

# **Straight Man and Coffee Guy**

## **Willa Okati**

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STRAIGHT COFFEE  
MAN & GUY



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## Chapter One

"So what would you say if I told you I was here to make every dream you've ever had come true?"

SM didn't even glance up from the magazine he was flipping through. Not that he'd been paying attention to the glossy pages. The skin magazine was designed for seriously lecherous and perverted types. Lots of pink, pouty things that kind of made his flesh want to shrivel up and his brain run away to hide. Still, better low-class reading material than none at all. Nothing else to do on the graveyard shift, was there?

"I'd ask if you were either AWOL from the City Genie conglomerate, wonder what you were selling, and pray you were the guy with the coffee I ordered --" he checked his watch -- "an hour ago."

"One out of three ain't bad." A cardboard tray smacked down on the hotel check-in counter. SM gladly abandoned his perusal of the so-called literature to reach up and grab a paper cup.

On his way, he spared a glance for the delivery boy. Not bad. Not bad at all. The kind of boy-next-door good looks that got his motor revving... or would if it weren't right around 3 a.m. Nothing short of an earthquake could get him excited enough to do much of anything this time of day.

He raised the lid and took a sip -- then choked. "This is cold!"

The delivery guy shrugged. "Well, you did it order a while back. Is it my fault it took this long to get away from the late-night crowd to bring the stuff over? And why did you order four cups, anyway? Have you got someone stashed under there?" He leaned over the counter, as if to check.

SM hastily knocked his magazine off into a trashcan. "No!"

"Come on, a hunk like you? There's someone under there." The coffee guy tilted up and over, resting his belly on the ledge, peeking. "Is that what I think -- no, just your shoe. Interesting. You dress like a wage slave drone, but those are some snappy sneakers."

"Sometimes I have to run to put out fires," SM replied dryly. Which was true enough. On more than one occasion, he had, especially when Combustion Man got too worked up. Oh, he didn't usually set more than the beds ablaze, but someone had to be quick on the draw with an extinguisher.

The truth was he wore the sneakers because they were comfortable, and it was one way of giving management the finger. Not that he'd admit it, of course, to a diner jockey.

He paused. "A hunk like me?"

"Well, yeah." Once he'd gotten up there, the coffee guy sat on the ledge, swinging his own sneakered feet back and forth. "You're a definite hottie. At least an eight on a scale of one to ten. Why do you think I waited to bring your coffee over myself?"

"To be annoying?"

"There is that," Coffee Guy agreed cheerfully. SM didn't see any harm in calling him that. It was neatly printed on his diner nametag, pinned crookedly on his tight-fitting T-shirt. "It's one of my better attributes."

"I'd hate to see the worse ones." SM took another sip of the brew. He blinked. "It's hotter."

"Thanks." Coffee Guy flexed his muscles. "I kind of thought so, myself."

"No, you dolt. I meant the coffee. It's not as cold anymore." SM took a careful sip and almost burned his tongue. He looked up accusingly. "Okay, give. How'd you do that?"

Coffee Guy shrugged. "It's a city full of real comic book heroes, right? Just about everyone and their brother has some kind of freaky power. I have dominion over the

almighty bean, blessed be the name of Java. Behold." He pointed at SM's cup, which refilled the slight distance back up to the lid. "Talk about your never-ending pot."

"You're kidding me." SM drank again. "How'd you get a sweet talent like that?"

"As if it's special." Coffee Guy snorted. He started to flick through the check-in register. "All it gets me is the graveyard shift at a hotel diner. Or is this a motel? I can never keep it straight."

"Hotel. They have hallways and doors that open from the inside. Motels open onto the street."

"You learn something new every day."

"Keeps the brain active." SM peered at the cardboard tray with his other three, now steaming, cups of coffee. "Do you have the ability to summon cream and sugar as well?"

"Somehow I knew you'd be the kind of guy who had a sweet tooth." CG grinned at SM and reached into his pockets. "Wasn't room on the tray, but I came through in the clinch."

"Oh, God. You're an angel." SM groaned in pleasure as he cracked open two still-cool plastic cup-ettes of condensed milk and poured them in his cup. The sugar came next: three packets. "Swizzle stick?"

"They're not called swizzle sticks, moron."

SM cut CG a sharp look. "Oh, yeah? What's the right name, then?"

"Hell if I know." CG swung his legs a few more times while SM fixed his coffee to his pleasure. He even whistled a few bars of a tune, pretty badly off-key. In the middle of a bar, just as SM was recognizing the melody, he broke off to say, casually, "I kind of figured you to be the kind of guy who likes cream."

SM almost choked on his first doctored swallow. He coughed and spluttered.

"Whoa, guy, take it easy!" CG reached over to pound him on the back. "A simple question like that throws you, and you manage to hold down a job over here?"

SM glared up at his coffee-savior-annoying-pest and refused to dignify the question with an answer.

Truth was, he kept the job *because* it was the graveyard shift. There were plenty of people checking in and out, but they kept the social interaction to a nice bare minimum. Name, duration of stay, here's your key, sign this waiver, and have a good night, Mr. and Mrs. Smith.

That was, if they even bothered with pretending they were married. He'd been surprised. Some juiced up people had proved positively shy, even if they did show up with a different Mrs. Smith three or four times during one week.

He liked being left alone. Granted, it could get boring, and the urge to sleep pretty overwhelming, but that was why the coffee. He'd ordered before, though, and it hadn't come with color commentary. What was he waiting around for -- oh.

SM dug through his pockets, came up empty, shrugged, and reached for the petty cash box. He pulled out a ten. "Will this cover it?"

CG held the bill up to the light. "It's legit, but I feel so cheap now. I'm only worth ten dollars?"

"If it'll get you to shut up, I could give you ten more."

"Or I could fill my mouth with something else." CG leered at SM, waggling his eyebrows. "Come on. You're bored, I'm bored."

SM would have choked and wheezed a second time if he'd been a little quicker on the draw raising his cup to his lips. "Are you propositioning me?"

CG cocked his head to one side. "Fill my mouth, leer, bored, bored... yep, I think I am."

SM folded his arms. "And what makes you think I'm gay? Or even bisexual, for that matter?"

"I've been watching you for a while now."

"You've what?"

"A while being the few hours since I was hired and took over the late-night shift tonight." CG tried out another leer, this time with a few extra degrees of sleaze. "It's boring as hell over there. Just a few customers to serve, and they're all truckers or truckers' floozies, or hitchhikers I don't even want to think about. It's a waste of my

power, but hey, it's the only job I could get. You know how that goes. You're stuck on the night shift yourself."

"I happen to like my job," SM said flatly. "I'd like to keep it, too. That means no slacking off on the clock."

"Oh, come on. Like you weren't reading *Pink and Pearly* when I came over?"

"How did you -- I hid that!"

"Not very well." CG craned his neck to peer into the trashcan. "The centerfold flipped open when you tossed it. Gotta say, I think that's airbrushed. You don't get that kind of spotlight on certain parts of the human anatomy in nature."

"And you'd know?" SM tried to discreetly cram the magazine deeper in among the empty candy bar wrappers and customer receipts. "Granted, it's not the finest in reading material, but it's part of the job."

"I need to get a job over here, then." CG grinned, apparently unquashable. "What kind of hotel is this, anyway?"

SM raised an eyebrow. "You don't know?"

"Not a damn thing," CG said cheerfully. "All I heard was 'you're hired,' and I kind of tuned out the rest. Also that I get moved to the breakfast shift if I pass my probationary period."

"You're sure to do that if you keep abandoning your station to come over here and bug the hell out of me."

"Bah." CG waved his hand dismissively. "I hauled out a pot on a cart, did a little hocus-pocus, and they can serve themselves. I'll hear the bell if anyone else comes in. Besides," he said, sitting up and peering, "I can see them from here. No one looks pissed. They're all just sitting there, staring into their cups. I don't think anyone can figure out how they keep refilling at just the right temperature."

"You did that?"

"Yup. It ain't much on a resume, but I *am* the Coffee Guy." CG raised his arms and rested his twined hands on his head. SM, who couldn't help noticing how the move pulled CG's shirt tight against a pretty nice set of pecs and abs, coughed and quickly

looked down at... nothing, actually, because his magazine was gone. He wasn't about to switch on the monitors with CG around. Off-color commentary was one thing. If he saw the closed-circuit entertainment, he'd never get rid of the man.

"So, what's your story? What's the deal with this place?"

SM sighed. "You're really not leaving any time soon, are you?"

"No plans on it. Besides, it's better than being alone. Isn't it?" CG looked actually concerned about that, so SM gave in and nodded. The beam he got in return almost made the intrusion worth it. "So how about my offer?"

"No!" SM reached to loosen his collar. "I mean, come on. You're cute, I admit that. Doesn't mean I can just go off and have sex during my shift."

"Ah-ha! So you are gay." CG pounced on the tidbit like a cat on a mouse. "I knew it! I saw you over here, busy as a good little worker bee, and I thought: anyone that cute has to have half the women swooning over him. Ergo, probably gay or at least bi."

SM frowned. "How do you figure that?"

"Common sense. If a guy is anywhere approaching gorgeous, he has to be gay. Women always say that it's a shame the cutest ones out there are either taken or not into their gender. Women? They're pretty smart. Have to give them credit for the brains. Guys mostly think with their smaller heads."

"Would you keep your voice down?"

"Why?" CG looked genuinely curious. He flipped through the register. "You've got enough Smiths and Browns signed in that I can pretty much figure out what kind of motel this is."

"Hotel."

"Motel with delusions of grandeur," CG fired back. "I don't care if it does have hallways and a diner attached. Come on, a *diner*? This is a quickie flophouse." He waved a hand under his nose. "Actually, now that I'm away from all the coffee, I can smell it. This place is like Sex Central. And you work here? God, you must walk around with half a stalk all the time." He grabbed for SM, as if to check.



SM yelped and skidded back on his squeaky computer chair, the wobbly casters threatening to tip him out. "Watch those hands, buddy!"

"Why? I know where they've been. Nowhere bad, for your information." The eyebrows waggled again, and a pink tongue swept over CG's lower lip. An awfully kissable, bitable, suckable lip. SM swallowed hard and jerked his gaze away with an effort. "Which returns us to my offer."

"Are you really that desperate?"

"Desperate? Nope. More like really into you."

"On the basis of a --" SM checked his watch "-- five hour observation period? Oh, yeah. It must be love."

"I'm not saying that. All I'm pointing out is that I'm bored, and if you're bored enough to check out the shaved shinies, you must be ready for a little action." He wiggled his tongue. "Two guys could find a way to make the time pass. Game, set, match, and that's all she wrote."

"You're mixing your metaphors."

"As long as I don't mix caf with half-caf and decaf, I'm fine." CG looked thoughtful. "What's a mixed metaphor, anyway?"

"It's when you --" SM caught himself. "This is a ridiculous conversation. I'm not having it any longer. You're going to go back to work, and I'm going to get on with the night's business." He thought, slightly wistfully, of the toned ass resting on his counter, and what he'd like to do with it, bent over a lower counter or a bed, but then shook his head. "It's called earning a living. Ever heard of it?"

"Plenty. I haven't paid much attention, though." CG's eyes lit up. He reached over to the small console of switches that took the place of a computer on SM's desk, and flicked one of them from "off" to "on." "What's this -- whoa, momma!"

SM covered his face with his hand and groaned. A 3-D image of a couple had materialized in mid-air above the console. The woman in the picture wasn't exactly saying some old guy in a hooded cloak was her last hope, but she did seem to be crying out for God's direct intervention. Meanwhile, she was busily fucking the guy beneath

her, who looked more than happy to be a participant in the action. Her breasts bounced up and down, barely kept in check by the Spandex top she still wore.

"Who is that?" CG whispered in admiration.

"That," SM said, attempting to flick the switch back to *off*, "would be the Lady of the Lakes and the latest knight errant looking for her sword." Naturally, the little lever jammed.

"She has a sword? Gotta say, his is pretty impressive."

"You would notice. And comment."

"That I would." CG craned his neck. "We have lakes around here? It's kind of a metropolis, yeah, but I've never noticed any big bodies of water." He thought. "Outside of a few pools at the better heroes' homes."

"You've been there?"

"Hey, I had a decent career as a barrista once upon a time!" CG seemed stung. He sat up straighter.

"What happened?"

"Got fired."

"One too many times?"

"Something like that."

"Let me guess. Fraternalized too much with other staff members?"

CG hopped off the counter and turned around to lean on it, almost too close to SM's face for his own comfort. "You, my friend, have got to get that pole out of your ass. Possibly replace it with something a little hotter, if not much shorter."

"Oh, God. I'm not just stuck with a chatty delivery boy. I'm stuck with a lecherously chatty delivery boy." SM fiddled with the switch a few times before he slammed the box with his fist. The Lady of the Lakes disappeared mid-orgasm. He sighed with relief.

CG appeared fascinated. "That is something else." He squinted, as if he could make the tiny fucking figures reappear. "Do it again."

"Under no circumstances. Those are private."

“Actually, I think I’ve seen her before. Not in a lake, either. Which reminds me, you didn’t answer my question. I wonder why she seems so familiar?”

SM relented. “Okay, fair enough. There used to be lakes, maybe a couple hundred years ago. She has a magic sword that she’s keeping safe for the next Artie.”

“Artie?” CG blinked. “Wait a second. Isn’t that an old British legend? Lady of the Lakes, Excalibur, King Arthur?”

“American version, 2.0. Beta tester Legend for the New World who got left here when mythology changed and decided she might as well branch out when they filled in the bodies of water she lived in and built a warren of condos on top. Her magic sword is still down there, but she doesn’t tell anyone. Just stands around in puddles wearing Spandex until someone young and hot, horny and preferably stupid, comes along looking for the keys to a kingdom.”

“So she brings them here?” CG sounded fascinated.

“Where else?” SM sat back and spread his arms wide. “Welcome to the Hotel D’Lust. That might not be the name on the sign, but as you might have noticed, this city has a glut of heroes and heroines without that many people left to rescue. What kind of arch villain would come around a place like this?”

“You have a point.” CG leered again, glancing into SM’s lap. “Pretty nice one, too.”

