him they were just running late and needed the food to go. He handed over his credit chip and told their waiter to add twenty creds to the bill for his tip and suddenly the waiter was all smiles again.

Dannen rolled his eyes. "You know, just once I'd like good service for good service's sake."

"Okay," Razi said, grinning. "I can do that."

Dannen gave him a look and then chuckled. "Oh, you're something else, Razi."

"I'm many things," Razi said, pleased. "And as soon as they bring our food, I can drag you out of here and start showing you."

"Oh, I'd like to see you drag me places. You'll need a little more mass I think."

"Just the proper chain," Razi assured him, smiling widely. "A little tug here, a little push there..."

Dannen's eyes went wide again. "Razi!"

Their waiter chose that moment to come back with their food and Dannen's credit chip. Dannen checked the amount withdrawn and nodded, thanking the man.

"Anytime," simpered the waiter, hips canted suggestively. "And if the two of you wanted company, I'm free after ten."

Razi blinked and didn't even look at Dannen. "Thanks for the offer," he said as he stood up. "But I don't share well. At all." He blinked again at the tiny growl in his voice. He'd never sounded like that before, hadn't felt possessive before. Confused, he looked at Dannen.

Dannen looked surprised, but there was a blush across the top of his cheeks and a rather turned on look in his eyes. He just nodded and stood, grabbing their bag of leftovers. "I'm with him."

Razi felt himself smile, felt his eyes grow wider and his mouth turn up. Without another look at the waiter, he took Dannen's hand and started moving them toward the door. "Hurry," he said. "I really want out of here. I want to kiss you."

"You're the boss," Dannen told him, the corners of his mouth twitching.

"Don't tease," he scolded, sending a quick shot of magic through Dannen's hand. The glamour was simple, he merely turned the skin on Dannen's arm a shade or two darker, but the buzz would be enough to distract Dannen. Which let Razi push him up against the wall just outside the restaurant and lean up to kiss him.

Dannen moaned softly, mouth opening for him, lips hard against his own as Dannen's arms went around him. Throwing himself into the kiss, Razi let himself explore Dannen's mouth, let himself take his time. Let himself take charge as much as Dannen would let him. Dannen sucked on his tongue a little, but basically let him lead, following with sweet moans that tickled his lips.

Bolder, Razi pressed even closer, pushing himself against Dannen as he plunged his tongue deeper, fucking Dannen's mouth steadily. He was hard, so hard... Too hard. With a moan he pulled away, panting. "I'm going to come in my pants," he said with a short laugh. "Can't have that."

Dannen blinked down at him and then looked around, clearing his throat. "And I'm not doing a good job of convincing you I'm interested in more than just sex."

Razi ignored him. "Let's go dancing," he said brightly. "I want to move, to watch. Then I want to..." He stopped and laughed, skipping away and tugging at Dannen. "You'll see."

Dannen followed, chuckling, letting him lead the way. "Can we walk there or do you want to take my car?"

"Food in car," Razi said imperiously, happy to have Dannen swayed to his program. "The club is only a block or two away."

"I'm parked that way," Dannen told him, pointing before going back to where they'd kissed and sheepishly picking up the dropped and forgotten bag of food.

Razi laughed and moved close to Dannen, slipping his arms around him again. "Distracted. Led by our cocks. Horny. We might very well get lost on the way to the car."

"We might. I'd rather not get arrested for lewd behavior though. The Protectors frown on their agents being arrested."

"Does that mean you won't fuck me in your car?" Razi asked lightly, a little horrified and somewhat amazed at his boldness.

"I. Razi. Not in the middle of the street."

"Well, no. In the *car*." Razi forced himself to stop teasing and took stock of himself. "I'm sorry," he said sheepishly. "I don't know what's come over me. I'm not usually so... over the top. Well, I *am* over the top, but that's just hair and color and clothes and manner -- not someone's feelings. I'll try to behave."

"Oh. I thought you just *really* wanted me."

"I do!" Razi stared at him. "I do, I swear! But I don't want to... I don't want to make you do anything you don't want to do and I thought I was pushing too hard, and I'm sorry." Razi took a step back, sure that anything he said was going to make things worse.

Dannen grabbed his hand and squeezed it. "Okay, let's put the food in the car and go find this club of yours."

Razi only nodded, watching Dannen carefully as they walked. That was yet another screw up on his part; he didn't know how many Dannen would take before he decided Razi was too much trouble to bother with. With a sigh he resolved to try harder, to pay more attention, and to make sure the rest of Dannen's night was something he'd never forget.

Dannen didn't go to nightclubs very often so everything at the Glittering Feather was new, fascinating. Dannen had chuckled at the name, given Razi's propensity for feathers, but the place was well-named and had even more feathers than Razi's place did. All of them glittering and bright and providing most of the light for the place.

It wasn't very busy yet -- they were really early for clubbing. But the place was open, the bar was serving and the music playing, a glitterball throwing rainbows on the dance floor.

Razi was swaying next to him, seeming to be a part of the music on an unconscious level. He moved, not quite dancing, to the bar where he stood looking around and smiling. With a finger he reached out and touched a feather. "Pretty," he said happily. "Would you like a drink?"

Dannen nodded. "Does the house drink come with a feather in it?"

"As a matter of fact it does," replied the bartender. Dannen jerked a little; he hadn't seen her. And no wonder, she blended in well with the decor, wearing a shirt and skirt that seemed to be made mostly of feathers.

"It's called a Feather Delight."

"Oh." He looked over at Razi, wondering if he could just order a beer.

"Oh, I'll have that!" Razi beamed. "I suspect he wants something a little less... um. Flamboyant." Razi smiled at him. "I'll handle the flamboyancy for the evening, if that's all right."

Dannen smiled, nodding eagerly. "I'll have a glass of whatever you've got on tap."

Razi did seem to fit in really well.

Razi grinned and looked around again, then laid a hand on Dannen's. "Is this flamboyant enough, do you think?" he asked as his clothes became something more lush and shiny, the colors shifting as Razi moved with the music. His hair took on a violet tinge at the tips and his lips reddened. Through it all, the hum and tingle of magic flowed.

Dannen's cock had finally deflated on their walk here, but now it was back, filling eagerly as the pleasure coursed through him. "Maybe..." he cleared his throat. "Um. Yes?"

"Not sure?" Razi's skin darkened and his clothes molded to him, his hair a deep red with feathers braided in. "Better?" His voice had taken on a specific husky note, and Dannen could see in Razi's eyes how turned on he was getting. Razi's brown eyes, never changed by a glamour. Razi was giving Dannen something of himself, even as he played.

"I think that had better be," Dannen replied softly, his cock hard, aching.

"Drink," Razi whispered, leaning across him to pick up the cocktail glass adorned with a pink feather. He pressed Dannen's own glass into his hand and added, "Then I'll dance for you." The pink feather turned silver.

"We could dance together while it's quiet in here," Dannen suggested.

"You would?" Razi looked up at him with wide eyes.

"Like I said, I'm not very good, but I'm game if you are." Frankly, the urge to touch Razi and hold him while dancing outweighed any embarrassment his lack of dancing ability might cause.

Instead of saying anything, Razi once more dragged him by the hand, first to a small table by the wall where Razi set down their drinks and then to a small patch of dance floor close to the table. "Hold me," Razi all but demanded.

Dannen smiled and did as he'd been told. He had to admit, he kind of liked it when Razi got all butch and gave orders. He put his arms around Razi and they swayed together to the slow, sensuous beat currently playing.

Razi's head was tucked next to his shoulder, his breath warm on Dannen's neck. The feedback from Razi's magic was steady, a wired buzz that ebbed and flowed as they moved and shifted with the music; no spikes of power, just the rolling pressure that mimicked Razi's body. One hand slid down his arm, and Razi tangled their fingers briefly before letting go, the hand coming to rest on Dannen's hip.

"You can so dance," Razi murmured.

"This is more swaying back and forth than dancing." Razi would change his tune when the faster stuff started. Which could take its time as far as Dannen was concerned, he was enjoying this.

"Dancing *is* swaying back and forth," Razi insisted. The hand on Dannen's hip shifted a little closer to his groin. "Dancing is... showing with your body what the music is saying."

He swallowed, his own hands finding Razi's hips and holding on. "Then this music must be saying obscene things, because I'm sure you know what my body is showing..."

"I can't take any credit at all?" Razi asked with a quiet laugh, his hand finally closing over Dannen's erection, rubbing gently.

Dannen's eyes widened, his hips jerking and he took Razi's hands in his own, holding them. "I think you can take most of the credit, Razi."

Razi purred and moved against him, rubbing with his whole body. "Oh good," he breathed into Dannen's ear, the wet tip of his tongue flicking over the lobe.

"Razi... you aren't playing fair."

"No. Do you want me to?" Razi leaned back and looked up at him. "Really?"

Dannen flicked his eyes around, noticing they were the only ones on the dance floor now and just one other table was occupied. "I guess not?" He wasn't used to doing this kind of thing in public, hell even flirting often felt kind of taboo in public, and he had to admit it added a little thrill to things.

"Oh good!" Razi looked delighted and those hands fluttered down to Dannen's thighs and back up, one grazing his cock again as the tingle of magic swelled. He had no idea what Razi had done, but he definitely felt it.

He closed his eyes and concentrated on not coming, on just enjoying the sensations without them getting to be too much.

"I want you," Razi whispered, swaying again as the music soared. "I want to watch you come, I want to taste you. I want you inside me." The hand on his cock squeezed then stroked down to his balls.

"Oh, God. Razi. You're going to make me come if you keep that up." Teasing was one thing, this was... pretty much sex. Sex standing with his clothes on and in public, but still sex.

"Uh-huh." Razi was purring. "Now, and then when I dance, and then when we leave and I let you bend me over. Let you drive into me. When I ride you and finally let myself go."

"Razi... It'll be a mess. I can't. We can't. Oh." He whimpered, hips pushing into Razi, losing the rhythm of the music and just going with what felt right.

"I can hide the mess," Razi assured him, kissing his neck and giving him a pretty straight-forward hand-job through his clothes. "You can wipe off in the bathroom. Or I can come with you and lick you clean."

"Razi!" He couldn't believe Razi was doing this right here on the dance floor. It seemed so, so blatant. And so good. God, he was going to come. Especially if he thought about Razi licking him clean...