“Stop looking at my -- point!” SM shook his head. “Are you trying to drive me as crazy as you are?”

“Depends. Is it working?”

“No!” SM snapped. “Look, I’m trying to explain. This is the place where they all come to pass the time. Sometimes with each other, and sometimes with the few young and busty, or young and toned, that are still dumb enough to be impressed by a cape and logo.”

“For real?”

“Cross my heart.”

"Wow." CG tapped his fingers thoughtfully. "A hotel full of super-boinking. I'm guessing this joint is pretty much jumping twenty-four seven?"

"Not so much at night. But I get my share." SM jabbed at his ledger. "Six of the rooms are occupied, and I'm supposed to be monitoring them. Oh, shit."

As expected, CG jumped all over that like white on rice. "Monitoring? So that's what these little switches are for?" He reached for another one, only to get his hand slapped. "Hey, that hurt!" He grinned. "Do it again?"

"A kinky, annoying delivery boy," SM amended. "Yes, I'm monitoring them." He held up a hand. "And before you ask, this is part of my job, and they do know they're being filmed. You ever heard of Hero Star Porn Productions?"

"I've purchased from time to time."

"Welcome to the studio." When CG blinked at him, SM went on -- why not? "You ever noticed how those films look kind of amateur, and the scenery doesn't change too much?"

"Huh. I wasn't exactly looking at the décor, but now that I think about it, not much changed between *Naughty Nurse* and *Disco Diva*."

"And you make fun of me for reading a straight skin mag."

"They sent me the wrong DVDs. I had actually ordered *Mighty Man* and *Bottom Boys II*. And who am I to turn down porn, even if it's got more bounce and jiggle than I usually like?"

SM had to grudgingly admit CG had a point. When a guy got bored... "They know they're being recorded. There's a waiver and everything. Besides, they get a cut of the profits. Most of them are pretty glad to have the extra money. They get to have some fun, entirely of their own volition, and they get a check at the end of the month."

"Sweet deal."

"It keeps them in Spandex."

CG twiddled with the switches, not turning one on. His face looked so introspective that SM began feeling genuine fear. "What are you about to do?" he asked, starting to back away.

“Stand up,” CG said abruptly. “Come on, that’s it. Put your feet on the floor and push until your ass leaves the chair and you’re all the way up.”

SM squirmed as he did so. He couldn’t much help it. Despite being irritating as all hell, CG was a cute guy, and okay, he had him at the lonely and horny parts of their conversation. “What are you doing?” he asked.

“I feel like being a movie star,” CG said before he dived in and kissed SM.

Startled, SM stood still for a moment, feeling hot lips roam over his mouth. Then, the all-male part of his brain kicked in. The thought process went a little like: *lips good, kissing lips better, who cares about coffee, man kissing me, shut up now.*

Grabbing CG by the collar of his T-shirt, he hauled the man in tighter to take an active part in the kiss. From the noises CG made, he was most appreciative, especially when SM got his tongue involved in the equation.

God, CG tasted good. Just like fresh java, piping hot, with a sugary sweetness. Kissing him was like drinking from a fountain of caffeine. SM could feel a rush rolling through him, as if someone had tapped his veins with a coffee IV. He fell back, licking his lips. “Whoa. That’s what you’re all about?”

“That, and more. You taste like...” CG looked thoughtful. “Spearmint. Not what I would have guessed.”

“Chewing gum.”

“Bad boy, to indulge in that nasty habit on the job.” CG paused. “I didn’t notice any gum when we were playing tonsil hockey there.”

“I swallowed it.”

“Good muscle control.” CG reached across the desk to knead at SM’s shoulder. “Mine’s better. You want to test me out?”

SM hovered, undecided. “I can take a fifteen minute break,” he heard himself saying.

“Fifteen. I can work with fifteen.” CG flexed his hand. “Come on. Me on my knees, your cock down my throat... what do you say?”

SM would have said, later, that he'd snapped. Blindly, he reached under his desk to pull out a "Be back in fifteen minutes" sign. He slammed it down on the counter and swung the little plastic hands in various directions. Coming around the check-in booth, he grabbed CG by the collar and began to drag him.

"Whoa, cowboy. Not that I don't appreciate the enthusiasm, but --"

"A room without cameras," SM clarified. "You coming or not?"

"Something tells me I'm just about to."

"Smart man."

"That'd be me."

All the while they were talking, they'd been moving, down a hallway -- yes, hallway. SM checked the door numbers, shaking his head at each one. Several boasted "Do Not Disturb" signs, and those he passed over completely. Finally, he came to Room 13 and reached into his pocket for the master key.

He paused long enough to reach around and grab CG, who really was completely edible with his soft blond hair, foxy face and full lips, and grope his ass while seizing his lips in a kiss. He tasted just as good the second time around, with maybe a little mocha added to the mix.

"How do you do that?" he managed to moan in between going after CG with lips, tongue and teeth. God, he could feel the level of caffeine start to spike inside him. He was bursting with energy and excitement --

"Could be you're just horny," CG said. Stronger than he looked, he cranked the doorknob, pushed them both into the bedroom, and didn't stop shoving until he had SM bumping into, then sprawling over the bed on his back while he pulled off his shirt. CG paused to look down at his handiwork. "Good," he said, apparently pleased, and then knelt between SM's sprawled-open legs.

Right around that point, SM just about stopped breathing. CG was *good* at what he did. He might deserve a few medals, if he didn't already have them. From the long, slow tease of pulling SM's zipper down to the slow drawing out of his erect cock, the

weighing of balls in his palm and the leisurely finger-measuring of length and girth, he was a master of his art.

*Sex, SM thought dizzily. Sex good. More? Please?*

CG grinned at him. "Impatient, aren't you?" he asked, his voice gone low and husky. Then, thank God, he lowered his lickable mouth over the head of SM's cock, sucking at the tip. He licked his lips. "Still spearmint," he said, puzzled. Then, he winked. "I can deal with it."

And with that, he slid his mouth down over SM's erection, taking in more than any human male should have been able to. While SM writhed and gasped, CG went on his merry way, doing things with lips and tongue that were probably illegal. Stroking up the fat vein underneath, nibbling his way down the sides, then soothing the slight sting on his way back up.

"Where -- how did you learn --"

CG twitched his hands on SM's thighs. SM interpreted that to mean "Shut up, I'm busy" and, accordingly, he shut up. Well... at least most of him did. The last holdout in the commotion corner was occupied with coming. Copiously. He shook, rattled and rolled while CG held on, merciless as Ming himself, sucking down the last drop.

Although dizzy, SM managed to gasp, "Get your ass up here."

CG didn't need a second invitation. He slithered up SM like a particularly happy snake, the most joyful part of all jabbing SM in the thigh when he settled into place. "Turnabout," SM managed, roughly opening CG's own pants and reaching in for a genuinely nice-sized handful of cock, "is fair play."

CG collapsed on his back and groaned. "Game on," he choked. SM stroked him hard, up and down, with just the grip he liked when he was flying solo. A little awkward with the angle, but he thought he was getting it right, especially when CG gasped and arched almost off the bed before coming in long, splattery stripes over his chest and SM's hand.

The two lay panting for a long moment, trying to gather their brains back into their skulls. Not much odds on that, SM had to grant. He hadn't had such incredible sex since... okay, ever. He raised his hand to his mouth to taste, then shook his head. Even CG's semen tasted like fresh hot coffee, savory rich and just what a tired man on third shift needed.

He turned to start licking it off CG's chest. CG laughed, a low rumble, and began combing his fingers through SM's hair. "Full service," he said. "We aim to please."

SM glanced up. "Trust me. You did." He hesitated. "Does this kind of service always come with the coffee?"

"Not always. But when you're on shift, and I happen to be the one who takes your order... it could happen."

SM happily returned to his licking. This? This, he could deal with. "My fifteen minutes are up," he murmured after a long, delicious pause. "I could get into trouble."

"You'll be okay. And, by the way? You were just fine. Better than fine." CG held his arms open. "Want to come up here for a minute?"

SM hesitated. "I'm Derek," he offered awkwardly.

"Scott," CG answered. "Just call me Coffee Guy, though. And I've been thinking of you as SM for so long I don't think I could rearrange my mind." He squinted at SM's nametag, crooked but still dangling on his shirt. "What does that stand for, anyway?"

SM felt his cheeks flushing bright red. He mumbled something, hoping CG wouldn't catch it. He didn't, and predictably, asked, "Say that again?"

"Straight Man. Okay?" Grumbling, SM stood and began hunting for his slacks. Behind him, he could hear CG just about having a fit of giggles. Yeah, well, it wasn't his fault he didn't get the boss's jokes.

Straight Man? The name didn't have a thing to do with his orientation, or his own special powers. He sighed, rolling his eyes. Just his luck. He had the power, all right. He drew all the jokers to him.



At least, on nights like this, his powers had summoned CG. Pulling on his pants, SM allowed himself to smile. Normally, he loathed his special ability of being able to attract all the weirdos.

Tonight, though... he didn't hate it.

## Chapter Two

"They taped us."

"What? You're kidding." CG almost dropped the three coffee cups he was juggling on the check-in counter. "I thought you said there were no cameras in Room 13."

"I thought there weren't."

"So how did they get the film of us --" CG wagged his tongue.

SM swatted at him. "Cut that out. I was wrong, okay? So now, thanks to you and your insatiable libido, there's footage of you and me going at it like a pair of hormonal Flemish Giants."

"Flemish whats?"

"Giants." At CG's blank look, SM clarified, "Rabbits. Fucking like bunnies. Humping like dogs. Do you want me to come up with any more animals, or is it finally sinking in? We got caught."

"This is a problem?"

"D'uh! I got put on report and everything. Apparently someone wanted to check in while we were otherwise occupied. A big player around here."

"I thought you were the big player."

"What?"

"Well, we were playing, and you were awfully big. So who was it? The Ocelot? Lightning Flier?"

SM scratched his neck. "Not as big as those two, I don't think."

"Don't think?" CG grinned broadly. "Come on, then, who got denied their nightly super-bonk?"

SM folded his arms and glared. "My boss and Magnetic Woman." As CG dissolved into a fit of laughter, he protested, "This happens to be serious! He's wanted to be in one of the films for months, and Magnetie can apparently do some amazing things in bed. Or so I've been told. At great length. Loudly." He unfolded to rub his temples. "The man yelled at me for almost half an hour. Off the clock, too."

"C'mon. The bastard owns this place and he didn't know where to look for the keys? If you're asking me, I'd say Maggie probably changed her mind and he was looking for a convenient target on which to place his shame. I think I've seen your boss. He's shaped like a bowling ball with a bad toupee, right?" CG nudged SM. "You're telling me a hottie like Mags would want to go to bed with a schmoe like him? Pull the other one."

"Other what?" SM tried to look back down at his paperwork. "You only had one of those, last time I checked."

"And that was some fine checking, I'm here to tell you. Finger-licking good. Mmm." CG shook his head in fond memory, then sighed. "Okay, so you got into trouble. Were you fired?"

"No, but my pay was docked for the half-hour we spent in Room 13, plus maid service to clean it up. And a few other things." SM's ears began to burn. He really, really didn't want CG to ask about the rest of it -- but, then again, it'd be sure to come out soon enough... "Anyway, they have the movie. I don't think they're going to use it because we didn't sign waivers, but it's all on the video feed."

CG looked thoughtful for a moment, then shrugged. SM stared at him. "You're saying you don't mind that there's film of you going down on me?"

"Why should I? I thought it was a pretty virtuoso performance."

"Shut up."

"I thought you were a star."

"Shut up!"

“Oh, come on, that was Hollywood material.” CG threw his head back and fisted his hands in invisible blankets. “Oh, oh, oh, CG, CG, come on, do it, yeah, baby, oh God, yeah! Gnarrrrrgh!”

SM watched him with arms folded. As CG panted into silence, he asked, “Are you finished?”

“Not quite. Fuuuuuuuuuuuuck!” CG nodded. “Yep. Now I’m done.”

“Thank you for the instant replay. By the way, here’s your check if you want it.”

“My what?” CG frowned as SM shoved an envelope across the counter at him. He ripped open the flap, shook out a letter and a check, and looked at them. SM waited for it. “Holy shit, this is made out for one thousand dollars!”

“Retainer.” At CG’s blank look, SM clarified, “They want you as a regular in one of their films. That’ll be a down payment on your services.”

“No way.” CG actually preened. “Coffee and cock sucking? The CG Special?”

“Believe it or not. Read the letter. They’ve got this whole line of gay films that are just waiting for a talented mouth.” SM watched as CG ran his eyes over the printed missive, slowly going pale. “A little too much for your taste?”

“I’ve only got one mouth, and the stomach can’t hold but so much.” CG shook his head. “Damn, I hate giving up that retainer, but nope. I have a feeling the life of a porn star would be a little too demanding for me.” He hopped up on the counter as if he’d been doing it all his life. “All that sex would really cut into my slacking time, anyway.”

“And God knows we can’t have that.” SM took the check and letter back from CG. “I’ll send it back with mine.”

CG whooped with laughter. “Yours?”

“Yes, mine!” SM glared. “What? You think you’re the only one good enough for a low-rent porno flick?” He frowned. “That didn’t come out right.”

“You came just fine, as I recall.” CG did his nifty eyebrow trick again, which failed to impress. “So what’d they want you for? If I was a suckety-suck star, what did

they have you down for? Sound effects?" He thwapped his own ear. "I think it's still ringing from that last scream of the well-satisfied."

"For your information, they wanted me to be a top in some leather flicks." SM grimaced as CG began to laugh so hard his face turned red. "You don't think I can do it? Oh, come on, it's not that funny."

"Yes, it is." CG wiped at his eyes, giggling uncontrollably. "Sorry, Derek. SM. What was it, the masterful way you let me work my wicked will with your body?"

"Something like that. Apparently they think I have the stuff. They even sent a photo of the costume -- dress code -- and asked for my sizes."

"In what, two or three straps that innocent naugas gave their lives up for? I've seen some of those S&M -- oh, now I get it! They thought SM stood for something else, didn't they?"

"Possibly. But they thought I had the skills it takes, which is more than I can say for you. You notice there wasn't a costume photo in your letter? Shows what they expected CG, cocksucker to the stars, to wear, don't you think?"

"Oh, give it up." CG took his check back, turning it over in his hands. "I've got half a mind to take the offer. It'd be better than pouring that fifteenth serving of coffee to someone ready to jitter out of their seat in the diner."

"I thought you had the heroic power of the never-emptying cup."

"You've never seen how fast some of those bastards can guzzle. I gave up spreading the joy after my second night in. It's less exhausting to brew and run around with refills. Especially for Hairy Pete."

SM blinked. "Hairy Pete. No joke?"

"I only wish."

"Excuse me. Is this where we check in?"

SM and CG jumped, yelling. The customer, a small man with a receding chin, runaway hairline and buckteeth, wearing a tan raincoat plus, thank God, chinos, stared at them with horrified eyes. "H -- h -- have I come at a bad time?" he asked after a moment that went on far too long for anyone's comfort.

“Not at all.” SM cut CG a glare and shoved him off the counter. “Now that my associate is out of the way, I just need to get some basic information. Also, we take all major credit cards and cash, but no checks.”

“Unless you can guarantee it isn’t a rubber.”

Both the customer and SM blinked at CG. He shrugged and made basketball-dribbling motions. “So it won’t, you know, bounce...”

SM shook his head. “No checks, sorry.”

“I have cash.”

“That’ll be just fine, Mr. -- what’s the last name?”

“Smith,” the walking raincoat said with a broad smile. “John Q. Smith at your service.”

“Of course,” SM said, penciling the name in, while CG mused, “Q is original. I’ll give you that.”

“Excuse me?” John Q. tilted his head in curiosity. “Oh! And wife. John Q. Smith and wife, Joanna Smith.”

“Of course.” SM made another note in his register. “That’ll be fifty.”

“You’re not going to offer him the waiver?” CG asked in a stage whisper.

“I hardly think he needs one.”

“I don’t need a what?”

“Would you excuse us for a second?” SM asked politely. He leaned over and jerked CG down close enough to whisper, “Look at him! You think he’s the kind of guy who wants to be a porn star?”

“God, if I looked like that, it’d be my wildest fantasy.”

SM shut his eyes tight for a second. “Look. He’s probably some kind of tourist, okay? We don’t want to scare off paying customers just because the rest of this metropolis is super-crazy?”

“Even guys with dubious names?”

“Especially not those. In case you haven’t noticed, besides being a porn palace, this is a flophouse. It’s fifty for the *hour*, not the night.”

"Jesus, that's steep."

"There's always an orange roof across the road if they take exception to our prices."

"True enough." CG straightened up and gave the baffled customer a broad smile. "Welcome to the Hotel California, Mr. Smith. If you need any coffee, I'm your guy."

"Oh. The rooms don't come with those little coffee makers?"

"Sorry. If you want some jumpin' java, you've got to come over to the diner. The cook on tonight slings a mean hash, if you're interested in hash. Actually, I'm not sure what that is. SM?"

"A little busy here, CG." SM stamped a large red PAID on the hotel's copy of a customer receipt. "Important paperwork and all that."

"Yeah, yeah. Do you know what hash is?"

"It's an expression, you twit. Not you, sir." SM passed over a key. "You and Mrs. Smith have a good night, now."

John Q. held up his key to the light. "So where do I sign to get the cameras turned on?"

SM had just taken his first sip of coffee. He almost sputtered it back out again. "Excuse me?"

"The cameras. I heard that your parent company's always looking. Especially for heroes and heroines."

"And you, uh... think you qualify?" CG, of course, was the one to ask the question. "I mean, these are pretty low-budget films, but even so, they're got a few standards."

John Q. patted his hip and winked. The gesture looked as if it were meant to be secretively knowing, but missed by a mile. He looked vaguely as if he should have been wearing a big red wig and have a honkable nose. "Don't worry. I have my secret weapon."

SM tensed. "Guns are forbidden on the premises, sir. If you're carrying, I have to ask that you leave the firearm with me at the front desk."

"Oh, I'm carrying all right." Again with the wink and nod. "But it's not what you'd call detachable."

"I beg your pardon?"

John Q. looked around from the left to the right, then nodded. "I can show you."

"Please do," CG said at the same time that SM, a little older and wiser, said, "Please don't."

John Q. opened his raincoat and showed them. CG's mouth fell open. "Holy shit."

SM covered his face with his hand. "Thank you, sir. I'll just get your waiver, shall I?"

"Holy shit."

"CG, shut up."

"Man, do you want a free cup of coffee? Never-emptying."

"CG, shut *up!*"

"Well, he's got to keep up his stamina if he's going to keep that... up." CG couldn't seem to tear his eyes away. John Q. didn't appear to mind being on display, holding his raincoat open. "How about a pastry? Something in the line of a cannoli or an éclair?"

"CG!"

"Long and cream-filled. Ow! Why did you do that?" CG rubbed his side, where SM had jabbed him. "You're a mean bastard. What did you poke me for?"

John Q. began to snicker. SM aimed him a filthy look. "Did you have something to say, sir?"

"Nah, not a thing. Just wondering how long you two had been together."

"We are not together," SM said as CG said, "About one night. But we're working on it."



"Young love's so sweet." John Q. shut his raincoat, thank God, and leaned on the counter with a broad, buck-toothed grin. "You two are made for each other. I can tell." He tapped his nose. "I get a sixth sense about these things. That's my super power. Pretty nifty, huh?"

"Peachy keen," SM said, straight-faced. "Fifty dollars for the hour, sir, and your waiver? Thank you."

"Does it still apply if they give you a fake name?" CG wanted to know.

"Fake?" John Q. drew himself up. "This happens to be my real name, sonny. It might be a little common, but I was born and raised as a John Smith and I happen to like the moniker. Show a little respect." He paused. "Although I would like a cannoli, if you have some. Maybe delivered up to our room later?"

"We don't usually --" CG stopped as John Q. stuffed a bill into his palm. "But for this kind of tip, yes, we do."

"I'll just wait for my wife. She stopped off in the little girls' room to powder her nose, and -- ah, there she is." John Q. turned expectantly. "Joannie! All finished? Come give me a kiss."

"Where is she?" CG asked without bothering to lower his voice, angling around to see. "I've got to get a look at the woman who can take his cannoli onboard."

"Keep it down! Do you think the customers want to... oh." SM blinked. After a moment, he tugged at the collar of John Q.'s raincoat. "Sir? Excuse me, sir? Would that be your wife?"

"You bet your sweet bippy she is." John Q. held his arms out proudly to a buxom blonde who had to be six feet tall, most of it legs. And breasts. Definitely couldn't forget the boobies. SM mentally slapped himself upside the head for calling them by a middle-school name, but holy cannoli, the woman could reduce even a gay man to a grade 5 idiot.

"This... is your wife," CG said slowly. "This supermodel runway star? She's married to you?"

"Yes, she is," Joanna said with a slow, sultry smile that made SM gulp and wish he had a tie to loosen. "And she's very happy." She wound herself around John Q. like a combination of kitten and python, winking at them. "Very, very happy."

"I would imagine so," CG murmured. SM elbowed him. "Ow!"

"Got our key, sugar doll?" Joanna plucked the magnetized card from John Q's hand. "Do the rooms come with those little coffee makers? And did you sign the waiver?"

"You'll need one, too," SM said through numb lips. He pushed a fresh sheet across the counter, proud that his hands only shook a little. "Here you go. Everything's filled in. It just needs your John... er... Hancock."

CG collapsed in another fit of snickers. Having decided that poking, punching and otherwise mauling the man wasn't going to work, SM consoled himself with the dignity of ignoring his partner in crime. Albeit a partner he'd taken on more or less unwillingly. "Right there on the dotted line, ma'am."

"Ooh, ma'am," Joanna crooned as she picked up the plain office supply pen and stroked it slowly and thoughtfully. "Such pretty manners he has. You are just so cute I could eat you up."

"I'm gay," SM said automatically, although he was really beginning to wish he wasn't. At least for an hour or two. When Joanna's eyebrows went up, they weren't the only thing to start pointing at the ceiling.

The knockout blonde -- and not from a bottle, that was for damn sure -- pouted full red lips at him. "I'd say that was a shame, darling, but only because you're such a cutie. If you were straight, I'd want to try a sandwich."

SM's mouth fell open. CG elbowed his way in. "I could handle one of those. I've even got the cute buns." He patted them as if to prove it. "Provided John Q. doesn't mind, of course."

"Hmm." Joanna considered him. "You are a piece of sweet shortbread, no two ways about it."

"He's busy," SM blurted out.

"I'm what?"

"Busy," SM repeated, beginning to sweat. "Or he will be in just a few minutes."

"Oh, baby." Joanna let the syllables roll over her tongue. "And we could have had such a good time. That is, if you didn't mind being the meat in the middle."

CG flinched, turning to stare first at John Q., who looked intrigued, then back at Joanna. He flushed a dull shade of red, then muttered, "Yeah. I'm, uh, busy."

"Too bad." She laughed a few silvery notes. SM began to wonder if she were actually real, or a very convincing android John Q. had built in his spare time. No flesh and blood woman could be quite so... gah. SM wiped his forehead. The elevator had just about reached the top floor, so to speak, and damn it if CG wasn't going to *be* busy pretty soon.

"Come on, sweet pea." Joanna took John Q. by the shoulders and began to lead him away. "Time all good little boys were tucked into their beds. Don't you think?"

"Ma'am, your waiver?"

"Of course." Joanna bent over the counter to slide it back onto SM's desk, almost at his lap. The sheet nearly fluttered to the floor. *Oh, God, if I have to stand up to go and get it...* SM caught the thing just in time. Joanna leaned over him for a second, massively full cleavage on display, and blew him an air kiss. "Good boy."

Her laughter floated in the air, almost tangible, as she turned and walked away with John Q., who was, as CG put it most aptly a moment later, "The luckiest bastard in the metropolis." He watched the two go, miming a chiming set of cymbals to go with the tempo of Joanna's swaying hips. "Damnation. I'll hand deliver the cannoli myself."

"I think that's his job."

"Job, schmob. I've already seen his package. There's only been a sneak preview of hers."

"Wait and watch it on film. I have a feeling she's going to be a regular."

"I'll start saving my wages." CG took one long, last look and leaned against the counter with a sigh. "Enough to make Liberace give a standing ovation. Not to mention those two guys in tights with the tigers. Rrawr!"

“CG,” SM said, keeping his voice calm and steady, “would you mind coming back here for a minute?”

“What? Oh yeah, no problem.” CG ambled around the counter to SM’s side. He dropped his hand to SM’s shoulder, kneading it almost idly. “So what’s up? You need help getting things set up for their film debut?”

“Not exactly,” SM said -- and tackled CG to the floor.

They were kissing before they crashed into it. CG tasted just as good as the last time, like coffee with two sugars and rich cream mixed in. SM licked at the man’s lips and detected a hint of hazelnut. He fucking *loved* hazelnut coffee. Hell, he loved nuts -- all kinds. At the moment, though, he was eager to get to the pair CG kept stashed in his slacks.

With their lips still fused and CG a willing participant in the flying leap style of seduction, SM reached down to start wrestling with the man’s zipper.

He stopped when CG seized his wrist, holding on tight. “Whoa, cowboy, slow down.” CG laughed, but this time, it was the amused chuckle of a familiar lover. “It’s not like we don’t have all night.”

“No, we don’t have all night. We have about ten minutes before someone else comes in, if that. Not to mention there’s a security feed on this desk, so we have to make this really quick.”

CG sat up a little. He brushed a kiss over SM’s lips. “Look, I’m not exactly a wham, bam, thank you sir kind of guy. I mean, not usually. Last time was an exception.”

“Exception due to what?”

“Extreme horniness. Hey, it happens!” he protested at SM’s disgusted look. “Don’t think I don’t want to go again. I’m just saying we could take our time, and let things develop naturally. Although I have to give you points on the way you took me down. Did you ever play football?”

“High school varsity.” SM tried for the zipper again. “Will you hold still and let me get this? I don’t want to damage you.”

"Trust me, if you start heading into the danger zone, I'll let you know." CG flopped back, still protesting although he didn't make any real move to stop SM. "Have you ever?" he asked.

"Have I ever what?"

"Taken your time. I mean, come on. There's more to sex than just get in, get off, and get out as quick as you possibly can. There's emotions and feelings and --"

"Yeah? Feel *this*." With CG's pants still on but his cock out, SM leaned down and took him half in at a gulp. CG almost levitated off the floor, letting out a high-pitched yell that could have shattered crystal. SM drew off with a liquid slither and narrowed his eyes up at the coffee super man. "Do you have any problems with fast, now?"

"No," CG said, eyes dazed. He reached out and waved a hand around to try and guide SM back down. "Fast is good. But trust me, I'm going to get you in an actual bed for a real fuck one of these -- *God!*"

SM didn't respond, as he had a mouthful of cock to deal with. Wonderful specimen, too. He lapped at the tip, dribbling clear fluid onto his tongue. Rolling the taste around, he almost choked when he realized: amaretto. That one nobody could blame on pineapple juice. Still licking, he drew back far enough to ask, "Does everything about you taste like gourmet coffee?"

CG laughed and groaned at the same time. "Do that again and you'll find out. I'm a one-man banquet."

*Yes, you surely are.* SM dove back down and circled CG's cockhead with slow, lazy strokes, then slid his mouth over the shaft again. He hesitated, wondering if he could, if he should -- then went even further, carefully relaxing the muscles at the top of his throat. It didn't fit all the way, but his nose was all but buried in crisp blond curls that smelled like... Irish Crème.

SM rolled his eyes, wondering, *If I rimmed him, would he taste like French Vanilla?*

"Yes," CG moaned, tossing his head back and forth. The response startled SM for a moment, wondering if CG had any kind of ESP powers, until realization sank home and he rolled his eyes. That was the sound of any sane man being sucked off, not a

response to his question. And far be it from him to lie down on the job, unless he... *oh, yeah, that's better.*

His rickety computer chair went flying as SM kicked it, going down between CG's thighs. It ricocheted off one wall and came back mutinously to clip him on the ankle, but he didn't care because he had died and gone to Java Heaven.