"Want me to stop?" Magic pulsed along his cock and between his legs, almost like a finger or a tongue. "Tell me what you want most," Razi added. "If I can do it, I will."

"What you're doing feels damned good, Razi. Gonna come really soon." His voice was so low and he was practically shaking.

Razi moaned and started sucking on his neck, his hand stroking him harder, almost roughly. The slip of magic grew more intense, like it would become *something*, like it could push right into his body.

His eyes rolled and he shuddered, come filling his pants as the pleasure overwhelmed him.

"Oh, beautiful," Razi gasped, hand slowing but not stopping. The feeling of the magic eased off slowly and Razi licked his neck. "So lovely when you come. So beautiful. Let me clean you, please? Let me kneel in front of you and lick you off, let me taste you again?"

"Not here." The harshly spoken words were as much for his own benefit as Razi's and he had to curl his hands into fists to keep them from opening his pants.

He could feel Razi quiver, but he had no idea if it was laughter or need making Razi shake. "Where?"

Their table was too exposed and there weren't very many dark corners -- the damned glittery feathers keeping everything lit up. "The bathrooms? A backroom?" God, he'd busted one or two couple in those when he'd first joined the Protectors, and now he was looking to use one.

"Come on." Razi didn't so much tug him along as drag him, moving to the back of the bar where a sign indicated the bathrooms were. Almost stumbling, Razi pulled open the door and urged him into a stall, pushing him against the back of the door. "God," Razi said under his breath, his voice strained. "Oh god. Want."

"Take," Dannen murmured, hands fumbling with his belt, the stupid thing stubborn as hell.

Razi's fingers knew better what to do, and the man slid to the floor on his knees, Dannen's fly coming open for him. The rattle of his belt against the metal door sounded loud in the small space, but not as loud as Razi's happy moan as his tongue darted out and lapped at Dannen's groin.

His cock throbbed, trying to come back to life and Dannen told it to behave -- there was more to this evening than just fucking. Still, with Razi's tongue lapping at him, cleaning him up it was hard to not get, well, hard.

"God," Razi said again, like he was in bliss. "You taste... you taste so *good*" He licked down to Dannen's balls, his head buried in Dannen's crotch for a long moment before he sucked at the root with another happy sound. A desperate sound, really.

"Oh, God, Razi. What can I do for you?"

Razi whimpered and sucked a little harder before licking his way up and drawing Dannen's hardening cock into his mouth. Brown eyes looked up at him, hazy and glazed over then Razi let him go. "Mean it," he said roughly. "Tell me you mean it when you say you want to know the real me. That's all I want." Tears suddenly welled up in Razi's eyes and he dipped his head to rest against Dannen's stomach.

"Razi! Of course I mean it." Dannen slid down onto his knees and drew Razi into his arms, stroking the slender back. "Sh. Sh. Razi. Please don't cry. Please."

Razi sniffled and then shuddered all over, like he was willing his composure back onto him like a set of clothes. "Sorry," he said softly. "Spoiled the mood, didn't I?"

He gave Razi a soft kiss. "No, you just showed me how you really felt -- that's never something to apologize for."

"My timing, however, is rather suspect." Razi sighed. "I was damn close, too."

"I could take you home and we can see if we can recapture the sexy part?" He was pretty sure they could, though he didn't know if that's what would be best for Razi. "Or you could just come home with me and we can eat our supper and I'll make you my grandmother's secret hot chocolate."

Razi giggled, sounding more wrung out than anything else. "Then sex?" he asked hopefully.

"I'm betting it'll come up no matter what we decide on. I'd like you to see my place though. And I bet you'll feel a lot better after food." He didn't want Razi to think they couldn't just *be* together.

"Okay," Razi said softly. "I'd like that." He tilted his head up and looked at Dannen, the brown eyes serious instead of hazy with lust. "Thank you."

"You're welcome," he said softly, even though he hadn't really done anything except what any good lover would do. He was pretty sure though that Razi's life experience was pretty low on people who cared about him.

"We're on the floor in a public bathroom," Razi whispered to him like he was imparting a great secret. "We'd better get up. Now."

Chuckling, he stood, bringing Razi up with him. "Good thing we're here early and the place isn't full up yet." His zipper and belt seemed far less confusing now and he got himself presentable.

Razi studied him carefully for a moment and then touched his hip. The tingle was a dead give-away, but so was the way the slight stains and one rough wrinkle vanished as Razi finished the job. "There. All better and presentable."

He grinned. "Thank you, Razi. That's a handy piece of magic." He took Razi's hand and led him out of the bathroom and through the bar.

He was taking Razi home.

Chapter Four

Razi followed Dannen to his door, outwardly calm -- he hoped -- and in turmoil inside. He had no idea what he was doing, going to this man's home, making himself vulnerable. He hadn't ever dared to hope this much before. He had never once considered letting someone get as close to him, the real him, as Dannen was.

He told himself firmly to keep control over his emotions and to make himself leave before he got too tired to maintain his glamour. He wasn't sure what would happen to his heart if he slipped and let Dannen really see; what he'd do if Dannen rejected him after he'd laid himself that bare.

Dannen opened the door and smiled down at him. "Welcome to my home." The place was simple but beautiful, decorated all in whites and blues.

"No feathers," Razi said with a smile as he walked in. He liked it; it was cool and calming, not unlike Dannen. It was comfortable and elegant. It was more real than what he'd created in his own space. He promised himself that no matter what they got to up to later, he wouldn't glamour any of Dannen's things.

"No, but I was thinking of getting a couple of peacock feathers in a frame for that wall space in the hall." Dannen blushed. "They remind me of you."

Razi felt his eyes go wide and impulsively he leaned up to kiss Dannen quickly on the mouth. "I'll give you some," he promised, incredibly touched. He was about to kiss Dannen again when his stomach growled, the sound embarrassingly loud.

Dannen laughed. "Come on, let's get some plates and eat."

Dannen's kitchen was clean and carried the white and blue theme, the walls, cupboards, and table and chairs all white, the accents in blue, as well as most of the dishes. Dannen set the table quickly, the blue glass plates soon filled with their food.

"I didn't think that one color could be so lovely," Razi said, lifting his fork. "I like it."

"It's not fancy like your place, but I'm not a fancy guy. I knew a guy once, he told me you couldn't go wrong if you stuck with a couple of colors." Dannen dug into his food like he was starving and, given it was close to nine, the man probably was.

"I tend to subscribe more to the 'everything is prettier with glitter' theory of decorating," Razi said with a smile. He ate just as quickly, glad they'd ordered simple food which had kept its flavor well. "It's also fun for me to play with color and texture, as you know. This is... very calming." There wasn't really any other word for it.

Dannen grinned. "You mean boring. It's okay, I won't be insulted if you say it."

Razi shook his head. "But it's not. If anyone had described it to me, I would have thought so. And it's not -- just look around. Your things. Your home. The blues are clean and clear on the trim, the white is warmed by your accents, and the accents themselves are part of you. Picture frames, trim, dishes -- the things which make a house a home. This place is beautiful."

Dannen reached out and touched him for a moment, just a slide of fingers on his forearm. "Thank you, Razi."

Razi blushed a little. "You're welcome," he said, not sure what else to say. "That doesn't mean you couldn't make good use of those peacock feathers, however."

Dannen laughed, face bright and happy. "I'll get them, I promise. I saw them at the market the other day, but I couldn't stop for them just then."

Still smiling and feeling strangely pleased, Razi finished his meal and set his fork down neatly on the side of the plate. He wasn't sure what to do next; if they were at his place he'd have offered to make tea, just for something to do. "Thank you," he said softly. "For... well, for supper, I suppose. And bringing me here."

"You're welcome. Thanks for coming. And for making me come." Dannen chuckled and blushed, head dipping as he finished up the last of his meal.

Razi's smile grew into a grin. This was slightly more familiar territory. "I could do that again. And you owe me one," he said archly, teasing.

Dannen nodded. "I do owe you one. I'd be happy to do you. Um... make you. Yeah." Dannen nodded again, laughing at himself.

Razi laughed as well and stood up to carry his plate to the sink. He made sure to move carefully, every step deliberately making his ass sway just so. "I think the word you're looking for is, in fact, 'do'."

"Yeah, it might be. Just leave the dishes, I'll do them tomorrow." Dannen dumped his own plate in the sink and smiled at him. "Let's go... have dessert."

"Something sweet?" Razi laughed, almost skipping into the living room. "Decadent?"

"Yeah. You are, you know. Both of those."

Razi barely paused, but he did look at Dannen to give him another smile, this one rather naughty. "Flirt," he accused, secretly delighted that Dannen seemed to really mean it as a compliment. Before he could let himself dwell on that, though, he countered by licking his lower lip and saying, "Would you like a taste, then?"

Dannen's eyes focused on Razi's lips and Dannen nodded, moving in close and wrapping his hands around Razi's hips. "Yeah, I would."

"Go ahead," Razi invited, deliberately pitching his voice soft and low. "Indulge us both." He leaned up, looking for his kiss.

Dannen's lips dropped onto his, the kiss soft, warm, slowly deepening and his lips were parted by Dannen's hot tongue. Razi fell into the kiss, or as much as he could while they were standing. He leaned into Dannen's arms and opened his mouth a little more, inviting Dannen in, wanting more. It wouldn't take much more than kisses to return Razi to the state he'd been in at the club and he fully intended to take Dannen with him.

Dannen's arms were strong, as was that body, easily supporting him as he leaned more and more. Dannen's tongue pushed into his mouth, fucking his lips. It pulled a moan from Razi, a hungry sound that was wanton even to his own ears. His cock was waking and stretching, getting thick and heavy between his legs, and he rubbed against Dannen like a cat. He sucked on Dannen's tongue and clung to Dannen's shoulders as he pushed as close as he could.

Dannen took a few steps backward and went down on the couch, pulling Razi on top of him. Dannen's hands slid over him, coming to rest on his ass, squeezing. Thighs parting, Razi wiggled until he could straddle Dannen's hips, not once breaking the kiss. He moved and rocked and arched his back so Dannen had little choice but to keep holding his ass. He liked that, liked it a lot, and wanted more. "Please," he whispered, finally pulling from the kiss to breathe. "You taste so good."

"Please what?" Dannen asked. "I'm all yours."

"Anything," Razi said, going back for another kiss. He felt both full of Dannen and utterly deprived at the same time, torn between wanting more and running from the intensity.

Dannen's fingers slid beneath his shirt, running lightly over his skin. The low groan that came from Dannen was testament to the power of his magic for Dannen skin on skin. Smiling into Dannen's mouth, Razi started to play with his own glamour, making subtle changes to tease Dannen with licks of his power, upping the feedback a little at a time.

Dannen groaned again, hips bucking up into him. "You... you don't have... have to."

"But it's good." Razi adjusted his glamour once more, shortening the length of his top a little, then eased off. "Isn't it?"

"Oh, it's good. It's really good. I just don't want you thinking that's all I want. I'm not using you, Razi." Dannen was so earnest.

"I know," Razi said softly. He was starting to believe it, which was dangerous. With a tight grin he changed his glamour completely, making his skin and hair darker, shifting his body build to something bigger and broader. "If you were using me, you'd ask for this." He knew the surge of magic would be more intense than any other he'd sent to that point.

Dannen's eyes went wide and his whole body bucked, the pants beneath his hips suddenly damp. "Oh fuck! Oh. Shit, I'm sorry, Razi. I wasn't expecting... it was so much."

Razi laughed happily. "I know!" He wiggled a little and kissed Dannen's mouth lightly. "You made a mess, though," he added sternly before giggling again.

Dannen nodded, blushing. "At least I'm home now. I can take them off. 'Cause cold spunk in your shorts? It's kind of gross."

Snickering and nodding, Razi curled into Dannen, ignoring his own cock. "I suppose it is," he said. "Maybe you should take a shower?"

Dannen shook his head. "Maybe I should just suck it up and get you off first -- I've already come lots and I keep leaving you hanging!"

Razi giggled again, feeling a little floaty. "You said suck," he teased. He rolled to the side a little and dropped a hand to his lap and rubbed his erection with a short gasp.

"I can do that for you." Dannen reached over and started undoing his pants.

"Oh. Oh, yes." Razi twisted a little as his pants opened and his erection pushed out into Dannen's warm hand. A jolt of need hit his balls like a shock and he thrust his hips up with a jerk.

Dannen slipped off the couch and settled on his knees between Razi's legs. He looked up with a smile and murmured something that sounded like "I'm not very good at this, but I'll do my best," and then wrapped his lips around Razi's cock.

Razi squeaked. He stared down and watched as Dannen took him in, then squeaked again as wet and heat surrounded him. "You don't have to--" he protested, but then he followed up by pushing in a tiny bit more, shuddering as Dannen's tongue flicked over the head of his cock. "Oh my."

Dannen made a noise that could have meant anything and his head started bobbing. And no, it wasn't practiced or full of tongue tricks, but it was a blow job and there weren't any teeth and Dannen obviously meant it and that kind of made up for anything else.

It wasn't like Razi had a world of experience from this end of it to compare to anyway. It was sweet and hot and he couldn't stop staring at the head in his lap, and before he knew it his hips were moving and he was giving in to what his body wanted. The drag of lips over his cock was just right and when Dannen sucked a little harder Razi cried out a warning.

Dannen pulled off and wound up with a face full of come and he was laughing, one hand working Razi, making the orgasm last longer, while the other hand wiped the come from his face.

"I'm sorry!" Razi managed between a panted breath and a laugh. "Really, I am." He took Dannen's hand from his cock and started licking his fingers clean, mostly boneless and completely content.

Dannen climbed up onto the sofa beside him. "It's okay, we're even now."

Razi let his eyes slip closed as he enjoyed the rush of endorphins. "I suppose we are," he said, resting his head on Dannen's shoulder. He wondered if he should start planning how to leave, but thought he'd rather like to stay for a while.

Dannen nodded and shifted, lying down full out on the couch, with him tucked in between the back of the couch and Dannen. There was plenty of room and the couch was comfy, Dannen's hand heavy on his hip.

"Don't let me sleep," Razi whispered, snuggling in.

"Why not?"

Razi shook his head as much as he could and purred for a moment, loving the way Dannen felt against him. "Can't sustain the magic in my sleep," he said without thinking, distracted by the smell of Dannen's skin.

"I wouldn't mind," Dannen whispered.

Razi felt himself go very still. "Yes, you would," he said softly. "You wouldn't want to, but you would."

Dannen sighed. "No, Razi. *I* wouldn't, but you would."

Razi shook his head again, making an effort to sit up. All thoughts of sleep were gone. "You don't *know*," he insisted. "You... you have no idea how different I look, how ugly I am. It would change your mind."

Dannen sat up, too, looking distressed. "You think I'm with you because you're pretty on the outside? I know that's not really how you look, Razi. And I love your eyes."

Razi forced himself to be still and not to blink too much as his eyes filled. He hoped Dannen loved them with tears. He thought hard for a few moments and looked down at the floor when he realized he wasn't going to be able to watch Dannen's face when he finally showed him. "There's 'not pretty' and then there's me," he said, letting go of the glamour slowly, bit by bit.

He sank into the couch as he let his body shape show through, the lithe and light frame vanishing to show his legs and arms, graceless and marred by thick muscle and sallow skin. He let the fine clothes melt away into the rougher cloth he could actually afford, long sleeves and a mended knee.

He lifted his head and closed his eyes as tears escaped when he shed his beautiful hair for his true brown cowlicks, and erased the fine lines of his carefully constructed face. He knew what he looked like, what Dannen could see. A slightly crooked mouth with a too thin upper lip and a too full lower, eyes a bit too widely spaced. A large nose, and eyebrows that he could spend a week on. Cheekbones that were strong only when compared to his weak chin.

Ugly. So far from pretty it was pathetic.

He felt naked. He felt raw. And all he could do was wait and resist the urge to run.

"Oh, wow." Dannen laughed softly and fingers ran through his hair. "Look at all these neat curls."

He was kissed suddenly, Dannen parting his lips and sliding his tongue in, and then soft kisses landed on his nose and his cheeks and his eyelids. "Thank you, Razi. Thank you so much for trusting me. And see? No screaming. No sending you away."

Razi stared at Dannen, his eyes suddenly wide open. "What?" he asked, dazed.

"What? The way you were going on, I was steeling myself for a monster. You're not a monster, Razi. I like how you really look."

"I..." Razi blinked again. "I have weird coloring and my face is... twisted. I have scars on my back and my body is awkward. My hair is... well, this."

Dannen looked at his hair again. "I like your hair, it makes me happy. And so what if you don't look like a pin-up boy? Your eyes are special and I want to suck on your lower lip and explore your scars." Dannen tilted his head. "Does that make you think I'm weird?"

Razi shook his head and then nodded. "A little, maybe. I mean... I'm not... oh God." Another tear fell and he thought he might just come apart at the seams.

"Razi, I see a lot of people in my line of work and nobody looks like they do in the magazines. Everyone's got flaws." Dannen wiped the tears from his cheeks. "Don't cry, Razi, please. I don't want to make you cry."

"Okay." Razi took a deep breath and shuddered with the effort of calming himself. "I'm sorry. I'm just so scared," he whispered. "I feel bare." He felt stripped and open, all of his secrets out there for Dannen to see. He took another breath and looked into Dannen's eyes, searching for the slightest bit of rejection. He couldn't find it, and something in him loosened, gave way. "Oh," he said, fresh tears welling up. "You don't hate me."

"I told you I wouldn't." Dannen shifted away, opening the top of the coffee table, which obviously doubled as a trunk, and pulling out a blanket, covering them both up and tucking it in around his chin. "Is that better?"

Razi nodded. "Warm," he said shakily. "Thank you." He turned, tentatively moving closer to Dannen's heat.

Dannen's arms went around him immediately, holding him. "Does this mean you might come to bed with me and sleep?"

"Stay?" Razi wondered vaguely if he'd been dropped into some other universe simply by stopping the magic. It hadn't happened before, but there had to be a first time for everything. "I'd like that," he said cautiously. "But I don't know if I can right now. I'm a little... wound up."

Dannen nodded. "I'll take you home then." He was given a soft kiss. "Thank you. For sharing your true self with me -- I'm honored."

Razi found himself standing up, looking down at the floor. He had no idea what had just happened, or what would happen next. He felt like he was treading on ice, very thin ice which threatened to shatter at any moment. "I can take a cab," he said woodenly.

Dannen stood, hands on his arms, rubbing. "Oh, please, Razi, let me drive you, deliver you safely to your home. You can change back if you want."

"I want to, but I won't." Razi looked up. "I need to try this." He needed to pass this test.

Dannen tucked him into his pants and did them up and ruffled his hair. "Come on then, I'll take you home."

Sighing, Razi nodded and followed, hoping that the hair ruffling thing was either going to stop immediately or stick around. If Dannen stuck around. He reached out and took Dannen's hand, almost clutching it. "You'll still buy feathers?"

"Yep. They remind me of you, Razi." He was given a soft kiss.

"Maybe the feathers of a peahen would suit me better than a peacock." He moved a little closer and kissed Dannen again before the man could move away.

"Oh, I don't think so. The peacock uses his glamour to attract his mate, but he still has to keep her and for that he needs to be real."

"But some get to be pretty *and* real -- like you. I'll get lost in you, Dannen. Your strength, your conviction, your good intentions. I can't be that pretty on the inside."

"I was a homely kid, Razi. I know what's important. And I see good stuff in you. I think you look pretty good."

Razi wanted to believe Dannen. He really did. He looked down at himself, standing there in his plain clothes with his somewhat less than appealing body and he could even see the tip of his nose. "I think you're too kind," he said. But, as he wanted to believe and he was the master of illusion, he decided to pretend it would all work out; just for a little while. Long enough to have good dreams, anyway. "If nothing else, I can decorate easily," he said, trying to make Dannen smile.

Dannen popped him in the ass. "You can do more than that. You're worth more than that."

"You think?" Razi asked before he could stop himself. "Aside from being able to change the way things look, I really can't do anything, Dannen. Seriously. I'm very good at that, though. And while you aren't using me for that, there are a lot who would if I let them."

"But have you ever tried anything else?"

Razi shook his head. "When would I? I was put in a box as soon as my extra was figured out and I never had a chance to, really. Besides, what would I do?" He looked around Dannen's neat home and sighed. "I haven't got the faintest idea where to even start imagining."

"But now you know maybe you can. And that's a place to start." Dannen kissed him. "And I'm willing to help."