How could any one man taste so good? It wasn't natural -- but what in the city was? It went beyond flavor. The way he smelled, the way he moved, the noises he made, all of them were enough to drive SM out of his mind. He could feel caffeine flooding his veins as he sucked, catching every bubble of pre-come as it slipped from CG's dick.

He pulled off long enough to say, "Ssh! Do you want everyone to hear?"

"Yeah," CG moaned. "Oh, yeah. I mean, no. No! Don't stop now!"

*Oh, hell.* Well, if a job was worth doing... SM reapplied himself to slurping down as much of CG's cock as he possibly could, using his hand to jack the rest. Lube, God, they could really use some lube right about now -- the in-room hospitality kits! If he wiggled around just right, he could probably reach one.

Unfortunately, that would mean letting go, and he didn't have any intention of doing that. As a matter of fact, he appeared to be working his way into CG's pants to fondle the balls drawn tightly up against the man's body.

"Gonna come," CG babbled, loud enough to rattle the faux-crystal chandelier. If they'd had one of those. Possibly make the windows shake. "SM, SM, Derek, hurry up, give me a little more, please."

SM paused just long enough to rise to a kneeling position. He'd been humping the industrial grade carpet, and the thought of friction burns in sensitive spots made him want to move. CG let out a tortured groan, but SM had a few other things in mind to do, and soon had the most important one in hand. Jacking himself, he applied his mouth to CG's cock one last time and sucked hard as he possibly could, cheeks hollowing.

CG howled and began to shake. He thrust up into SM's mouth once, twice, and three times, then let go with a flood of coffee-flavored semen. Some of it overflowed, but SM was there to catch every drip. When the man lay panting below him, SM raised up on his knees, licked his lips to catch the last bit of CG's unique flavor, and pumped his dick hard, stripping it just... the right... way...

He came in an elegant spray over CG's chest, an arc of semen that landed in pearls on his exposed belly -- and partly on his shirt.

"I owe you one," he gasped before collapsing on top of the man, seeking out another kiss. CG gave it to him, arms coming up to pull him in close. SM closed his eyes and thought he would be able to die a happy man, until --

-- he heard applause.

"Oh, God." He didn't have to look up. Didn't want to look up. CG did, though, and a broad grin cracked his lips. "How many are there?" SM asked.

"Joanna and John Q."

"That's not so bad."

"And Hairy Pete. Plus this one guy built like a bowling ball with a bad toupee, and oops, I just said that out loud."

"My boss is here?"

"Either that or we have a new hero in town to take care of all those pesky ninepins."

"Fuck."

"Already did, thanks. But if you give me a few minutes..."

SM groaned and hid his face in CG's really very comfortable shoulder. The applause went on. He could still taste coffee on his lips, and two conflicting thoughts ran through his mind: *I'm not sorry, no matter what -- and, now can I die of shame, albeit a satisfied man?*

The Fates were not so kind as to oblige.

## Chapter Three

"What do you mean, I'm not on shift tonight?" SM hitched his laptop carrier strap higher on his shoulder. He leaned on the check-in counter from the wrong side, staring at his decidedly apathetic replacement.

A skinny guy erring on the doubtful side of age twenty-one, still peach-fuzzed in a dubious attempt at growing a goatee, with two rings through one eyebrow and one through his nose. SM winced just looking at him. He wouldn't have been surprised to find a tattoo of a heart with "MOM" laced through it somewhere on the kid's body.

"I always take the graveyard shift."

"Not tonight you don't, dude." The kid snapped his gum. "You've been penalized one shift for fucking on duty."

SM slammed his hands down on the counter. "I've been *what*?"

"Fucking on duty. You know, goin' down on your man behind the front desk here. Which, you know, you could have sprayed some air freshener on the carpet after you were done." The kid waved a hand across his nose. "I mean, come on."

SM's eye twitched in irritation. "So they're cutting me out of a night's wages? That's so unfair. Who gave you these orders? I'm going to complain to the boss."

"Go ahead. He's the one who called me in. Hey, man, don't look at me like that. I don't like this any more than you do." Piercings Boy rolled his eyes. "I take second shift so I can be home in time to put the blocks to my girl, you know?"

"Well, with charm like yours, I can easily see why you were picked to replace me."

"Just for the night. Pfft." Piercings snorted. "You think I'd choose this shift all the time? No way. Nothing but freaks and weirdos come in at this time of night, or couples you have to call the cops on. Why do you work graveyard, anyway?"



“Usually because that means I run into less people.” SM gripped his laptop strap again. “Okay, fine. If I’m not needed here, then I’m going home.”

“Didn’t say that, Derek. Just said you weren’t on the front desk.” Piercings rummaged in a desk drawer for a few minutes, flipping carefully arranged paper clips and thumbtacks and rubber bands willy-nilly until he finally dug out a sheaf of letters and a key to one of the rooms.

“This,” he said, handing over the mail, “is all for you. I guess they saw your encore performance, and they want you. Lots of ’em. Hey, did you sign a waiver?”

“God! Is everyone in this town a voyeur?”

“Huh, now?” Piercings frowned in confusion. “You want to run that by me in English, maybe?”

“A Peeping Tom.” When Piercings continued to look blank, SM gave it up as a bad job and said, “Fine. So what’s the key for?”

Piercings shrugged. “Got me. I was just supposed to tell you that some guy named CG had rented the old stomping ground, and he’d be waiting for you in there covered in strawberry jelly. With coffee.” He wrinkled his nose. “That’s a funky-ass combination, if you ask me.”

SM resisted the almost uncontrollable urge to rub his face with his free hand. “And he told you this?”

“Yeah. Guy’s got a leer on him like you wouldn’t believe.”

“Oh, trust me, I would believe it. You could tell me anything about him, and I wouldn’t doubt a word of it.”

“Even if I said he was dressed in a tear away shirt and pants? Kind of see-through, and I mean everywhere, you know?”

“Still not surprised,” SM muttered. He took the letters and key almost absently, trying his hardest to think. Room 13, just as he’d suspected.

So, there was a choice to make. Go home and sulk with a TV dinner in front of the late-night crappy programming on five working channels, or head into a room that

CG had had ample time to booby-trap with all sorts of seductive devices. Where he might possibly be taped again. Or taped up. With CG, anything was possible.

“Was he carrying anything?”

“Grocery sack. Pretty full one.”

“Paper or plastic?”

“Plastic.” Piercings looked gleefully smug, which crinkled his face into a frightening approximation of an elf on a mission of destruction. “I could see inside. He had lube, the flavored kind, condoms, couple of dildos, a rose, and some handcuffs.”

SM swallowed hard. “You saw all of this? Through the plastic?”

“Not exactly. I got a better look when he spread it all out on the counter.” At SM’s glare, Piercings held up his hand and scooted back a couple of inches. “Hey, don’t look at me like that! You never know in this town when someone’s gonna develop laser vision, and I don’t want my eyebrows burned off. I had to make sure he wasn’t carrying, right?”

“Oh, he is,” SM grumbled. “Twenty-odd years of insanity and counting. That’s a lethal weapon if nothing else.”

“Whatever. All I’m saying is, if you go down to that room, you’re gonna have a rockin’ good time. Hey, hey, eyes!” Piercings put a hand in front of his face. “Ease up, man. Don’t kill the messenger.”

“That’s not my power,” SM gritted out.

“Oh, yeah? What is?”

“I attract all the freaks.” SM shoved the letters in his laptop bag and held the key up to the light. The holographic design of two bodies twined together, the hotel’s signature logo, glimmered at him. It’d gotten a little worn off, so one of the figures appeared to be missing a leg, and the other one an arm. A shame, considering where the hand would have ended.

“Not much of a superpower, if you ask me.”

“It’s been useful from time to time,” SM said absently. He turned the key over in thoughtful hands. Home and shitty TV, or CG and possibly being driven insane. Not

much of a choice, when you put it that way -- but on the other one, at home he definitely wouldn't have any sort of friendly company except his own hand. He'd gotten a little tired of Rosie Palm and her five daughters.

Impulsively, he leaned over the desk and frowned at the camera control console.

"Hey, hey, what are you doing?" Piercings protested. "It took me twenty whole minutes to figure out how that thing worked!"

"Yeah, well, it'll take me all of twenty seconds to do what I need." SM located the switch to Room 13, noted with satisfaction that it was in the "off" position, and tapped it with one finger. "That stays where it is, right? If I get wind that you filmed us -- I mean, me -- I'll rip out every one of those rings with my bare hands. Or possibly pliers. Got it?"

Piercings blanched. "You got it, man. You didn't sign a waiver, anyway."

"Like that's ever stopped anyone before," SM muttered. He got a better grip on his laptop bag and the key, took a deep breath, and headed off down the hallway in search of Room 13. He tried to ignore Piercings behind him, shouting out an obnoxiously cheerful, "Hey, you want your free hospitality kit? Rubbers and slick, courtesy of the hotel!"

He flipped the kid off and kept on walking. One room was blasting rock music loudly enough that he would have knocked to ask them to quiet it down, if he hadn't gotten an eyeful the one time he'd tried. Captain Notes had a real thing for a soundtrack to his escapades. SM guessed he was making up for a shitty super-name and the power of shattering glass on the high notes by playing sweet music on any wonder-slut he could bang.

The guy wasn't shy about opening the door naked, either. SM shuddered. There were certain things a man just didn't want to see, gay or straight. One of them was a penis wrapped in New Year's ticker tape and decorated by a silver star. He'd been dumb enough to ask why it was silver. Captain Notes had grinned and said he was going for the gold, and asked if SM would be kind enough to piss off?

Yeah. He'd just be leaving them alone. SM hurried past the door. He heard a banshee in Room 7, which was never a good sign. They normally cried when someone was about to die, or so he'd heard. Trouble was, around here that meant she was ready to die the little death. Talk about breaking glass. He almost broke into a run.

One thing Room 13 had going for it -- soundproofing. And if the cameras stayed off -- CG had chosen well, nostalgia notwithstanding.

He reached the door, hesitated for a moment, then inserted the key and waited for the small "click" of it unlocking. When it came, he took a deep breath and stepped inside.

Into an empty room.

SM glanced around himself, uncertain of what the hell CG might have been up to. He took a few careful steps forward, then stopped, sniffing the air. Fresh-brewed coffee. Ah-ha! CG *was* in there somewhere.

"This isn't funny," he said, keeping up the careful pace toward the bed. It'd been made up in a slightly better class of sheets and comforters than he was used to, with the pillows plumped.

SM began to feel nervous. When he spotted the bottle of champagne resting in a faux-silver bucket of ice, he froze in his tracks. "CG?" he asked. "If you have ticker tape or star stickers anywhere, I'm leaving."

"Why the hell would I have those?" SM jumped and yelped as warm arms surrounded him from behind. A chin nuzzled into the crook of his shoulder. "Hey, hey, hold still. Let me just enjoy your surprise for a second."

"Jesus. If you could feel how my heart's hammering, you'd know how surprised I am." SM shifted uncomfortably. "You mind easing up a little? I feel like you've got me in a hammerlock."

"I'm just holding you. Man, they did say romance was dead. Now I believe them."

"Who said?"

“A group of vampires I ran into while I was shopping. They were right. Who’d have thought? But then again, I guess they would know.” CG caressed his way down SM’s chest, stopping to twiddle with a few buttons on his way down to the waist. “What, don’t you like the surprise?”

“You can definitely say I’m surprised.” SM half-turned in CG’s arms. “Vampires? And you didn’t kill them?”

“With what? A cup of flammable espresso? Give me a break. They were on their way back from the blood bank and they stopped off for some cookies to dunk.”

SM let out a snort of laughter. “And you believed them?”

“Kind of hard not to when they open up their bags to show me what’s inside. Ugh. Remind me never to drink fruit punch again.” CG shivered. “Did you know they prefer gingersnaps to chocolate chip? As for vanilla wafers, no way. Apparently there’s something addictive about ginger. Nutmeg, too, but they were all out of snicker doodles.”

“Snicker doodles have nutmeg?”

“Beats me. What do I look like, a chef? The vampires made a claim as to the contents of their shopping carriers, I nodded politely, and then I got out before they decided I looked tastier than the red-bag special. Besides, hey, shut up. I’m trying to carry out a seduction here. Kind of requires two willing participants in the fun.” CG snuggled again, an action SM was beginning to find more than a little disquieting. “See? I clean up real nice.”

“I heard what you cleaned up in, and I’m not sure I want to take a look and see.”

“You didn’t seem to mind it the last two times you got a good look.” CG sounded a little stung. “I told you, I’m not big on the fifteen-minute loving. I like to take my time. Hey, why’d you wince?”

“That word.” SM fidgeted.

“Which word?”

“The... you know, the L-word.”

"Love? As in, the making of?" CG let go of SM, who couldn't stop his sigh of relief. "Well, that's great. You don't have to act like I was a Gila monster with my jaws around your neck."

"It kind of felt that way." SM rubbed his throat. "I just think you might be reading more into this situation than it calls for."

"What, you mean actually going to the trouble of renting a room with my very limited funds, spending a couple of hours whipping up chilled cappuccino champagne, and buying supplies for a night of lov -- oh, God, don't flinch, would you?"

"I'm sorry. I can't help it!" SM turned around to face CG. "Look. It's not like I don't appreciate that we have fun together. It just seems that you're taking a few things for granted."

CG, who SM did have to admit looked pretty tasty in his sheer outfit, folded his arms. His expression wavered between hurt and pissed, with the latter almost winning out in the fight.

"Stop looking at me like that, would you?"

"Like what?"

Okay, so CG wasn't about to let him off the hook without watching him twist and wiggle. "Like this means more than -- than -- two ships passing in the night. Deep night, on the graveyard shift. This isn't about love, CG. It's about two guys working shitty jobs and being bored out of their minds enough to risk their employment by having a fuck." He hesitated. "It's not like I've been leading you on." He paused. "Have I?"

CG opened his mouth, shut it, opened it again, then finally sat down on the bed with a heavy sigh, folding his arms. "Okay, call me a girl if you want. I just thought we might have the beginnings of something good here."

SM weighed up his options, then sat gingerly next to CG. "Like what?" He had an odd urge to reach out and grab CG's hand. There was a brief struggle for dominance over comfort versus safety, and in the end he loosely wove his fingers together and let them dangle between his knees. "I thought this was just about having fun. You make it

sound like you want matching rings and some kind of ceremony where we wear matching tuxedos and everyone throws super-confetti.”

CG elbowed him, not bothering to be gentle. “Idiot. I don’t want that.” He turned to face SM. “I would like it to be something more than just random fucks. Could you handle that, or does the mere thought turn you into Mr. Anti-Everything, running screaming into the night like an old lady with her pajamas on fire?”

SM thought for a moment, then shrugged. “I don’t know,” he offered at last. It sounded lame even to him. “I mean, I could try. I just -- I don’t do well in long-term relationships. Relationships of any kind at all, that is. You should have seen my last breakup. You want to talk about messy?”

“Not particularly, no.”

SM ignored him. “Now that was messy. He wanted to take half the sofa.”

“Half the -- no way.”

“I kid you not.”

“What was he going to do, saw it in two?”

“He had the tools and he was going to do the job.” SM ran his hands through his hair and sighed again. “A thing like that makes a guy a little gun-shy, okay?”

“Well, I wasn’t about to bring guns into this whatever we have by whichever name we’re calling it today.” CG scooted a little closer, until their hips were touching. “All I want is to get to know you better. Maybe we could get to where we’re making love instead of grabbing each other in a fit of ill-timed passion.”

“We couldn’t do both?”

“There’s plenty of grabbing in love. Jeez, I think that’s part of what it’s all about. Which, come to think of it, might be one of the reasons you’re acting like a cat in a room full of rocking chairs.”

“A what now?”

“Like you’re scared of losing your ass. I happen to like your ass. I haven’t had as much chance to explore it as I might desire, but that doesn’t mean I’m going to steal your wallet, suck your brains, or demand you come watch golf with me.”

"Golf?"

CG shrugged. "It was the worst thing I could think of, next to table tennis, and even I'm not that cruel, no matter how hard I'm trying to yank your chains."

"Yank my --" SM turned around to stare. "Is that what this is all about?"

"Dope. Of course not." CG leaned in and kissed SM. The touch was light and sweet, a bare brush of lips against lips. For a second, SM's resolve weakened. "I wanted us to spend a nice night together. Last time I checked, not a crime. Even in this city."

"The King James Thumper might object to your plans." SM stole his kiss back, lingering a little longer than CG had. "So might the Disciples of Holiness."

"They can go fu --"

"Anatomically impossible. Not unless they were fourteen or fifteen inches long, in which case I'd be on a mission to convert *them*."

"Smartass."

"I thought you liked my ass."

"I do, and I have a vested interest in keeping it safe." CG kissed SM again, once more with passion, then traced his tongue along SM's lower lip in a slow tease. "Matter of fact, I'd like to get inside that ass."

SM made a small, choked noise. CG took it for interest and turned around so they were facing each other. "Or, you know, you could get inside mine. If you were so inclined."

SM's throat had gone dry. "What were you saying about romance being dead?"

"Please. If I asked you the way I wanted to, with hearts and possibly flowers and maybe even a violin or two, you would head for them thar hills and I'd never hear from you again." CG took SM's hands and held them linked in his own. "I'm not gonna push you. You have to start believing me when I tell you that."

SM shut his eyes tightly. "I'm not scared," he said, but he didn't even believe himself from the way he sounded.



"Yes," CG said, "you are. But I think you're worth keeping, right? So I'm going to consider it my personal mission -- my super-duty -- to teach you that this isn't all bad. Okay?"

"I don't know..."

"Have a little faith." CG loosened one hand and reached up to brush SM's hair off his forehead. He smiled, and it seemed a bit... wistful. "Trust me, okay?"

SM steadied himself and, finally, nodded. "What do you want me to do?"

"We could try the caffeinated champagne. Or," CG said, leaning in to lick, then bite at SM's earlobe, "you could fuck me." He used his tongue again, soothing away the slight sting. "Would you like that? Don't think I haven't caught you staring at my ass. You want a piece of me, and I know it surely as I know my own name and how much coffee it takes before Hairy Pete actually does start levitating."

CG lifted SM's hand and laid it in his lap. SM realized, although he should have already known, what with the see-through clothing, that CG was hard. Probably had been for a while now.

"That for me?" he asked, applying a little pressure. Not to hurt, just to feel good. And God, did it feel great. Nothing like a handful of hot, needy cock. From the small sound CG made as he squeezed, he enjoyed being on the receiving end. Which seemed a little funny to say, considering what he clearly wanted to happen. "You're serious?"

"As life or death." CG pulled back far enough for SM to look into his eyes. They were dilated with lust. "What are you waiting for?" he asked huskily. "An engraved invitation?"

SM felt a warmth suffusing him. "How about a lesson how to get you out of that outfit?"

"That," CG said, pulling SM's hand to his waist, "is something I can do. Real easily. Just tug right here."

SM tugged. He waited. Nothing happened.

"Psych." Chuckling, CG stretched himself out on the bed. "We do this the old fashioned way, big man. One piece at a time. You game?"

SM assessed his own situation, so to speak. Hard, check. Needy, check. Ready, check. Add those together and throw in a ready-to-be-ravished CG, and, well, what *was* he waiting for?

"I'm game," he said, voice going low. "But if you want to play, here are the rules."

CG wriggled. "Ooh, sounds kinky."

"You think you know me?" SM asked, standing over CG's relaxed body. "You don't know who I really am on the inside." He slowly began to remove his belt. "You think maybe I'm just plain, old, boring vanilla? Maybe I have hidden depths. Do you want to sink to those lows?"

"Depends on how low we're talking." CG's eyes traveled to just below SM's belt. He shifted back up with a cocky grin. "I could put some effort into traveling. So are we taking a long journey? Should I pack a sack lunch?"

"There's only one kind of sac I'm interested in." SM had his entire belt off by now. He folded it double in his hands and gave the air an experimental *thwap*. "And I want to see it. Yours. Now. Naked."

He saw CG swallow. "Hey. You weren't kidding about the kink, were you?"

SM tested the strength of his belt again. "I said strip. Fast. Or slow, whichever way you want it." He looked at CG with all the lust he felt burning in his eyes. "I'd prefer fast."

CG wasted no time. Putting his hands to his own waist, he unzipped his sheer pants and wiggled out of them. As advertised, no underwear beneath. He paused. "The shirt, too?"

SM's hand flexed on his belt. "All of it."

"Are you gonna use that thing, or just wave it around all day?"

SM's eyes traveled to CG's package, standing up and saluting him, despite the slight nervousness in CG's voice. "Go on," he said, voice neutral. "The shirt, too."

"Yes, sir." CG flashed him a wicked glance before shimmying out of the garment. Naked, he sprawled across the bed, spreading his legs to show off everything he had. "Are you going to punish me for leading you on?"

"I might." SM walked slowly, calmly and deliberately to the side of the bed, and sat down. "Over my knee. Come on." When CG stared, he gave his thigh a thump. "You wanted to play? We're playing. Move your ass right over here. You need a damned good spanking, and I'm here to deliver."

SM saw a flicker of nervousness in CG's eyes, but then, game as ever, the man nodded. Writhing around until he was on hands and knees, he crawled to SM and, with only a little prodding for the right position, lay across his lap.

One hand fumbled its way to grasping SM's hip. "Is this gonna hurt?"

SM let fly with the belt. "What do you think?" CG gasped as the leather made contact, and, if it was possible, his cock pressed wonderfully close to SM's own and got stiffer. "I think you liked that."

"Could -- could be."

"Did I say you could talk? Start counting. One for each smack." SM raised his belt. "I'll be pissed off if you don't. Do you want to see me angry?"

"No, sir."

"Then start counting. And don't move. Or talk. Both of those get you an extra lick."

"Lick. I like it." CG gave a shimmy, stopping to gasp, as SM did, when their cocks bumped.

SM gave him another hard slap with the belt, then a third. "Now," he said, breathing heavily. "Start counting."

"How -- how many?"

"Did I say you could talk?" *Smack.*

"But how am I supposed to know --"

*Smack.*

"God!"

*Smack.*

"Take a wild guess," SM said. "You can only talk to count them. Start."

"One --" *Smack.* "One. Sorry." *Smack, smack.* "Two." *Smack.* "Three." *Smack.* "Oh, God!" *Smack. Smack.*

SM ran a hand over CG's ass, which was turning a pretty shade of pink. "Good boy," he said, caressing the tender skin. "Just a few more." He could feel through the trembling of CG's backside how much this was affecting him. "Get ready. Here they come."

*Smack. Smack. Smack. Smack. Smack.* SM kept aiming and striking, watching as the pink turned to a cherry red, grinding up against CG in search of his own friction. He forgot to complain about CG's gasps and thrusts back into his own lap.

All that mattered was teaching the smart guy a lesson. He thought he could push SM? Thought he could lead him down a road he wasn't ready to travel? He'd learn, all right. He'd learn.

*Smack. Smack.*

SM breathed heavily. He rubbed his fingers down the bright skin, sliding one, dry, into the crack of CG's ass. "Next time," he whispered, "I'll come inside you. All the way. Do you want that? Nod yes or no."

CG bobbed his head up and down frantically. "All right," SM said. "Now, do you think I have what it takes to be in a leather film?"

"Is that what this was -- *God!*" SM had inserted the tip of his finger, just the barest part of it. "You're killing me!"

"Not yet," SM murmured. He raised his belt one last time. "Here it comes..."

"Oh, fuck, so am I!" CG wailed. When the leather made contact with his ass, he bucked and let out a long, hoarse cry. Heat welled up between their pressed-together pricks. The feel of it made SM stiffen. He managed the last *smack* of the belt before falling over CG, grasping him tight as they both rode out their climax.

Finally, gasping, SM pushed CG off. He rolled bonelessly to the floor, wincing out loud when his ass made contact with the cheap carpet. SM got up, dignified despite

it all, including the spreading stain over the front of his pants, and stalked over to the champagne bucket. He held the bottle up, uncorked it, and sniffed. "Mocacchino," he said, wondering.

Two glasses stood waiting. SM poured a serving into both, then held his up to CG, who was still lying on one hip, naked, staring at him as if dazed. "Cheers," he said simply, and tipped back the glass.

That'd show him.

## Chapter Four

"See?" CG sat up and shook his head like a dog. Water droplets flew everywhere. "Everything's better when you're naked." He paused. "You didn't have to dump the ice bucket on me, though."

"You needed cooling down. I mean, what are you, eighteen?"

"Twenty-eight!"

"Of course. Hormones of a teenager, testosterone of a locker-room full of football players, average IQ of a sheepdog, and so caffeinated that you'd bounce off the walls regardless. That's my idea of a perfect companion."

"Yeah, okay, granted, but isn't it?"

"Isn't it what?"

"Better when you're naked," CG clarified. He pointed at the small pile of SM's T-shirt, jeans, and socks. For good measure, he indicated the sneakers in either corner of the room, where they'd been kicked.

"I'm not entirely exposed. I still have my boxer shorts on," SM protested.

"Not for long, baby. You owe me for that spanking." CG sat up, albeit gingerly, and gestured. "Come on. Turnabout is fair play, and payback's a bitch. Bark, bark. Off with the chastity belt."

SM folded his arms across his chest. "I don't want to."

"Oh, give it a rest. It's not like I haven't seen what you have in there. Tasted it." CG wagged his tongue. "And I'm here to tell you it was a tasty treat to write home about."

"God! Do not tell me you've written letters to someone about the size of my cock!"

"Only my therapist."

"Your what?" SM's eyes threatened to pop out of his head. "You -- you actually wrote --"

"Fuck, no. Just pulling your chains."

"You yank any harder and they'll snap."

"I thought they already had. Hence the aforementioned spanking." CG wiggled provocatively. "Take the boxers off, already. They're all sticky and trust me, you don't want to go peeling them down later when everything's dry."

"You're an ocean full of charm, you know that?" SM made a face, but he did as he'd been told. "I need a washcloth."

"Thought you might." CG stood up and ambled into the bathroom. SM had a first-class view of his very fine ass, still bright pink from the whipping, as he went. He heard water running briefly, and then the man returned holding a dripping towel.

"Sorry. I don't think maid service has been by. But hey, it's terrycloth, or..." He frowned. "Some acceptable substitute." He dropped to his knees in front of SM. "Here. Let me."

"I can clean myself up. Come on, CG, you don't have to." SM tried to push CG out of the way, but something moved his hands to be gentle. Just as tenderly, CG nudged him back.

"I want to," he said, looking up with clear eyes. "It's not a hardship." He leaned forward and kissed the tip of SM's spent member -- well, spent for the time being. "Vested interest, remember? Besides," he murmured, attending to careful clean-up detail, "I kind of like what's attached."

A lump formed in SM's throat. His fingers itched to reach out and bury themselves in CG's hair. Not to grab or pull, but just to stroke and maybe scratch his scalp lightly, the best feeling on earth.

He stopped himself just in time and rested his palm atop CG's head instead, like a bishop giving a blessing. He cleared his throat. "Thank you," he said uncomfortably. The words weren't ones he used very often, except with a nice sarcastic quirk on the end of them.

CG kissed him again, on his newly cleaned thigh. "You're welcome," he replied, just as softly. Then, without further ado, he rose to his feet and slithered his way up SM's body, reaching for a kiss.

SM couldn't deny him. He touched his lips lightly to CG's, wondering if they could keep it chaste. Kind of silly after all they'd done together, but kisses felt more... intimate. Like they were the final bastion, the last line drawn in the sand.

CG surged in eagerly, tongue sweeping into SM's mouth. His arms wound around SM's back. The kiss turned into something more, going on for at least two or three minutes, enough that even breathing through the nose became a problem and they had to back off for air.

CG's eyes were shining in a bright, expectant way. "Now that's what I'm talking about," he said, licking his lips. "Can I have another?"

SM gently pushed him back. "Maybe later."

CG frowned. "Why not?"

"I'll explain in a while."

"And what about cuddles?" CG folded his arms across his chest. "Do I get those later, too?"

SM wavered, then relented. "Okay. Lie down on the bed next to me. I'll put my arm around you. Deal?"