Razi kissed him back, and then again. "I believe you," he whispered, moving a fraction closer. "We're not getting any closer to the door," he observed.

"Are you sure you need to leave?"

"No." He wasn't, not anymore. He wasn't sure of anything, other than the fact that Dannen was warm and solid and kept kissing him.

"Come to bed with me? Make love with me? Please, Razi? I promise I'll take you home the moment you need me to."

"You still want me like that?" Razi asked. He had to know; there was a difference between kisses and sex, and he had to take Dannen's word that he didn't have to use magic to keep Dannen. It was a test for both of them, in a strange way.

Dannen took his hand and brought it to the bulge in his pants. "Ignore the sticky and see for yourself."

Razi felt an immediate twitch in his own pants. "Oh," he said stupidly. His fingers, thankfully, were less stupid and he rubbed Dannen's erection encouragingly. "Maybe... maybe we could take care of the sticky?"

"Yeah, shower before bed? I'm really good at back scrubbing."

"Oh good, I'm really good at the front parts," Razi said, allowing himself the first true smile he'd had since he dropped his glamour. "Lead on," he ordered, giving Dannen another squeeze.

Dannen smiled back and led him down the hall to the bathroom. There was no tub at all. Instead the space had been given over for a large shower with two shower heads. "I like getting it from both sides," Dannen told him, going red as soon as he realized what he'd said. The rest of the bathroom followed the white and blue theme, the trim neat and bright.

"Me too," Razi teased, tracing a blue tile with his finger. "And lots of room for it in there."

Dannen chuckled. "I don't think I've ever had shower sex, but I've always thought it could be fun."

"You don't *think* you have?" Razi grinned at him and started plucking at Dannen's buttons. "If you don't remember, it wasn't that good."

Dannen laughed and helped him, working on the buttons on his shirt.

"I've never done it either," Razi confided, slipping a hand into Dannen's shirt. "Not in a shower. Too worried I'd land on my face and lose my concentration."

"Well, I'll make sure you don't land on your face, but it doesn't matter if I'm such a good lay you lose your concentration, now does it?"

"You're already the best lay ever," Razi told him, a hand going around to Dannen's back and down into his pants to stroke over his ass.

"Really? I'm your best ever?" Dannen beamed at him and pushed back into his hands and then made a face. "Um, I'm still ick up front; let's get this naked and wet thing going."

Razi let Dannen go long enough to watch as Dannen stripped, smiling as skin and a bit of a mess was revealed. It wasn't until he absently moved to peel off his own clothes that he paused. Head buried in his shirt, he took a deep breath and tugged it off, over his head. Dannen got the water running and helped him take off his pants, drawing him into the water without a word or a wince. He didn't seem to be ignoring Razi's body at all.

Razi wasn't used to feeling self-conscious with a lover; usually he was wrapped in layers of pretty and his partner was floating either on feedback or simply too far gone in arousal to pay him much attention. The strangeness of this situation, Dannen really seeing him and *still* wanting him, was confusing and more than a little scary. It took most of his willpower to push aside his fears and simply enjoy the moment, marred as it was with his insecurities.

Turning his focus outward, Razi reached for Dannen with one hand, the other searching for soap. With slippery hands he could distract Dannen all he wanted, he was sure. Dannen pushed happily into his hands, seeming to be enjoying himself even without the feedback. The man's cock was already filling again and Dannen gave him a sheepish grin. "I'm usually good for a couple of times."

"Good to know," Razi said, his eyes fixed on Dannen's cock as it grew. He raked his fingers through the tight curls at its base and gently cupped Dannen's balls. "God, you're lovely," he said softly, foregoing thinking for feeling.

"Oh..." Dannen groaned, eyes closing, hips pushing into his hands. "You've got an amazing touch, Razi. Gentle. Sweet."

Razi felt himself blush, disconcerted to realize that if Dannen opened his eyes he would see it. He dropped his head to watch his hands again. Being without his masks was even harder than he'd thought, though in different ways. Delicately, he rolled Dannen's balls and traced them with his fingers, then swept a fingertip over the head of Dannen's cock.

Even without the feedback, Dannen was moaning, pushing into his hand, cock just as hard as anything now. Dannen was responding to his touch. Just him. Dannen's hands landed on his shoulders, slid over his arms in long, gentle sweeps.

Shaking just a little, concentrating on the feeling of Dannen in his hands, the smell of the man, Razi asked, "What do you like? What should I do?" He stroked the smooth erection firmly, fascinated by the look of his real hands on a man.

Dannen's eyes popped open, smiled down at him. "I like being touched, so touch. Let me touch you back." Dannen moaned softly. "Your hands feel so good, Razi. I mean that magic stuff is good, too, it's wow, but this... it's hot and close and nice."

Razi stroked Dannen again, pulling gently. He looked up, trying not to frown as he thought. Tried to think. It wasn't easy, whatever it was. "This is... better?" he asked doubtfully. He was pretty sure that wasn't possible.

Dannen nodded. "Don't get me wrong, Razi, I'm not saying I don't like the other, but wham, bam and I'm coming -- it's like a thunderstorm, fast and furious and gone. This is... it builds slowly, gets hotter and hotter and hotter and I can feel it climb my spine and slowly make my legs weak and then eventually there will be rain." Dannen laughed. "God, I'm a dork. Thunderstorm metaphors while we're having sex. Sorry."

"In the shower, too," Razi said absently, trying to understand. He blushed again when he realized what he'd said and bit his lip. "Um. Maybe we should move to the stopping talking part."

Dannen laughed and raised his chin, eyes closing again as their mouths met. "Not talking works for me." The words filled his mouth a moment before Dannen's tongue did.

Razi moaned softly, immediately swept up in the rush of arousal that flooded through him. He gave Dannen's cock an extra squeeze and tried not to plaster himself to Dannen's body, mindful of the slippery and wet shower stall. Water poured onto them from two directions and his cock was rubbing on Dannen's thigh, and Razi wondered exactly how he'd gotten there. He moaned again and sucked Dannen's tongue, wanting more. Dannen's hands landed on his ass and tugged him close and their skin was slick with the water and the friction between their bodies was good. Dannen's cock was so hot against his belly.

Razi's moan changed to a whimper, a chant starting in his head. Good. More. Good. More. Good. Hungrily, he tried to take possession of Dannen's mouth, soft cries filling the shower and being washed away by the water. "Please," he said roughly, his eyes squeezed shut. "In me? Please?"

"K." Dannen turned him to face the tiles and spread his legs with a knee. Then Dannen reached for the conditioner and got it all over his fingers, pushing one into him. "Oh, wow. You're so hot."

Razi shuddered, concentrating on making himself relax. The single finger felt wonderful; he tried not to think ahead to what more would feel like. "Oh god," he said seriously to the tile, his hips pushing back. Dannen had lovely hands, with long fingers, something he hadn't really appreciated until just that moment. He pushed back again, his legs spreading even more.

Dannen kissed the back of his head. "It's good? You're so tight."

"Good," Razi agreed, nodding his head. Dannen's finger stroked into him so finely, sending shocks through him from his hole to his balls. "More?"

"Yeah, lots more." Another finger pushed slowly into him and now he was being stretched, and Dannen's fingers seemed huge.

"Oh," Razi sighed, stilling himself. He let Dannen move in him and tried not to tighten himself. With a deep breath he relaxed again, his attention almost entirely on his ass. The small part that wasn't, was concentrated on his prick, stiff and standing away from his body, twitching eagerly. Carefully he pushed back again, starting to ride Dannen's fingers.

Dannen moaned and whispered softly. "So hot, Razi. God, you're so sexy. Gonna be so tight and good inside you."

Razi whimpered. The thought of Dannen inside him was almost completely overshadowed by the fact that Dannen thought *he* was sexy. That Dannen wanted *him*. He shook, braced on the wall, and arched his back. "Dannen," he whispered. "Oh god, Dannen. Please!"

"Are you ready?" Dannen asked, fingers scissoring inside him.

"Yes!" He was pretty sure he was. He was also certain that it didn't matter, he wanted it so bad. He was panting, his cock bobbing in front of him and his ass felt open and loose; he was a slut right then and he didn't care. He needed Dannen inside him more than he'd needed anything before. "God, please, Dannen. Now."

Dannen's fingers disappeared, leaving him feeling so empty and he'd never been so empty, and then Dannen was pushing in and Dannen was huge and hot and just what Razi wanted, needed. He cried out, the sound shockingly loud in the shower, but he couldn't keep anything inside. The joy of it was too big, the pleasure too intense to keep locked in his body. Dannen filled him completely, not leaving room for anything else, not even insecurity. Razi tipped his head back in the water and filled his lungs with steaming air, then began to move back, taking as much as he could into himself. "God," he said yet again. "Big. So *hard*."

"And you're the tightest thing I could ever imagine." Dannen's mouth moved on his neck, sucking away water and teasing his skin. The big hands slid around him, one holding his prick loosely, the other stroking his belly.

Razi gasped and fought the urge to jerk and twist on Dannen's cock, knowing that if he let go and just rode the thick cock inside him, if he fucked himself into Dannen's hand.... he'd come and come and come and then it would be over. He wanted it to last, to take Dannen along with him as high as they could go. He squeezed his ass around Dannen and shifted his weight a little, moaning. "More," he begged, despite his resolve.

"I just don't want to hurt you," Dannen whispered, but then he was moving, going too slowly, but moving, pulling almost all the way out and then sliding back in deep.

"Not hurting." Burning, maybe, and a very pleasant ache, but no hurt. Razi groaned as Dannen filled him again, picturing the way his body must be opening for the man, the way he made room for Dannen's cock. He had a moment to be grateful that they weren't face to face, that he couldn't actually look to see Dannen sinking into him before the image of it locked in his brain and his cock throbbed. Dannen must have felt it because he moaned and moved a little faster, pushed into him harder. The hand around his cock tightened, tugged.

Razi's panting turned to grunting as he started to move, speeding up and rocking back to meet Dannen. "Fuck me," he ordered, past any real sense.

"I am," Dannen told him, moving faster at the words. That one hand stayed on his cock, the other landed on the tile near his head, Dannen bracing himself as he moved hard and fast, fucking Razi with long, deep strokes.

Razi's cries were becoming more or less constant, getting sharper as Dannen found his gland, repeatedly and often. His eyes closed as he got closer to coming, his body so hot he was sure that the water would turn to steam before even landing on him. Pressure in his balls built, and he could feel his gut tightening in anticipation. "I'm going to come," he whispered, heat flooding through him again. "Oh god, Dannen."

"Yeah, do it. Please. Gonna be soon, too." Dannen's cock plowed into him, the hand around his cock tightening. What finally pushed him over the edge, though, was Dannen's mouth on his shoulder, teeth digging into his skin hard enough to leave a mark.

Suddenly silent, Razi's climax poured over Dannen's hand while his body shook and his hole spasmed in time with the pulse of his cock, the thunder of his heartbeat. Breath was gone, everything was gone -- all that remained was the violet-white of pleasure and the feeling of Dannen everywhere.

Dannen's groan felt louder than it sounded, vibrating against him as Dannen jerked and filled him with heat. It was almost enough to make him come again. If he'd had anything left, he would have done something other than lean, boneless, against the tile. "Wow," he whispered. "That was... wow."

Dannen leaned against him, one arm around him, kind of holding him against the big body so he wasn't being crushed or anything. "Yeah, wow. That was really good, Razi. Hot."

Razi nodded as he tried to catch his breath. "Good. Best. I never realized how much I was... elsewhere, before. Concentration scattered." He thought it was possible he wasn't making sense. He didn't really care right then.

"Sh. Sh." Dannen petted him and then slid out with a groan. Those big hands soaped him up quickly and then Dannen washed himself, too, rinsed them off and all but carried him out of the shower to wrap him in a big blue towel.

"I'm fine," Razi protested, trying to snuggle and walk at the same time. "Sleepy. Floaty. Damp. Fine." God, he felt drugged. "Kiss me again?"

Dannen stopped and turned him, giving him a long kiss that ended with a wet slurp, making Dannen giggle. "Sorry."

"For what?" Razi grinned. "Sloppy kisses are sexy." He summoned a little energy and turned the towel white for a moment, then let it slip back to blue. "Thank you," he whispered, leaning up for one more kiss.

Dannen shivered and kissed him more softly this time. "Thank you, Razi, for trusting me with yourself."

Dannen's bedroom was white with red accents and dominated by a big bed. "You are going to stay, right?"

Razi found himself nodding before thinking. "I'd like to," he said honestly. "I think that if I go home now I'll convince myself this was either a mistake or a dream. If I stay, I can hold onto it a little longer. Believe in it."

Dannen gave him another of those sloppy, lazy kisses. "It wasn't a mistake. And if it was a dream, I'm dreaming it, too."

Razi's hands roamed slowly but freely over Dannen's arms and chest. He felt safe there, with Dannen. Safe and warm and protected. "Dreams are where the best magic is," he said between kisses.

"I don't know, this feels like pretty good magic," Dannen told him. "And I'm really hoping we're awake."

He was lifted onto the bed, Dannen climbing under the covers with him and curling around him.

"Awake," Razi murmured. "No magic except us. Different magic. Better." He closed his eyes, huddled in Dannen's arms, utterly content. Even worry and insecurity had slipped away, leaving him drowsy and lax, his legs tangled with Dannen's. It would be nice to wake up that way as well.

Chapter Five

It had been awhile since Dannen had woken up with someone and he'd forgotten how nice it was to go from sleeping to being awake and cuddling. Humming a little, he pulled Razi closer and nuzzled into the warm neck. Oh, Razi smelled good, warm and sleepy and soft and just good. Different from when he was using his glamour. This was... real. He nibbled a bit, hardly even really awake yet.

Razi stirred lazily, just a flex of muscles instead of real movement, and made a mumbling noise that was either a contented purr or a request for more. Either was fine, as was the slightly more emphatic shift of Razi's body as he started to wake, his legs rubbing, and pressing the start of a morning erection against Dannen.

Oh, yeah, this was another good part of waking up with someone. Rubbing and warmth and things popping up all over the place for attention.

Dannen reached a hand down, sliding it along Razi's cock. Oh, it was fatter than he remembered and Dannen actually looked and yeah, that wasn't the cock he'd seen the day he'd sucked it -- he had to admit he hadn't been paying attention to how Razi's cock looked last night. It made him a little sad, that Razi had even felt the need to glamour his prick.

"Dannen?" Razi's soft voice asked. "You don't have to -- I mean, I understand if you don't want to."

"Don't want to what?" Some guys didn't like sucking, although he'd already done that, so Razi had to know he liked doing that. And all he was doing was holding Razi and kind of jacking him off, although really he was just exploring the heat and silk of Razi's nice fat cock.

Razi's head was suddenly buried in his chest, his eyes hidden. "You don't have to touch me," he whispered. "It's okay."

He put his mouth down next to Razi's ear. "Why am I suddenly supposed to not want to touch you?"

Razi shrugged a little, or as best he could, considering their positions. "Cold light of day, maybe?"

"I'm not cold." He kissed the top of Razi's head and kept pumping the sweet prick in his hand, figuring maybe that would convince Razi it was okay, or at least distract him enough to not worry about it.

"That's not what I mea -- oh." Razi hissed and turned a little more, his hips rocking a bit. "Nice," he said, nuzzling one of Dannen's nipples. He started licking just as his cock started to leak a little, silky heat gliding on Dannen's hand.

Dannen shivered. "Oh, that feels good, Razi. Not cold at all."

His own cock was nice and hard, but he ignored it, thought maybe it was time Razi got off first.

"Cold?" Razi asked absently, his teeth scraping lightly over the wet nipple before his lips fastened on it and started to suck a little. Every time Razi sucked, his hips jerked and his prick slid through Dannen's hand. Razi was starting to hum, and one hand was making its way to Dannen's other nipple, every movement synchronized with the way Dannen played with his cock. Razi was in Dannen's rhythm, completely.

It made him feel like the center of Razi's universe and he was thinking that was a pretty heady place to be. He got his free hand around to Razi's ass and he squeezed one round globe.

Razi moaned and went lax, although he seemed to push even closer. It was a strange feeling, Razi's pliable body moving with him, loose limbed and warm, and still managing to be hungry and demanding. Razi's hips rolled again and the moan turned into a breathy whimper. "Dannen," he said softly lifting his head slowly. His eyes were hazy, sleepy and a little bewildered under the heat.

Dannen leaned down and kissed him, kept tugging, pulling, showing Razi it was okay and it was good and he should just enjoy himself and come. It took only a minute or so before Razi's kiss grew first more intense then sloppy and wet, his tongue thrusting with the rocking of his hips. With a groan Dannen could feel, Razi let go and fuck his mouth as well as his hand, faster and harder until he stiffened suddenly, the wet warmth of his orgasm seeming to be everywhere as he came.

"Oh yes," Razi sighed into Dannen's mouth. "Yes." Another wave passed over them both as Razi shuddered and his cock pulsed once more. "Yes."

Dannen beamed. Oh yeah, Razi made him feel like a god in bed and that was pretty damned special. "So it was good," he teased.

"Yes." Razi laughed and kissed him again. "God, yes. Best. Didn't I say?" He seemed happy enough, his face and body flushed slightly from sex, his smile natural. "And you?"

"Feeling kind of smug." And he was. Look at the glow *he'd* put on Razi's face. Kind of nice after all the times Razi had sent him over the moon with that magic feedback of his.

"Just smug?" Razi asked archly, one hand worming its way down to Dannen's groin. "Or smug *and* hard?"

He chuckled and nodded, hips pushing, helping Razi's hand find his cock.

"Ahh, very hard," Razi grinned at him. "Any requests? I'm feeling very generous at the moment."

"As long as it involves you touching me in some way, I'm not picky at all." Hand, mouth, ass, it was all good in his experience.

"Oh good!" Razi's grin grew wicked and he slid down Dannen's body, pausing long enough to rub what remained of his own pleasure into Dannen's skin before curling around Dannen's hips and kissing his erection. "Good morning," he whispered to it, just before he started licking.

"Oh. Oh, *good* morning," murmured Dannen, watching as Razi's tongue slid over his prick. It looked as good as it felt and he moaned, wriggling a little.

"Uh-huh." Razi sucked at the head for a moment, then moved. "Open your legs a little," he said. When Razi had re-settled himself between Dannen's legs, he sucked once more before moving down to mouth the root of Dannen's cock, his hands stroking over Dannen's balls, lifting them gently. He buried his head there, sucking one and then the other, pressing Dannen's thighs apart.

Dannen spread his legs wide, groaning, shivering. Oh yeah, this was good. The magic thing was pretty hot, but it was like cake -- you didn't want it every time you were hungry.

"Feels so good," he told Razi.

"Taste good," Razi countered, licking his balls again. Razi's hand, now wet with saliva, slid up and started jacking him as Razi's tongue moved lower.

"Oh. Oh, Razi." Dannen might have gurgled; he definitely spread his legs wider, encouraging Razi not to stop.

Razi didn't gurgle, but he did dive in, licking and kissing around Dannen's hole for an eternity. He nipped and licked and moaned, giving every indication of making a feast of Dannen's ass. Dannen just closed his eyes, his hands fisting in the sheets as Razi's tongue slid over him, made him feel so good.

He made some more embarrassing noises and found he didn't care at all. He thought he heard Razi laughing happily -- there was certainly a very interesting vibration down there just before Razi pushed his pointed tongue right in, thrusting wetly before retreating to lick some more.

"Oh, fuck. Razi." He was going to just explode.

Razi's hand, almost forgotten, suddenly swept up his dick and over the head, then started stroking him madly. At the same time, Razi started tongue fucking his ass again, moaning and licking and thrusting, pulling and squeezing. Dannen just shouted, his whole body bucking uncontrollably, Razi's tongue and hand guiding his movements as he came, the pleasure moving through him.

Razi stayed there until it was over, the hand and the licks both slowing but not stopping until Dannen was ready, until he was back in the bed instead of off in the stratosphere somewhere. Then Razi crawled up beside him and smiled smugly. "Good?" he asked.

He put his arm around Razi and tugged him in close. "Yeah. It was very good."

"Just very good?" Razi demanded in mock outrage. "I'll have you know that you screamed. That's got to be four stars at least."

"I didn't scream, I shouted."

Razi made an indelicate noise. "Sure. Shouted. And made a huge mess -- God, look at you." He was smiling and wiggling against Dannen, all traces of his earlier insecurity gone as he teased.