"Deal!" CG hopped onto the bed and sprawled full-length on his belly. After a second's pause to appreciate the natural male in his modern habitat, SM joined him. The bed felt softer than he'd come to expect from the few times he'd spent a night -- or rather, an exhausted stretch between shifts -- in the hotel. Maybe it was the comforter.

"Where'd you get this, anyway?" he asked, patting the really pretty decent bed coverings. "The hotel doesn't exactly go in for luxury."

CG shifted onto one elbow, all the better to face SM, he supposed, and gave him a wink along with a crooked grin. "It always pays to be friendly to the help. Maid in America gave me these. They're from the honeymoon suite."

"Oh, you mean the primary film room."



CG poked him. "Honeymoon. There actually is one, you know, except no one ever uses it. People don't exactly come here to celebrate lifelong commitments. So she stripped the bed and helped me make this one up."

SM began to feel uneasy. "That right?"

"Oh, get the panicked deer in the headlights look off your face. I'm not about to go down on one knee and ask for your hand." He paused for thought. "Of course, then I'd have had to visit your father first and ask for his permission to wed his son."

"You'd still be on the plane, then. He lives in Hawaii."

"No joke?" CG whistled. "Lucky bastard. How'd he escape the metropolis?"

"Well, when your name is Ukulele Man, you've got to find a place to fit in somewhere."

CG cracked up. "Ukulele? Go on. What's his power?"

"Love songs," SM mumbled. "Don't ask me how, but when he plays, people fall in love. That's how he got Mom. At first. After that, she figured a woman without any super powers at all would be pretty lucky to hook up with someone who did."

"She hadn't been around this town long, had she?"

"Fresh off the bus from Muncie, Indiana."

"What's out there?"

"Got me. Corn, maybe?"

"That's Iowa."

"Whichever. Anyway, they met, fell madly in love, and end of story. Except for the part where they moved to the volcano state. Maui. He's making a killing playing for luaus for the tourists."

"Do you write them?"

SM shifted uncomfortably. "Every now and then."

CG stared, then shook his head. "More like not at all. Not even an e-mail. God, you really are a cold-hearted bastard."

"I'm not!" SM protested, stung. "I just don't -- look, that's not the problem."

"Then what is?" CG challenged. "I mean, check us out. We're naked, in a hotel room that's as posh as I can make it, circuit cameras turned off, and we're just sitting here talking. What's the deal?"

SM shook his head. "The deal is that there is no deal. We're fine," he lied. "Come on. I want to show you something." He reached over to the bedside table and awkwardly aimed the attached remote at the TV. "Check this out."

The TV clicked on. SM fiddled with a few of the buttons, muttering to himself.

"What are you doing?"

"You'll see. Just give me a second, and -- there!" SM proudly thumped the nightstand. "Check it out, captain. Coming in loud and clear."

CG turned his head curiously toward the screen. His jaw dropped. "What is... are you tapping into the other rooms' circuit feeds?"

"Would it turn you on if I was?"

"Only in a creepy, stalker sort of way. Which is to say, not at all."

"I thought you liked being a voyeur."

"I like people voyeur-ing over me. That doesn't mean I want to watch other not-so-innocent folks get their groove on. Turn the TV off." He edged a little closer, slinging an arm over SM's bare back. "Come on, man. This is making me uneasy."

SM gave him a *look*. "This is not the in-progress feed. This is a selection of the performances already for sale on DVD. Normally, you have to pay for the porn, but if you know the right access codes..."

CG stared at him for another moment, then broke into a huge, reluctant grin. "You sneaky bastard."

"Thought that was what you liked about me."

"One of the reasons, so you wouldn't be wrong there. What's playing tonight?" CG wiggled down, apparently to get more comfortable. SM tried not to tense up. CG really had put an effort into making this a nice night. He wasn't about to spoil it for the guy. Wasn't he even trying to contribute, in his own particular way?"

CG watched for a few minutes. "So what's the deal with this one? All I see is a naked, slightly tubby guy with... oh. Holy cow."

"I thought you might like his performance."

"What is his name, Long Dong John?"

"How'd you guess?" SM pointed. "Not much to look at above the waist, but when you get below it, hello Mr. Sunshine. All twelve inches of him."

CG squinted. "You sure? I'd guess fourteen, easy. What is he, some kind of a mutant?"

"No. Just a lucky bastard blessed in the genetic lottery. He doesn't even have a super power."

"If I had one that size, I'd strap on some really tight Spandex and pretend," CG muttered. "Gay or straight?"

"He switches. This one is a bisexual film."

"Two men, one woman?"

"No. The other way around."

"Hm." CG frowned. "You know, I never saw the point in that kind of setup."

"What, two women is two too many for you? God, you are pathetically gay."

"And you're not? I seem to recall a spanking in the not too distant past where you were more than happy to appreciate my inclinations." CG reached around to rub lightly at his reddened ass. He wiggled. "Not to say that I didn't enjoy it, myself."

"Hopelessly kinky, then?"

"If you thought that was kinky, then you have another think coming, my friend."

SM lay utterly still. CG noticed, of course, and leaned his head against SM's. "You are, you know."

SM's mouth felt dry as cotton. "I am, what?"

"My friend. And maybe more." CG turned at the right angle to press a kiss to SM's cheek. "Play your cards right," he whispered.

And SM had no idea what to say at all. He cleared his throat and pointed the remote at the screen. "Okay, what about this one?"

They watched in silence for a long stretch of time. CG kept angling his neck to get a better view of the picture. Once he muttered, "Turn up the volume or mute the sound track. I don't care which."

SM turned the sound down, but they continued to watch. "Nice technique on the blond," CG said after a moment's consideration. "Although, I've got to say, the brunette isn't half bad himself. Excellent cock-sucking technique."

"You would think so, wouldn't you?"

"Well, yeah. Look at the way he's deep-throating, no effort at all. At least I think that's what he's doing. Ooh, ooh, there he goes with the hands."

"No lube, you'll notice. This is fake as Long Dong's -- earrings."

CG gave him a *look*. "No, you're kidding me. I thought every inch of the goldfish were real." He frowned. "Kind of an odd accessory for someone who --"

"It's a pun." At CG's raised eyebrow, SM clarified with a blush, "Swimmers."

"Ohh." CG watched for a few more minutes. Then, he blinked. "Is he..."

"Yep."

"And that other guy..."

"Yep."

"Damn." CG shook his head in admiration. "All right, color me impressed. One down the gullet, one up the ass. Now that takes coordination. Check out his technique."

"You're impressed?"

"Hell, yeah. He's got a whole rhythm down, doesn't he? In with one, out with the other. In with the other, out with the one. Those three are a finely-tuned fucking machine, if you ask me."

"They've had practice. These guys are the stars of the gay line for the hotel's video sideline."

CG was silent for a bit. "Do they like each other?"

"Excuse me?"

"You heard me. Those three guys. Do they do anything besides fuck? I mean, like go out for, well, coffee, or a meal? Sit around watching TV and shooting the breeze? Or do they just walk into the room and switch on like a light bulb?"

SM shook his head. "I wouldn't know."

"Wouldn't know, or never asked?" SM could feel the weight of CG's measuring stare. Uncomfortable, he squirmed around to meet it. "You really don't have any idea, do you?"

"Not as such," SM admitted. "I thought you'd be enjoying this a lot more than you are. I can make it picture in picture, if you want. Four tracks playing at once."

"What were you hoping for? Is this some kind of pat on the head for the good doggie?" CG wiggled away and sat up on his heels. He winced once, but seemed otherwise okay. Except for the slight attitude of offence. "SM, I don't get into the whole video thing."

"You could have fooled me when they sent you that offer to be a star," SM retorted, stung. "The way you grabbed that check, I thought it was one of your greatest dreams come true."

"Money, yeah. Not having to work in a second-rate diner in a third-rate hotel just to keep myself in frozen dinners would be nice. But did you actually think I would have taken them up on it? My sex life is private, and I like to keep it that way. This?" CG jerked his head toward the screen. "This is all just show for the camera. Don't get me wrong, I like the moans and groans and the sliding in and out. I mean, I'm only human and more, I'm male. But there's no heart there. Just three guys mechanically getting off for the camera. That's not erotic. That's nothing but porn."

He reached across SM and hit the "off" button on the TV. "I'd rather spend time with you," he said frankly. He laid his hands on his thighs, palms up and open. "That's why I rented this room. For us to have a chance to be together, no lights, camera and action. Just you and me." He waited for SM to rise to the bait. "So? Are you up for it? Ready for the challenge?"

SM closed his eyes tightly. *No, no, no* chanted in front of his mind. But CG... hell. It wasn't the smart thing to do, and it might not even be the right thing to do. But slowly, jerkily, he nodded his head. "All right," he said. "Let's give it a try."

"Now that's the spirit," CG said, laying one warm hand on SM's back. "Come on. Let's get physical."

"Wait, wait, wait a second." SM got onto his knees as well, facing CG. "I thought you just now said you didn't want passionless sex. You like all those kisses and sweet nothings whispered in your ear."

CG gave a slightly embarrassed shrug. "Yeah, I do. What, does that make me too girly for your taste?"

"Not as such." SM glanced between CG's legs. "For instance, not girly at all, right there."

"I was just fantasizing."

"Lie back and think of England?"

"More like lie back," CG said, fitting words to action, "and think about you finally fucking me. Like I've been dreaming for days that you would."

"Two ships passing in the night, pausing to let a passenger on board?"

"More than that," CG denied. "I'd say it's more of a welcome home. Come inside and get comfortable."

SM swallowed. "You think you're home, to me?"

"I think I could be. If you were interested." CG spread his legs wide. He reached down and idly stroked at his cock, already half-hard. It grew against his palm until it stood tall and proud, a gorgeous handful or mouthful no matter what your preference. "Like this," he whispered. "I was thinking about you inside me. Will you? Please?"

SM hesitated. "It's been a long time. I might have forgotten how."

"Please. This isn't something you forget. It's just like learning to ride a bicycle." CG's eyes twinkled. "Hop on board and put the pedal to the metal. Home is, after all, where your heart is."

"One more cliché, and I won't fuck you."

"So you were planning on it?"

SM reached out to touch CG's erection. It twitched in the man's grasp, welling up a bead of pre-come. "I don't think I could resist," he admitted. "I know I should, but damn you, you know right where to hit me. I can't say no to you."

"Good." CG relaxed and got a bit more comfortable on the bed. "So?" he asked. "What are you waiting for?"

"Nothing," SM had to say. He closed his eyes as a wave of longing rode over him. "I can't promise you anything," he blurted out. "There are things about me that you don't know."

"So give me a chance to find out." CG's hand reached out for SM's, brought it to his erection, and closed their fists over it. "That's all I'm asking for. See, the way I figure, you're a guy worth getting familiar with. So, give it a chance. Give us a chance."

"If the next words out of your mouth are 'give peace a chance,' I'm leaving."

CG laughed. "Not exactly. I was going to say, shut up and kiss me."

Kisses. Intimate. More than he should have risked. But the way CG looked, spread out and waiting, wanting... SM couldn't resist. Slowly, to stretch out the sweetness of the moment, he crawled between CG's legs, stretched out on top of him, chest to chest and cock to cock, then lowered his mouth so that their lips met.

The kiss was almost tender. SM knew he was out of practice, but couldn't have stopped himself if he'd been willing to try. They started out slow, mouths closed, but the taste of CG filled him regardless. Fresh hot coffee, a little sweet, tempting as the first cup in the morning. Slowly, he ran his tongue across CG's bottom lip. The man moaned and opened his mouth, inviting SM in.

SM drew in a deep breath and took the plunge, sliding his tongue into the warm cavern that tasted of the finest java ever. He squeezed his eyes closed as CG's tongue twined around his own. Drew back for half a second, then plunged back in.

This time the kiss was fast and frantic, SM desperate to soak up every second of pleasure he could. CG proved, as expected, to be more than a willing participant. He

arched under SM, thrusting up, leaving a wet trail across the stomach pressed to his own.

When SM pulled away to trail a line of heated kisses across CG's cheek, down his neck, and into the small dimple where his collarbones met, CG gasped and began to mutter, "Knew it. I was sure you had this in you somewhere. Buried deep, maybe. But you can do it. You didn't prove me wrong."

"Ssh," SM begged. "Don't talk. Just let this be a moment, okay?"

"Not even a little?"

SM pulled back to look at CG's face, flushed and bright with wanting.

CG clarified: "Like, the lube is in the drawer, plus condoms, and I really want you to fuck me now, okay?"

SM studied CG's face for another moment, then nodded jerkily. "Okay. I can do that." He reached for the drawer, his hands shaking. Stopping for a moment to steady himself, he tried again, and this time managed to get the thing open. A tube of clear jelly and -- he had to laugh -- flavored condoms. Raspberry. A twelve-pack. "You weren't feeling ambitious or anything, were you?"

"Just hoped I'd get lucky." CG thrust up again, dragging his cock over SM's stomach. "I want you. No, I think I need you. In me. Right now."

"Not rough. Not without getting you ready." SM gave into the urge and kissed CG again. "You deserve better. God, what you've earned, I can't begin to --"

"Hey. Derek." CG's use of his real name startled SM into stopping for a moment. "It's okay. I know you won't hurt me."

"How? How can you know?"

"Because." CG's hand found his and squeezed. "I trust you. Are we cool here?"

SM had to take a deep breath to steady himself. "We're cool. But I'm still going slow."

"You say that now, but you haven't felt my power grip yet." CG grinned cheekily. "No attachments necessary. Comes standard with the Coffee Guy package."



"I wondered," SM said, kissing him again because he couldn't *not*, "if I rimmed you, would you still taste like coffee?"

"So I've been told. What you see is what you get with CG Taste, too."

They kissed again. "Yeah," SM said. "That's sort of what I'm afraid of."

"Say again?"

SM slumped against CG. His own erection began to wilt. Encouragingly, CG -- who missed nothing -- began a slow, steady rhythm of thrusting up against him. SM gasped, then began rocking back as best as he could.

"You," he tried to explain, "you're all on the surface. You don't hold anything back. No shadowy corners, no secrets. Nothing to protect yourself. It's the great wide open, you're a rebel with a clue, and I'm just a -- a wanderer who happened to order coffee one night. Then boom, there you were, and you don't know me. You think you do, but not really."