Dannen laughed. "I said *very* good, you know. I thought that *was* four stars." He winked and slid his hand along Razi's body, enjoying the slide of skin, the interesting terrain. He wondered why all the scars though -- had something terrible happened to Razi?

"Nap now," Razi said, kissing his jaw. "Or breakfast?" He sat up suddenly. "Do you have to go to work? Should I go?"

He chuckled. "It's Saturday, Razi. I have the weekend off." Dannen tugged Razi back down. "And we only need to worry when my stomach is louder than we are."

"I don't think my stomach can get that loud. We'll just keep coming and coming and making messes, and I'll wither away to nothing!" Razi laughed and curled against him again, one hand flung across Dannen's waist. "I like this," he said softly.

Dannen nodded. "Lazy mornings are always good -- if you have someone special to share them with they're amazing."

Razi nodded slowly. "I'm beginning to see that," he said hesitantly. "The special part, I mean."

Dannen smiled, fingers sliding through Razi's wonderful curls. "You are, you know."

"I meant you, Dannen," Razi said, looking at him like he was insane. "You are special. You're the only person I've ever met who wanted to look behind the pretty. The only person who seems to like... this better. Even my parents didn't give me that."

"Oh, Razi, that's terrible. No wonder you don't think anyone wants to see you like you really are." He hugged Razi tight, feeling so bad for him. "I never knew my parents, but my Gram... she said that everyone had something special about them. Sometimes you had to look pretty hard, but it was there." Dannen chuckled. "Not that I had to look hard to find something special about you -- but you do hide everything else about you behind your glamour, did you know that?"

Razi nodded then shook his head. "There isn't anything special about me except for the glamour. At least, that's what I was taught." Razi looked up at him with troubled eyes. "You don't agree. But why would everyone lie? It doesn't make sense, Dannen."

"I know lots of people would agree with me -- you just know the wrong kind of people. I don't think they're lying so much as... shallow?"

Razi frowned at him, not unhappy but merely thinking. "Perhaps," he said finally. "But it's what I am. It's what I do. If no one gets joy from it, then I have nothing to offer. If it's shallow that no one looks deeper, I must be shallow because it's all I show."

"But it's not all you are. Look at you now! I think you're beautiful just like you are. You turn me on and make me want. And I think you could use your glamour for good, for more than just being 'pretty' for people."

Razi peered at him, his eyes full of doubt. "How?" he asked seriously. "That's all it's really good for -- making things pretty. It's not real, it doesn't actually change anything."

Dannen smiled. He had some ideas; they didn't pay, but nobody said Razi had to stop doing what he was doing for money, just add something that helped him find meaning and value. "Have you ever been to the Hospital for Children?"

Nodding slowly and pulling a face, Razi said, "Unpleasant place. Not a lot of fun, to say the least."

"No, but the kids have to be there, they have no choice. I bet if someone were to go there and dress up their rooms for a little while, maybe dress them up, too, like give the cancer kids hair and put the little girls in princess costumes. Man, I bet that would bring those kids a lot of joy."

Razi's eyes widened. "Share the glitter," he said thoughtfully, a smile starting to light up his face. "Like... a present for a day, or at least a few hours. I could... I could make them laugh, too -- change myself, change their beds, color the walls!"

Dannen watched as the possibilities of it lit up Razi's face and he laughed, enchanted by the spell that happiness put on Razi's face. Now that was more lovely than any glamour he'd seen -- it came from the inside. He laughed softly. "Yeah. Can you imagine what a gift that happiness could be, that laughter? The changes might not be permanent, but that feeling would last."

"You think so? Do you think the doctors would let me?" Razi twisted and sat up in the bed, his eyes dancing. "I'd have to make sure the parents gave permission, too, maybe talk to the staff -- what if there's a magic sensor, though?" He shook his head impatiently. "I'll deal with that if it happens. Oh, Dannen!" He beamed and bent over Dannen, kissing him quickly before sitting up again. "Should I go talk to them? Today?"

Dannen nodded. Strike while the iron is hot, his Grandmother always used to say. "Yeah, Razi, I think that's an excellent idea. I'm sure they've got a volunteer coordinator who'd be happy to help you sort out all the permissions and stuff." In fact he knew they did, because he volunteered once a month, going in wearing his uniform and talking to the kids, playing with them.

Razi nodded, his fingers toying absently with the sheets. They turned blue gradually, a hue at a time as Razi wiggled and bit at his lip, clearly thinking of something other than what his glamour was doing. "It won't pay, of course, so I'll have to keep up the modeling stuff to make money. But it'll be good anyway -- I can practice that way, get out of my apartment. Oh, it's a good idea, Dannen." He beamed again and the sheets grew dark. "Oops," he said, his eyes wicked and unapologetic.

Dannen laughed again, skin tingling in anticipation. "Can I touch you?" he asked.

"Yes," Razi grinned. "Although I don't know if I'll be ready for much so soon." He looked down at his lap and shrugged. "But then again..."

Dannen touched, shivering a little at the feedback from the glamour. It was just light, soft almost with just the sheet colored between them.

Razi's hand dropped to his own erection for a moment, his legs shifting as he rearranged himself. "Soft and slow?" he whispered with another smile, the sheet suddenly blinding white. "Or does it matter at all?" He stretched out and took Dannen's mouth in a deep, wet kiss.

Dannen lay down with Razi, pulling him in close. "I thought I wanted the magic buzz," he admitted. "But now that you're in my arms, soft and slow sounds really good."

"It might leak out around the edges anyway," Razi said, kissing his jaw. "I'm full of energy -- if I don't use a bit now and again it gets... harder to manage." Razi's tongue lapped at his neck and a low buzz settled over him as the sheets maintained a slightly blue shade of white. "I can turn it up later, if you want."

"Whatever you want, Razi." Dannen's voice was low, rough, from Razi's tongue as much as the gentle magic. His hands slid over Razi's skin, finding the scars without him even thinking about it. "What are these from?"

Razi stiffened in his arms. "A belt. Well, a belt buckle, I think."

Anger filled him. "What? Somebody hit you? Who?"

There was a long silence before Razi moved, his head resting on Dannen's shoulder. "It doesn't matter now. It was a long time ago, Dannen."

"I'm sorry, Razi. I really am. No one should be hit with a belt, no one should have to wear scars like that." He petted Razi's shoulders, Razi's back, fingers finding the scars again.

"No," Razi agreed. "No one should. But sometimes..." He shook his head and sighed. "Sometimes I think the yelling did more damage. Deeper hurt than what you can see, if that makes sense. I can forget the scars, the beatings, or at least pretend to; it hurt and it damaged me, of course -- but it didn't cut into my soul. The yelling did." He lifted his head and frowned. "I don't want to talk about this right now. I wanted to make love and be happy."

Dannen nodded and stroked the frown from Razi's face. "Okay. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to bring up bad memories." He brought their mouths together, kissing Razi softly to start with.

Razi sighed into the kiss, returning it and adding to it by caressing Dannen's arm with a soft hand. "It's okay," Razi said, although it wasn't clear if he was speaking to himself or to Dannen. They kissed again, moving slowly as they tasted each other.

Dannen cupped Razi's face, fingers stroking the warm cheeks, humming as the kisses deepened, their tongues sliding together. The hand on his arm traveled from wrist to shoulder and back, finally tangling with his fingers as Razi pushed against him, their bodies pressed together with only the sheet between them.

He could feel the heat of Razi through the sheet, especially in the middle where Razi's cock lay, hard and so hot against his belly. With a low moan, Razi pushed against him again, the feedback from the magic pulsing a little before dying off once more. The kisses didn't stop, and Razi made no move to get rid of the sheet.

Dannen didn't mind at all. It was the weekend, they had all the time in the world and spending a good chunk of it just kissing Razi sounded like a good plan.

Minutes later, ages later or only moments, depending on fleeting perceptions, Razi's hand was tangled in Dannen's hair and Razi was pulling back just enough to look him in the eye. "You're lovely, you know. Special and kind and beautiful."

Dannen blushed a little. "I'm just trying to be a good person and enjoy my life."

"You're a good person," Razi said with certainty. He smiled then, and added, "Let me help with the enjoyment."

The sheet turned a deep blue and Razi's hand slipped between them. He started to lightly stroke Dannen's cock through the sheet, the color seeming to shimmer as it shifted.

"Oh!" Dannen called out and bucked, the magic feedback just zinging through him, entering him through his cock. "That's unbelievable," he whispered, voice gone hoarse.

"I know," Razi agreed, his breathing a little faster. "I want to make it better."

Dannen just made another gurgling noise. Any better and it was all going to be over like a shot, but wow, what a shot. He tugged at the sheet, wanting skin on skin all over, especially that hand to cock connection.

Razi moved, quickly and easily. The sheet was pushed aside and once again Dannen found himself with his legs spread, although this time they were around Razi's hips. "Let me love you," Razi whispered, one hand on Dannen's erection, the other on his own cock, guiding it. "Let me in."

His eyes widened, but he nodded. "Slick stuff?"

Razi's eyes glittered as he looked around the room, finally lunging for the bedside table. "Here?"

He nodded again, trying to relax as he spread his legs wider, opening for Razi.

Slippery fingers pushed into him, a little faster than he'd expected before slowing. "Sorry," Razi said. "I want too much."

"I've only done it once like this," he told Razi, breathing through the burn, the stretching.

Razi froze for a moment, a heartbeat, before moving his hand again. The fingers in Dannen pushed more gently, joined with a cascade of magical feedback. Massaging him open more than stretching the muscle, Razi dipped his head to tease at Dannen's nipple with tongue and teeth. His eyes rolled, from the magic and the nibbling and the ache of pain faded away, leaving a growing ache of need in its place.

"Better?" Razi whispered, leaving a sucking bite on his chest and easing another finger into him. "Okay?"

"Oh, yeah. Yeah, it's good, Razi." He nodded his head, crying out as Razi's fingers touched a spot inside him that made everything kind of jerk sideways and left him gasping.

"Now?" Razi's voice had taken on a note of pleading, and he could feel the man's cock leaking on his thigh.

He nodded. He didn't even care if he was stretched enough, he wanted to feel Razi inside him, to make Razi feel good with his body. He reached for Razi's cock, sliding his hand along it.

"Careful!" Razi cried as he jerked closer, then away. "I'll come. I want to be inside you." He rose up, draping Dannen's legs around him and grasping his erection with a hiss. "Ready?"

"Yeah, come on, do it. I want to feel you in me." His heels dug into Razi's back and he tugged him closer.

With a groan that sounded like it came from his soul, Razi started to push his cock in, achingly slow. Wider than his fingers, harder and softer both, Razi moved into him steady and sure. Eyes locked on his, Razi paused when he was deep in Dannen's ass and took a breath. "Don't move," he cautioned.

Razi gathered Dannen's cock in his fist and took another breath. Without moving, without thrusting, he suddenly tossed his head back and changed his glamour with a cry. His hair grew long and dark, his skin tone evened out and around them the sheets turned blue. His face remained the same, stayed Razi, but Dannen could barely register that under the flood of magic around and in him.

Dannen screamed, the sensations wild, huge and unbelievable. His whole body went tight, the pleasure pouring out of his cock in pulse after pulse until everything went slowly grey.

"Oh God," Razi cried. Dannen was as sure as he could be through the haze that Razi still wasn't moving, but the cock in his ass was throbbing, swelling, filling him with heat as Razi came with him. "Dannen!" Razi blazed, bright and sharp, then the magic faded out as Razi fell forward onto him, panting.

He got his arms wrapped around Razi, trying to catch his breath. Too blown away to say anything, he just patted Razi's back.

"Dannen?" Razi whispered, his voice rough.

He grunted and patted a little harder, trying to reassure Razi he was okay.

"I think," Razi said carefully between pants, "I think... we should save that for special occasions."

He nodded. "Intense," he managed to spit out, pleased with himself for finding words.

"Wild." Razi rested his head on Dannen's chest and panted some more.

"Uh-huh." He kissed the top of Razi's head, relaxing into the bed. It was intense, something special, and he thought maybe he was going to nap now.

"Sleep," Razi whispered. "And when we wake up... we'll still be us. Still here." He sighed and pressed a kiss to Dannen's sweaty skin. "Stuck together."

Dannen chuckled, but he didn't try to move. Somehow stuck together with Razi sounded just about right.

Chapter Six

Razi studied the feathers and glitter and carefully made the center plume pink and changed the glitter from silver to gold. "Better?" he asked.

The boy sitting on the hospital bed nodded slowly, then shook his head. "More purple. Please. She likes purple more than pink."

"I do not! Let me see!"

Razi smiled at the five year old who was propped up on her pillows and held the mirror back. "Not yet. You need... satin!" He waved his hand and both deepened the pink to a slightly more purple hue to please her brother and changed the cotton pillows to mounds of rich satin in shades of white and pink and red. "There," he said, lifting the mirror.

She stared into it and then down at her bed, her eyes wide. Her tiny hands lifted to play with her gold crown and touch the feathers in her hair, then dropped to trace the glittering pattern of her name scripted across the dress he'd created for her. "It's... It's..."

"Beautiful," her brother said earnestly. As earnestly as a nine year old could, anyway. "Tamra, you're beautiful."

"You are," Razi agreed, smiling.

Tamra took the mirror and stared into it. "I'm a princess!" she said, clearly delighted. She looked at him and grinned. "Make it blue!"

Laughing, Razi turned it all to blues and silvers, and the children squealed in delight. For ten minutes he sat there, changing colors as they wished, making feathers and flowers and losing himself in their laughter. When the nurses came to take Tamra's latest blood draw, he let them take the blame for the end of the fun, and stood to leave. "I'll be back the day after tomorrow," he promised.

"Thank you, Razi," Tamra said, her dimples showing. "It's fun."

He smiled and nodded. "It is."

He was still smiling as he walked through the corridors toward the main doors. It was fun and fulfilling, and the children were the most appreciative audience he'd ever had. Not counting his lover, of course, in the throes of their rare magic induced orgasms. They left that for a treat, but Dannen was certainly appreciative when they indulged. His smile grew as he thought of Dannen, and his step sped in anticipation of meeting him.

Dannen was sitting in the little patient garden with an old man in a wheelchair, both of them looking up and watching a flock of birds flying through the sky. His lover was still wearing his uniform, though Razi knew he would have signed out already.

Razi slowed his step and enjoyed just watching Dannen. He was so handsome in uniform. Smiling and thinking himself utterly smitten, Razi headed right for Dannen. It wasn't until he was almost there that it dawned on him that he hadn't even considered tweaking his own appearance for the benefit of the elderly gentleman; Dannen really preferred him as he truly was and Razi was finally taking that to heart.

Dannen beamed at him as he got closer, holding a hand out to him. "Come sit. Mr. Reljina and I are watching the birds flock from tree to tree. Mr. Reljina, this is my lover, Razi. Razi, Mr. Reljina – his granddaughter is a patient here."

"Hello, Mr. Reljina," Razi said softly as he took Dannen's hand. "The birds are lovely." He thought he might be glowing; Dannen saying that -- that -- in public.

"They are. And you're right Dannen -- they're almost as lovely as your Razi."

Dannen's hand squeezed his, eyes so proud.

Razi felt himself blush. "Dannen! You're being blinded by your feelings again," he said, ignoring for the moment that Mr. Reljina had given his implicit agreement. There was little doubt, however, that the emotions in Dannen's face shone out and made him beautiful; perhaps the same was true of him.

"No, I'm not," Dannen insisted, kissing his cheek. "How did it go with the kids?"

Razi felt his smile grow. "It was wonderful, you should have seen it. A beautiful, perfect princess, with her young prince standing guard. I made butterflies."

Dannen beamed at him. "You should see your face when you talk about the kids. I love how it makes you glow."

"I love how it makes *them* glow," Razi said. He blushed again and looked at poor Mr. Reljina. "I'm sorry, we're boring you, I'm sure."

"No, I should go and check on my granddaughter. It was nice to meet you both."

Dannen got up and helped the old man get his chair turned around and headed down the path to the door.

"You ready to go?"

Razi nodded happily, reaching for Dannen's hand. "Tired," he said as they began to walk. "No magic play tonight, I'm afraid."

"I know -- you're always tired after spending the day with the kids. I have supper being delivered and candles and stuff at home. Hot oil -- I thought you might like a massage."

Razi's spine almost melted at the mere thought of a massage. "Thank you, love," he said happily. "You always take care of me."

Dannen nodded happily. "It's my job."

"Mmm Special Protector Dannen, in charge of wayward Extra-normal Razi. Dispenser of encouragement, massages and mind-numbing orgasms." Razi giggled and leaned into Dannen's body. "And tomorrow, it's my job to take care of you. We planned this well, really."

"You're taking care of me tomorrow?" Dannen looked pleased.

"Uh-huh. I have nothing to do tomorrow but cook and tidy and rest. Tomorrow night, when you come home from work, you'll be spoiled and pampered and washed and oiled and read to and loved into a puddle." Razi smiled at him and squeezed his hand. "Because it would make me happy to do so."

Dannen nodded and kissed him softly. "I know how you feel." Dannen opened the car door for him.

"I know you do," Razi said as he settled himself in the car. He did. It had taken a while, but he'd finally figured it out and he was working on believing it all of the time, not just when Dannen was right there. Slowly, it was coming together. Every moment he spent with Dannen while not using his extra to hide behind, he believed it more. That Dannen understood the need to use the extra now and again was a help as well.

"I love you," Razi said softly, peering up at Dannen.

Dannen just beamed at him, like he did every time Razi said it. "I love you, too." He was given a soft kiss and then Dannen closed his door, walking around and getting in the driver's seat to drive him home.

Razi smiled all the way home, and right on through dinner. He let Dannen pamper him, and rested comfortably after dinner and dishes were done, just staring into the light of the candles. He was content. He was fed and warm, and he was loved. He seriously doubted that the massage would be needed; all he needed was Dannen to hold him.

Dannen came out of the kitchen, wiping his hands on the cloth. He stopped, and just stared.

Razi stared back, suddenly self-conscious. He looked down to make sure he hadn't accidentally glamourised himself, but he was normal. "Dannen?" he asked. "Is something wrong?"

Dannen shook his head. "I just... it's so good, coming out of the kitchen and having you sitting there, candlelight shinning in your eyes. I'm such a lucky man."

Oh. Oh my. Razi blinked slowly, completely unprepared for the swell of emotion Dannen's words brought. "Come here," he said, then had to clear his throat and say it again.

Dannen came over right away, sitting with him and pulling him into the strong arms. "Are you okay, Razi?"

"Yes," Razi said, almost laughing at the way they worked to reassure each other. "I just needed to touch you -- sometimes I can't believe you're real, you know. You're so... you, and I have to touch you, kiss you, make sure I'm not dreaming." He moved as close as he could to Dannen, possibly clinging and not really caring, as long as Dannen was holding him.

Dannen laughed softly, happily tugging Razi into his lap. "If this is a dream I don't want to wake up." The words were fond and familiar.

"Best magic is right here," Razi said with a smile, curling up and taking advantage of his position to start kissing Dannen's neck and jaw. "Best thing ever is right here, with you."

Dannen's head dropped back, hands sliding over him. "You said it, Razi."

"I could keep saying it," Razi offered, his kisses taking a turn on Dannen's jaw and moving up to his mouth.

"No, I have better things in mind for your mouth," murmured Dannen, licking at his lips as they came into range.

"Kisses?" Razi guessed, although the word itself vanished as he opened to Dannen. Dannen just purred into his mouth, tongue hot as it swept over his teeth.

Razi revised his assessment of magic. Magic was right there in Dannen's mouth, in his taste, in his kisses. He could, with one brush of his lips, with one plunge of his tongue, make Razi harder than stone, make him feel secure and loved and accepted. There wasn't any magic like that anywhere else in the world, and Dannen used it often.

With a soft moan, Razi wiggled on Dannen's lap, his legs spreading a little to make room for his cock, and accidentally-on-purpose rubbing on Dannen's crotch, too. Dannen's moan filled his mouth now. There was no doubt Dannen wanted him, cock hard in his pants, body pushing eagerly toward him. Dannen's hands slid along his back, stroking and petting.