CG regarded him steadily for a moment. "So give me a chance to find out," he said. "I don't think I'll be bothered by what I find."

"You're wrong," SM said flatly. He began to draw back. "Maybe this was a bad idea. I mean, we've sucked, we've fucked, and it was all great. But you want something deeper, something that's actually meaningful, and I -- I don't think I can give that to you."

"Why not?"

SM turned his head away. "I can't tell you," he whispered miserably. "Not unless you ask the right questions."

CG studied him intently. "Okay," he said after a moment. "Roll over, then. You on your back."

SM's heart began to pound in his throat. "What?" All the same, he began to move as CG had directed. "Are we going to switch?"

"There's been enough switching tonight." CG pushed SM gently down into the cool, fluffy pillows until he was the one looking down. "You said you have secrets and hidden depths. That's fine. I figure it's my job to find out what they are. Maybe then

you'll trust me. Maybe then I can get to know you the way I want to." CG leaned in for a kiss and traced his tongue around SM's lips. "Starting from the head and working my way down to the bottom if I have to. Do we have a deal?"

SM inhaled shakily. He hadn't expected, hadn't planned, but -- "Deal," he said, hoping he wouldn't live to regret this. "Go ahead. Do your worst."

"I prefer to think of it more as doing my best." CG kissed the top of SM's forehead. "I just want to look at you. Okay?"

SM managed to nod. "I can deal."

"All of you."

"Still dealing."

"You promise you won't back out?"

"I can promise I'll try not to."

Another kiss. "Good enough." CG scooted backwards until he was kneeling between SM's feet. He lifted one and ran his finger along the sole, grinning as the toes curled and SM struggled to keep from bursting into giggles. "You're ticklish. Always good to know." He winked. "Future ammunition."

"Sadist."

CG checked the other foot. "Yep, same response. You know some people don't like feet, some people are frighteningly into them. But me? I think they say a lot about someone. A little like hands. You have good, strong feet. I can tell you've spent most of your life doing hard work. A lot of running when you were younger."

"How did you --"

"Trade secret. And good guesswork." CG winked, and SM couldn't help laughing a little. "Okay, moving on from the feet."

He swept his way up SM's legs. "Very nice," he approved in a low voice. "Great calf muscles. Squeeze them for me? Oh, yeah, that's the ticket. Some time I'd like to fuck you, just to feel those wrapped around my back."

"I thought you liked being on the bottom."

“Mostly. A change of scenery is good, though.” CG ran his hands over SM’s legs, several sweeps up and down. Sometimes light enough to barely tickle the hair, sometimes deep as a hard-core massage. SM gasped and barely stifled a groan whenever CG hit the thighs.

“You have fantastic legs,” CG assured him. “Long, strong and lean. I knew they were, but now I’ve seen them. You understand where I’m going with this?”

SM managed to nod. “I think so.” His heart began a frantic trip hammer in his chest. What if CG found... what if he didn’t find...?

“Now here, I could stay a while.” CG had zeroed in on the gold mine, at least as far as he was concerned. Gentle fingers lifted and cradled SM’s balls, rolling them just hard enough to feel good. SM’s toes curled again, this time from pleasure.

“You like that, huh?” CG crooned. “What about this?” He brought his other hand into play, lifting and holding the length of SM’s erect cock. “This is one fine specimen of manhood. I could spend all night right here if you wanted me to.” He squeezed hard enough to make SM buck in his hand. “Do you?”

SM managed to shake his head. They’d come that far already. He might as well go on and find out the worst. “Move... up,” he said. “Higher.”

CG developed a slight frown. “You want me to find something in particular, don’t you?”

“I can’t say.” He actually couldn’t. It was part and parcel of the situation he’d gotten himself into. “Just... keep looking.”

CG’s talented fingers reluctantly let go of SM’s erection and traveled up. He traced his way through the thin trail of hair on SM’s lower belly, then moved on with his fingertips spread out, carefully pushing down. “You don’t have any automatic self-destruct devices hidden in here, do you?” he asked warily.

SM managed to laugh. “No. There’s only one part of me that goes *boom*.”

“I remember.” CG gave him a grin so fond that SM felt an ache in his chest. Right about where... yeah.

CG's hand had landed over SM's sternum, right at the spot above his heart. He frowned. "The light's kind of bad here. What is that, a scar?"

SM didn't have to look. He'd seen it before, in the mirror and when looking down, and he'd felt it with his fingertips a hundred times. "Yeah. You got me."

"It's an X. Right above your heart. What's the deal with that?" CG frowned. "Does it mark the spot, or say here be dragons, or --"

SM couldn't take any more. He reached up and closed his hand around CG's. "It means that there isn't anything inside."

CG looked alarmed for a second, then shook his head. "Bull. I can feel it beating. You have a heart, same as me."

"I do, and I don't." At CG's questioning look, SM sighed. "Look, it's like this. That boyfriend I mentioned? The one who was going to saw the couch in half? He did this to me. He had his own powers. He could take things away from you. Keep them locked up. See, I know you pretty well, CG. I think you want more than just friendship. Two ships docking and everything. You want me to give you my heart, metaphorically speaking. But I can't. Okay? I can't give my heart because it was taken from me and I don't have one to give."

He brought their joined hands down to rest over the scar. "The X is to remind me of that. And until you, I haven't been tempted."

CG shook his head slowly. "And you can't get rid of it? Alter it, or --"

"No." SM paused. "I've tried."

"Oh." CG sat up slowly. His own erection had gone down. SM didn't want to look up at his face, but he couldn't help himself. The expression he saw there made him hurt on the inside. "So there can't ever be anything between us except fuck buddies. Is that what you're telling me?"

"CG --"

"No, no, I just want to be sure I've got this right. You're saying because some super-asshole took away a part of your emotions, you're never going to make an effort with anyone? Never going to try and figure out how you can beat it?"

SM was silent.

"Damn you!" CG rolled off the bed. He began snatching up pieces of his clothing, stopping long enough to point and accuse, "You know, you could have said something about this."

"What was I supposed to say?"

"Oh, hi. You're cute, sure, but I don't have a heart. So, no use in hoping. I can't fall in love with you. I can only sort of like you. But no, you were thinking with your little head."

"That's rich! Coming from the guy who tackled me first?"

"I wouldn't have if I'd known." CG shrugged his shirt on. "Instead, you let me think that maybe we were getting to be friends. You gave me the hope that maybe there could be something more. Well, fuck you! I'm out of here."

"CG, no. Wait." SM raised up from the bed as CG grabbed the caffeinated champagne and headed for the door. "Don't go like this. Come on. Please."

"Sorry, SM." CG reached for the knob. "I've already sailed past. You missed your chance to get on board."

And with that, he was gone. SM lay still in the bed for a minute before grabbing the bottle of lube and hurling it across the room so hard that it burst open. "*Damn it!*"

## Chapter Five

*Tap. Tap. Tap. Tappity-tap-tap-tap.*

SM gave up trying to produce a decent rhythm using only two yellow pencils and the surface of his otherwise completely bare desk. Okay, so percussion was out as a possible source of entertainment, which left him with exactly nothing to do.

The game of solo paperclip football had been good, but after a while there was no savor in touchdowns against an imaginary opposing sides.

Seeing how many coins he could spin at once had been curtailed by almost all of his spare change flying off into the hotel courtesy kits.

Bad memories.

It'd been three nights since the disastrous Room 13 encounter, and he hadn't seen CG once. Of course, most of that had been due to his refusing to order coffee, drink coffee, or even look across at the diner unless he had to. CG, for his part, was keeping out of sight.

SM sighed. He wouldn't have admitted it otherwise, but without the cute blond around, his life on the graveyard shift was... boring. What had he done before CG? He tried to remember, but couldn't. Although he did think it had involved a lot more solitaire. Too bad he couldn't find the deck of cards.

Icing on the cake? No one had even checked in on his shift. There were a few rooms filming, but from the check-in log, nothing and no one he'd want to watch. Not even the Golden Boys in Room 17. Golden, boy, CG -- no.

He sighed. God, a cup of coffee would have tasted great right about then. But the risk of running into CG when he was still mad... and SM did have to admit, it was all his fault. The guy had gone to so much trouble to make a special night together, and SM

himself had managed to screw it all up by not being able to be what CG wanted. Needed.

SM rubbed the X over his heart through his shirt. *I told him I wasn't good with relationships*, he thought darkly. *Why did he have to push?*

He knew the answer, actually. CG had liked him. Him! SM, the surly, the loner, the grouchy desk clerk at a flophouse hotel. He'd shared his gift of coffee with SM -- in more ways than one. He'd made an effort to spend time with SM. And they'd had fun, they had. In the beginning.

Their ending left something to be desired.

Oh, the hell with it. He *would* order a coffee. Before he could change his mind, SM picked up the courtesy phone and hit the speed-dial for the diner. As it rang three times, he felt his heart rising into his mouth. What if CG answered? What if he didn't?

A cheerful voice picked up on the other end. "Hotel Diner, Pete here. Can I help you?"

SM's mouth fell open. When he managed to pull it back together, Pete was saying, "Hello? Hello? Listen, if this is another one of you kids making a prank call --"

"Pete?" SM got out. "Hairy Pete?"

He heard a hearty guffaw of laughter. "I'll be damned! Straight Man, is that you? I thought you'd disappeared off the face of the earth yourself."

"Hairy Pete?"

"One and the same."

"What are you doing over there?"

"Working!" Hairy Pete sounded jovial as ever. "I figured since I was over here all night every night anyway, I might as well apply for a job. They needed an extra server, so, here I am!"

"Fantastic." SM swallowed around a dry throat. "Look, I could really use some coffee." *And it's not an excuse to get CG over here delivering it. Honest, it's not.* "Can you send me, say, three cups of whatever's brewing?"

“Three cups? Sweet Holy Moses, you’ll be answering telephones that aren’t there. I’m not that good at working these machines yet.”

SM frowned at the phone. “You’re on the machines? What, isn’t -- CG -- teaching you how to operate them?”

“You didn’t know? CG up and quit, son. That’s how I got this job. He walked off two days ago. Didn’t even come back for his final check. I’ll have to mail it to him, soon as I find some kind of address. He didn’t keep much around. And let me tell you, these are some unhappy truckers without Coffee Guy’s magic java touch. Why, I --”

“Never mind the coffee,” SM said through numb lips. He dropped the phone back into its cradle. CG... gone. Two days ago. The first day SM had refused to even acknowledge his presence.

Oh, shit. Oh, shit, shit, shit.

Across the way, he heard muffled clanking and cursing, and then Hairy Pete’s voice bellowing out, “You all mind yourselves for a minute! I’ve got a delivery to make.” Deep voices rumbled up in disapproval, but Hairy Pete shrugged them off. “You’ll live five minutes, and if you don’t, just leave an address with your next of kin. We’ll pickle you in this fine lighter fluid and ship your body on. We clear?”

Oh, fuck, he was coming over. SM panicked for a second and tried to think of where he could hide. Under the desk? No, his legs would stick out. The supply room? Memories again, but he could cope with them for a few minutes, and --

“There you are!” Hairy Pete smacked down a cardboard drinks container, right on top of the check-in register. Coffee slopped over the top of the uncapped cups, running down into the pen and pencil signatures and rendering Rorschach blurs out of the names. “Hey, kid, you all right?”

SM stared up at Hairy Pete. He had a hair net tied under his chin, covering up the ZZ beard, and one on his head, containing his bushy mane. The mustache had escaped through some freak stroke of luck. The guy looked like a surgeon, not a coffee dispenser. “What the hell happened to you?” he blurted.



“Regulations.” Hairy Pete shrugged as he began slapping cups down on the counter, hot coffee sloshing everywhere. Some of it dripped down onto the desk. “Three cups, and I warn you, better drink them fast before they melt the containers. Oh, hey.” He dug in his pockets. “You take cream and sugar?”

“Sugar.” SM accepted the handful of packets Hairy Pete shoved at him, through the puddles of coffee. He didn’t open them, however, but just stared at them in his palm. “With CG’s brew, you didn’t need any,” he said, almost to himself. “It was good enough not to need this stuff.”

“Oh, hell, yeah.” Hairy Pete leaned on the counter. “That kid was a hell of a java king. Or queen, eh?” He chortled. “So, what happened between you two? He stay in touch with you? I mean, I didn’t expect we’d keep him around here long, not with all the cafés and trendy coffee establishments in the city. Someone like him deserved to shine, not rush around serving the surly and the drunk. Or bums like me, right?” Another hearty laugh made him look like a demented, safety-inspected Santa Claus.

SM shook his head. He glumly opened a soggy pack of sugar and tried to tap the mess into his first cup. “I haven’t heard from him since he left,” he admitted. “We had a...”

“What? You two have a falling-out?” That got Hairy Pete’s attention like nothing else could have. He leaned over toward SM, his eyes alight. “Come on, not the both of you. Not with the way you were made for each other. Shoot, I’d have figured you were moving into each other’s places by now.”

“Not exactly.”

Hairy Pete thumped the counter. “Well. What did you do wrong?”

“Me?” SM sat back in dismay.

“Yeah, you. CG wouldn’t hurt a fly. If something screwed up, I’m willing to bet I’m looking right at the screw-ee.” Hairy Pete’s genial air turned dark. “Now look here. Don’t you go and try to wiggle out of this. I may not have any super powers, but if I know one thing, it’s people. And people who belong with people. You two? You were a

matched set. Salt and pepper. Cream and sugar. Other things that go together. Why the hell did you let him get away, boy?"

SM ignored the "boy" -- with effort -- mostly because he was reasonably sure Hairy Pete could crush him into a handful of molecules if he protested, super-powers or not. He shook his head. "It's a long story."

"But things are bad between you?" Hairy Pete persisted. "Have you even seen him since he quit?"

"Not since before," SM admitted.

"Well, I'll be damned all over again. This won't do. No sir, this won't." Hairy Pete stood up straight, putting his hands on his hips. "Now, the two of you have got to get back together toot sweet, you understand me?"

"What's 'toot sweet' mean?"

"It means *right now*, you dumbass. CG moped around for one night making coffee you could use as motor oil, and the next day, he was gone. If that's not someone with a broken heart, I don't know what is."

"Hearts. Those are kind of our problem."

"Can I be of assistance?"

"Jesus!" SM jumped out of his skin at the unexpected female voice. He blinked to be sure he was seeing things right. "Joanna?"

"One and the same." Amazing how the woman had the ability to drape herself sexily over everything, including a check-in ledge. "I couldn't help overhearing your current dilemma." She reached out with one long, red fingernail and tipped SM's chin up with it. Don't tell me you messed things up with that delicious CG." She frowned. "Oh, for shame."

"For shame?" SM's eyes grew wide. "Look, neither of you know the whole story!"

"Don't have to, son," Hairy Pete put back in. "So you messed up. Had a fight. Doesn't mean everything you had has to be over and in the past."

"Everything? A week or so worth of clandestine encounters and one night in Room 13?"

"I heard about that night," Joanna winked.

"How did you?"

She straightened proudly. "I developed a power. I'm the Leather Queen, now. I have dominion over all the spankings that go on in this hotel."

"Oh, give me a break." SM sank his head into his hands. "Is nothing a secret anymore?"

"Nope. Not from those who care about you."

"And you care about me?"

"Well, more about CG," Hairy Pete admitted. "Son, you've got to do something to set this right."

SM closed his eyes tightly for a brief moment. When he opened them back up, his audience was still there. He spread his hands wide. "What am I supposed to do? Go back to him and beg for forgiveness?"

"So it was you who caused the rift," Joanna murmured, stroking the counter as if it were a beloved sex toy. "I knew it."

"Why is everyone so eager to blame me?"

"Cause, son, you're not the most welcoming type on the planet."

"I have a good reason!"

"Everyone does." Joanna lifted her hand and blew on it. Motes of dust went flying, some of them into SM's hair. "Go find him. Put whatever went wrong to bed."

"Then put him to bed, huh?" Hairy Pete cackled. "Go on, now."

SM hesitated, torn. "But the desk?"

"I can watch it." Joanna slinked around behind the counter. "How hard can it be? Cash or credit, and don't question the pseudonyms."

"You don't have someone waiting for you?"

"They'll keep," she purred. "Now, move aside. I have business to conduct here." She frowned. "For one, making myself a decent cup of coffee. For two, redoing this ledger. What happened here?"

"Hairy Pete happened." SM waffled, torn between duty and the need to see CG again, even if it was to wring his neck for walking away without a word. "I can't just walk off the job."

Hairy Pete shrugged. "Is it that great of a job? What counts more, SM? True love or another night playing paper-wad foos-ball?"

"You've been watching me!"

"There's a great view of the diner from here."

SM hesitated. He wanted to go, truly he did, but... "I don't even know where he lives," he admitted, shamefaced. "We never exchanged addresses or anything like that."

Joanna clucked her tongue. "What about the envelopes from the film companies? I know you would have handed them over, but surely they'd have his address on there?"

"I gave them all back."

"Oh, yes?" She arched an eyebrow. "Have you checked today's mail?"

SM followed her gaze over to... an overflowing in-basket. Taking his life into his hands, he surged up and kissed her square on her luscious mouth. Joanna chuckled as their lips touched. She pushed him away -- gently. "Go find that boy of yours," she ordered. "Tell him what he needs to hear."

"But it won't be... I can't... I don't have it in me to give him what he needs." SM unbuttoned his shirt far enough to show them the X. "I don't have a heart to give."

Hairy Pete and Joanna exchanged long, significant looks. After a moment, SM, irritated, blurted, "What? What is it?"

Hairy Pete crossed his arms and rested his weight on the counter. "Son," he said, "did it ever occur to you that if you weren't able to give it, someone might be able to take it?"

SM sat with his mouth hanging open. Then, silently, he grabbed up his keys and his hat.

"That's the spirit," Joanna cooed.

"Go get 'im, tiger!" Hairy Pete cheered.

SM didn't respond. He was a man, and he had a mission. Find CG.

The rest would have to sort its own self out.

\* \* \*

Three buses and a short walk later, up three flights of brownstone stairs, SM found himself in front of a scarred wooden door. The mailbox down below had held an unfamiliar last name, "Browning," but he was sure he'd found the right place. The coffee mug carved on the room number plate was a dead giveaway.

Gathering up his courage, he knocked. Once, twice, and again. Then he waited, his throat closing up, for some sign of life.

The muted sound of a TV clicked off. "All right, all right, hold your horses," CG's irritated voice came from within. "I'm coming."

*I only wish.* SM held his breath as locks rattled and CG opened the door as far as the safety chain would let it go. One warm eye, rapidly going cold, peered out at him. "Oh. It's you." He began to swing the door shut again, but, with a burst of courage, SM jammed his foot into the empty space.

"Fuck! Did you have to try and shut it so hard?"

"Why not? You shut me out, so now it's my turn." CG relented and took the pressure off -- after one last squeeze. "What do you want? I'm pretty sure I didn't take anything of yours, except your time, and sorry, when I last checked that wasn't refundable."

"CG, it wasn't like that. Let me in. We have to talk."

"I thought we said everything that needed to be said," CG fired back. "Up to and including: I can't even be your friend anymore."

"I never said that."

"It was implied. I'm good at reading between the lines."

"CG, I swear, things have changed." SM put on his best contrite expression -- not hard, as he felt about two inches tall. "Please let me in? I want to explain."

CG eyed him suspiciously. After a moment, he sighed. "I'm going to regret this," SM heard him mumbling as he undid the chain. A second later, the door was swinging open. "Come on in. Welcome to my home, such as it is."

"Thanks." Ducking his head, SM slipped through. CG didn't seem inclined to move his arm, so he slipped underneath it and entered the room. The rich smell of coffee permeated the place, fresh and hot and good. He stood still for a moment, drinking it in with his nose. He could almost taste it on the back of his tongue. Oddly enough, or perhaps not, it didn't make him thirsty for a cup. He wanted the taste of CG himself back on his tongue.

So. Faint heart never won fair... Coffee Guy. As CG turned, probably to demand what the hell SM thought he was doing, SM didn't give him the chance to speak. Grabbing CG's T-shirt by the collar, he hauled the man in close to him and pressed their mouths together in a famished kiss.

CG froze briefly, then, with a muttered, "Damn you," was kissing SM back. His hunger seemed equal, from the way his arms went around SM's back, hugging him close. His kiss became open-mouthed, their tongues battling for dominance inside warm, wet mouths.

"I have to tell you," CG managed to get out. "You bastard, you think you can just..." More kisses. "You don't get away with hurting me..." Kisses. "Why did you come over here?"

SM stopped and pulled away. He couldn't take his eyes off CG, standing there with his lips beautifully swollen, his hair in disarray. The taste of coffee lingered sweetly in his mouth, just the way he remembered. "To say I'm sorry."

CG laughed shortly, without humor. "Sorry? You picked a fine time to apologize."

"Oh, God." SM flinched and glanced around. "Do you have company?"

"Just the TV. But seriously, where do you get off? Barging in here like you think I'm just going to have a really great kiss and forgive you for everything?"

"I --"

"No, you shut up. It's my turn to talk." CG grabbed SM by the forearms. "Look. So what if we hadn't known each other for long? It doesn't take forever to fall in love sometimes. And okay, call me a girl, but I wanted you first, but then I gave my heart to you. And what did you do? Tell me you didn't have one to give me back. Which, as 'take a hike' lines go, rates right up there."

He freed a hand to jerk open SM's shirt. Buttons went flying. "X still marks the spot. So why did you come over here? A quickie and then back to work?"

"No!" SM caught CG's hand. "I came to say I'm sorry. And I am. Really, truly am. And one more thing." He pressed CG's hand to his chest. "I don't have to give you my heart. You already took it. It belongs to you."

CG froze. The strangest look appeared on his face. "You think... you think it works that way?"

"Why not?" SM turned giddy with his excitement. "I didn't think there was a way around it, but I'm sure there is now. You hold my heart in your hands. I hotfooted it all the way from the hotel to tell you that. It's yours. Do with it what you will."

CG pulled his hand back, staring at the palm as if he could see the proof of what SM claimed. "It's mine?" he asked quietly. Then, he glanced up. "You're mine?"

"If you'll have me," SM said, holding his breath. "Will you?"

CG gazed at SM for a moment longer, then drew in a breath, and nodded. "I'm still mad at you, you know."

"That's okay." SM felt almost giddy. "We have time for you to forgive me now. For me to earn it."

CG kissed him again, taking SM by surprise. "I know of a way you can start making up to me," he whispered. "How long before you have to go back to the hotel?"

"As long as I want," SM murmured back. "Joanna's manning the desk."

"Joanna?"

"She volunteered. I think the hotel is safe in her keeping."

CG cracked up. But then he was pulling SM to him in yet another kiss, and this time there was no turning back.

Eager mouths roved over one another, pressing together until it was less of an embrace and more of moving together, desperately seeking closer contact and moving on to finding it. CG's hands slid up against SM's chest, pressing briefly against his heart, then gliding up to his shoulders to slide the shirt off his shoulders.

"You don't get to have all the fun. T-shirt, off," SM ordered gruffly.

"Help me." CG raised his arms. Almost laughing, SM helped him pull it off and got in there right away, kissing a trail across CG's chest. He paused at one nipple, drawing it into his mouth with a bite and a lick, sucking hard as he could.

"God, SM!"

"Derek," SM panted. "Call me Derek. Just once."

"Derek," CG replied. "I'll call you the fuchsia panther if you just make good on what your body's promising."

"And what's that?"

CG pressed close enough that their swollen groins touched. "Fuck me. I need you inside."

"Your wish is my command." SM began to wrestle with the button and zip on CG's jeans. "God, you had to wear a pair that's almost molded on?"

"Complain, complain. You want some help?"

"No," SM said, sinking down on one knee. "I want to do this all by myself." Slowly, reverently, he drew the jeans down off CG's hips, scooted them over his thighs, reached his knees, and then his ankles, pressing his lips to every available inch of skin as it was revealed. "Feet, Coffee Guy."

"Feet? Oh." CG raised one, then the other, stepping out of his jeans entirely. He stood before SM naked and unashamed, his cock standing up proudly. SM couldn't resist rising up a little bit and taking the head into his mouth, using his tongue to lash the tip. "Fuck!"



“Soon.” SM tapped out a staccato tune with his tongue. Hey, there was his rhythm! He’d just needed the right instrument. “You taste... God, you taste so good.”

“Coffee,” CG said, threatening to break into a chuckle. SM couldn’t have that, so he dove back in, drawing half the length into his mouth and using his fist to cover the rest. He bobbed up and down, licking and sucking until CG was bent over him, hands scratching at his back. “Stop. Fuck, stop! I’m gonna come if you keep on going.”

“Would that be so bad?” SM recognized a tone in his own voice he hadn’t heard for ages. Low, dark, seductive. “I want the taste of you. You’re better than anything -- anyone -- I’ve ever had.”

“Anyone ever?”

“Ever,” SM swore. He ran his tongue down CG’s cock one last time, then reluctantly pulled away. “I want this. But more, I want you excited for the big showdown.”

CG looked down, his eyes dilated with lust. “You want me?”

“More than anything.”

“Enough to come and get me?”

“I already did.” SM caught CG’s hands and brought them to his waist. “Your turn with the jeans. Take them off.”

CG moved faster than SM had ever seen him, unfastening buttons and slipping the denim off. SM hadn’t gone with the tight n’ tarty look, so his fell off much easier. He stepped out on his own, and right into another kiss, winding his arms around CG’s neck and burying them in his hair.

“You weren’t kidding, were you?” CG asked against his mouth. “Your heart. I have it. It’s mine now.”

SM nodded. “To do what you want with.”

CG shimmied against him. The brief moment of friction when their cocks bumped was sheer heaven. “What about your body?”

“Same deal. Whatever you want.” SM kissed him yet again. “What do you want most? On top, or on bottom?”

“Bottom.” CG was eagerly kissing back. “Definitely on the bottom. Need you. Need you now.”

He began leading SM backwards. Hopefully toward a soft surface, but SM would have gladly taken the floor right about then. To his surprise and delight, they seemed to be backing up to a bed, neatly made -- in that bachelor sort of way. CG’s knees bumped into it and, with his arms wound around SM tightly as a limpet, tipped them both back onto the soft mattress.

“Now this is a bit more like it,” SM breathed as he lay on top of CG, both naked and loving every second. He reached down between them for a handful of cock and began stroking, hard and fast. “I’m going to drive you to the edge,” he promised.

“No coming back?”

“Plenty of coming. But no going back.” SM looked at CG, seriously as he could. “If I do this, we’re in it for the long haul. Think you can handle that?”

“Know I can.” CG grasped at him. “Come on, lover. I want you in me right now.”

“Lube. Condoms?”

“Bedside table.” CG managed to wave in its direction.

Without moving too far off CG, SM was able to reach for the drawer and fumble it open. He found a full bottle of something that smelled like raspberry coffee, which warmed almost instantly to the touch. Anointing his fingers with the stuff, he said hoarsely, “Open up for me.”

CG groaned, but with anticipation, and drew his legs up, exposing himself. SM felt his heart skip a beat at the sight. Slippery fingers went in, stretching and opening the way for him. He found the small, spongy lump and began to work it, loving the way CG thrashed and moaned under his touch.

A condom, then, and more lube on it. “Are you ready for me?” SM whispered into CG’s ear.

CG nipped at him. “Come on,” he said, “let’s ride this horse into the sunset.”

SM slipped inside his lover's body and knew that at last, though he spent most of his time at a hotel, sure, he'd finally come home.

## **Willa Okati**

Willa Okati is one hundred percent in love all things vampire and supernatural. However, she's an even bigger fan of stories that feature beautiful men exploring their desires for one another. Casually known as the "blue-haired, tattooed wench" among Changeling folks, she lives for the fun of acting just as young as she feels. She'd love for you to visit her website at <http://www.willaokati.com> or join her reader's loop for fun and chatter at [willa\\_okati@yahoogroups.com](mailto:willa_okati@yahoogroups.com). Happy reading!