Razi's body was almost humming, tuned to Dannen's need. He wiggled a little more and started unbuttoning Dannen's shirt, hands slipping inside it to touch soft and smooth skin. Dannen made him feel so wanted, so beautiful. He tried to give a little of that back. Dannen's breath hitched and his hips bucked. The kiss deepened as Dannen tried to return the favor, tugging at his clothes. He loved the way Dannen got all butterfingers and addled when they started making out.

Smiling, Razi leaned back a little. "Easy, lover," he whispered. "We'll get there."

He brushed his fingers over a tight nipple and added his moan to Dannen's, then finished the buttons and shoved Dannen's shirt off his shoulders. So beautiful, he thought, surveying the body in

front of him. His cock twitched in his pants and he dove for Dannen's mouth and another kiss. Dannen's mouth opened eagerly for him, lips wrapping around his tongue and sucking. Those fumbling fingers finally managed to work his buttons, tugging his shirt off and then they were skin on skin from the waist up.

"Oh, yes," Razi sighed, pushing against Dannen a little more, rubbing. "Feel so good." He kissed Dannen's mouth again and then his jaw, moving steadily to the man's neck as his fingers plucked at Dannen's nipples. He wiggled again, trying to get closer. He wondered vaguely if they were in danger of falling off the couch, but couldn't bring himself to care.

Dannen's hands slid along his spine, fingertips dancing on his skin as Dannen's head went back, giving him more of that neck to kiss and lick and maybe mark. Razi heard a low growling noise and had already latched on to the skin at the soft spot under Dannen's ear before he realized it was him. He blinked and laughed and left a sloppy wet kiss on the skin, then dragged his teeth over the spot, growling louder, trying not to laugh again. Dannen chuckled and moaned, the sounds of happiness and horniness mixing together, making something good, something that was his as much as Dannen was.

Razi twisted, shifting until he could straddle Dannen's hips, bringing them that much closer. "I love you," he said softly, dipping his head and kissing Dannen again.

Dannen was smiling when their lips parted, that smile also belonged to him, the one that was part goofy, part sappy. "I love you, too, Razi. More than I know how to say."

"You could show?" Razi suggested with a wink, one hand landing in their laps and brushing over Dannen's cock.

Dannen grunted, jerked. "I do, don't I? I mean you know, right? How much, how important you are?" Warm fingers pushed his hair off his face, Dannen looking at him intently.

Razi met Dannen's eyes and his smile smoothed from a grin into something more serious. He nodded slowly, staring into Dannen's eyes. "I know," he said quietly. "I know how much you care, how you feel. I know you love me."

"Good. Good." Dannen tugged him and their mouths closed together again, Dannen's hand sliding down to push into his pants, cupping his ass. Razi melted against Dannen, pressed skin to skin as they traded kisses, his erection tight against Dannen's and Dannen's hands on him. He knew that soon -- likely very soon -- heat and need would take over for them and they'd make love. But for now, for this brief time before, he wanted to float in Dannen's arms and savor being loved.

Dannen's kisses melted one into the other, hands squeezing his ass rhythmically, and Razi pushed back into Dannen's hands, and forward again into his groin. "Here?" he whispered into the next kiss.

"Let's go to bed now so we're already there. So I can hold you all night after."

A shiver ran down Razi's spine. He loved that, needed that. With Dannen holding him all night he slept better, got his energy back faster. He felt safe there, in Dannen's arms, surrounded by Dannen's smell and touch. He made no reply, simply stood up slowly and carefully, and took Dannen's hand.

Dannen hauled himself up and led the way to the bedroom, tugging him along. The hallway was full now, little tables against the wall with vases on them full of peacock feathers. Dannen seemed to bring more home every week.

Razi would have smiled and touched them as they passed, but he was already smiling and there wasn't any chance of stopping as they went into the bedroom. Razi tugged Dannen back to him, tilting his head up for another kiss before they got to the serious business of getting into bed.

Dannen's lips slid on his, fingers warm as they opened his pants. Razi moaned and reached for Dannen's fly. He got distracted, both by Dannen's hands on him and his hands on Dannen, and settled for rubbing Dannen slowly through his trousers with one hand while the other fought with the button. Dannen had his pants open and then down, fingers exploring his skin, his hips, his cock and balls, so careful and warm.

"Oh," Razi sighed. He petted Dannen absently for a moment, just taking in the touches, and then he blushed. "Should lie down," he suggested. "I want to touch you, and if you keep doing that my legs will give out." He smiled and kissed Dannen's chest and shoulders, however, not willing to let go long enough to actually get to the bed.

Dannen's chuckle rumbled through that beautiful chest, kind of vibrating against his lips and then Dannen had his own pants undone and off and was tugging him over to the bed.

"You're so clever," Razi praised, only half joking. There was very little chance that he'd have had the brain power to do that. Once upon a time, he was much more in control of himself when it came to sex; since the masks had fallen away, however, he was always getting lost, pleasure and joy distracting him over and over again.

He fell onto the bed and beamed at Dannen, then started scattering kisses all over, moving steadily down toward Dannen's erection.

Dannen didn't sound clever, moaning and whimpering he sounded more eager, wanton and needy. "Razi..." his name was whispered, Dannen's hands reaching and stroking over his face, his shoulders.

"Anything you want," Razi whispered, pressing a kiss to the tip of Dannen's cock and drawing Dannen's flavor into his mouth.

Dannen's whole body shivered. "You, Razi. I want you -- any way I can have you."

"Any way," Razi assured him. "Any way, any time, anywhere." He opened his mouth and started licking Dannen's erection, caressing it with his lips. Dannen tasted so good, alive and clean and male. Razi moaned and did it again, finally taking Dannen deep into his mouth.

Dannen's hips pushed, finding a rhythm that sent Dannen's cock gently in and out of his mouth, sliding that velvet heat along his tongue. Razi played with him, teasing him with the tip of his tongue and fingers. Razi followed Dannen's pace and kept his suction light and easy. He drew Dannen in and savored him, building their need carefully for long minutes before letting Dannen slip from his mouth and going lower to make love to Dannen's root and balls. Dannen's legs spread for him, the air filled with wanton noises as Dannen's pleasure spilled from his lips, pleasure that was created between the two of them, a magic all its own.

It was so good like this, quiet and sweet. They loved in so many ways, from the intense wildness when he used his glamour and Dannen would thrash and scream to sleepy middle of the night sessions that built until they shattered. But this, this slow build of passion laced with tenderness, was Razi's favorite. He worshipped Dannen's body with his mouth and tried to give back every touch he'd received, magnified.

"Love. Oh, please." When Dannen started begging, it was time to move forward, to let the passion take over, take them together.

"Anything you want," Razi promised again, dragging his tongue lower to lap around Dannen's hole. "Anything." He rocked his hips on the bed, the fabric teasing his rigid cock.

"In me, Razi. Or in you. Please." Dannen shifted restlessly on the sheets, body sheened up with sweat, almost glowing in the light coming in the window.

Razi laughed softly and licked Dannen again. It was somehow reassuring that his brain wasn't the only one that got distracted and lost when they were like this. He lifted up, kissed Dannen's cock once more, and reached for the lube on the side table. He would love Dannen into a puddle, he decided, then sleep in his arms. In the morning, Dannen could wake him, and they could start the day satiated and happy.

He kissed Dannen's lips as he slicked his fingers, carefully smoothing the lube onto his cock. Too long touching himself and it would be too late. With a soft sound he eased his fingers into Dannen, amazed as always at the heat and the way Dannen both opened to him and clung at the same time. Dannen's whimpers increased, his head tossing from side to side, hips pushing, driving Dannen's body eagerly onto his fingers.

"That's it," Razi whispered. "More?" He didn't wait for an answer, just braced one arm to keep himself steady above Dannen, and guided his cock in, moving as slowly as he could.

"Yes." Dannen hissed, back arching, hips pushing, helping, bearing down and taking his cock right in.

"Oh God," Razi groaned, his eyes closing. Dannen felt so good, better than anything, ever. Tight and hot and just perfectly made for him, for this. Slowly, Razi forced himself to pull out instead of spending the rest of the night right there, buried in Dannen's body. The long pull out, and then the soft glide back in, and Razi shuddered as his cock got even harder. "So good."

"Uh-huh." Dannen nodded, legs wrapping around his waist, pulling him in harder.

Razi gritted his teeth to keep from merely pounding in, fast and hard. He thrust again, changing the angle slightly, and tried to keep his breathing even.

Dannen shouted, bucking up. "Right there, Razi."

With a matching cry, Razi broke, his hips snapping as he stabbed into Dannen again and again, plunging into Dannen with increasing need. His spine felt hot, the bottoms of his feet were tingling, and his balls were tight. "Dannen," he said roughly. "Please. Soon!"

Dannen reached for Razi's nipples with one hand and his own cock with the other, tugging both with a rough touch. It was too much, too good to last any longer. Razi threw back his head and ploughed into Dannen again, then switched to short jerky thrusts that rubbed the head of his cock over Dannen's gland. "Come for me," he whispered. "Please, Dannen. I want to see, need to watch you." He didn't know if he could hold off that long, though, tingles and heat were rolling through him, his orgasm already starting.

Dannen's body clamped down hard around his cock, the handsome face going lax, mouth dropping open and eyes rolling back as seed shot from Dannen's cock. Razi was only a heartbeat behind him, matching him pulse for pulse as Razi came in a rush, pleasure exploding out of him. His eyes had closed and he could hear himself groaning, panting, and whispering his love for Dannen as they climaxed together. He gulped air and, still trembling, lowered himself onto Dannen's sticky and wet chest.

Dannen's arms immediately went around him, hot hands sliding on his back. "Oh, Razi. Love you. Love you."

"I know," Razi whispered, smiling. "And I love you. We're magic." They were. Better than anything he could do with his extra, more powerful than anything he'd seen anyone else do. "We're right," he added with a happy sigh.

"Yeah. Razi. Just right."

Razi kissed Dannen's chest and nestled against him, still inside of him. Razi didn't want to move, couldn't make himself give up one tiny bit of this particular happiness. There was joy there, in Dannen's arms and in his life. There was security and passion, love and respect. It was what Razi had always thought would be denied him, and he was overwhelmed with feeling it, with returning it. There could be nothing better than being in love with someone who loved him back. He wouldn't pull away from it.

Thankfully, Dannen didn't want him to. That he knew that, that he trusted it, made Razi's heart sing, made him kiss Dannen again. "Sleep," he whispered. "I'll be here in the morning. Always."

"I know."

End