



Loose Id

# ANGEL HEART

SHARON MARIA BIDWELL

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Sharon Maria Bidwell

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## Dedication

*To the love of my life, always.*

*To Ann, for being my first reader.*

*And to the readers who took the time to write to me about Snow Angel. Thank you.  
You asked for this one and I listened.*

## Prologue

*A few months ago...*

A firm grasp shrouded Jay's cock in heat.

Jay opened his eyes to the light of the room and looked down. Still crouched before him, Dean lifted that hardness to his face. He stroked Jay's cock gently against his cheek, brushing that tumescence against the side of his mouth. The sensation felt soft and rough all at once. *Delectable*. A small gasp escaped Jay's lips. Dean hadn't taken that solidity into his mouth and, in truth, Jay didn't expect it, though who knew...one day...but, all the same, that tender gesture swelled his cock to full hardness.

When April knocked on the door, Jay told her to go home. His sister must have heard something in his voice, because without a word of argument, she left them in peace.

Slowly, with that same tenderness, Dean divested Jay of his clothes. Then he rose up, removing his own garments, though letting Jay help him when necessary. The truth was, Jay's hands shook too much to help in any significant way. He couldn't believe they were doing this, here, in the office at the garage. He supposed this would soon be his desk, if he

truly decided to help Dean run the business, and it wasn't as if he expected anyone to interrupt them, but even so...

He shivered, physically shaking with too many sensations and emotions to express them in any other way. Dean raised an eyebrow.

"This feels a little disreputable," Jay attempted to explain, though that barely described the emotions currently threatening to tear him apart. He felt he might, not shatter exactly, but simply disintegrate under Dean's weight, the weight he anticipated, already knowing what was to come.

"You telling me that doesn't make it feel good?"

He wanted to say that it didn't, but the truth was that doing this here and now felt so explicitly good that, unless someone caught them at it, he didn't want to stop. Even if someone caught them, he was unsure he could repent. When Dean lifted him, turned with him still in his arms, and sat him on the desk, Jay did nothing to prevent it. He shivered again, finally realising the room felt much colder than he'd been conscious of up until that point, but still unable to end this. He gave himself over to Dean and to the moment equally.

Dean's long reach came in handy; he could hear the other man moving things out of the way on the desk's surface behind him, and then Dean tipped him back to lie against the desktop. His long hair spread out like a seductive pillow and he watched the hungry look come into Dean's eyes. Aware his hair was the kind most women would kill for and that, ironically, April had cut hers while he chose to let his grow, the reaction from Dean always bewildered him. He liked it, though. He very much liked seeing that ravenous look enter Dean's gaze. The unyielding surface of the desk provided the physical support he needed but his emotions were another matter. They escaped his restraint, made him feel as though he floated free. Dean came down over him like some all-consuming shadow, engulfing.

Dean kissed Jay's neck, almost gnawing hungrily at his skin, before a soft moan escaped him. Hearing that sound from his lover's throat made Jay catch his breath.

“It’s a pity we don’t have lube,” Dean whispered against Jay’s flesh. The soft, tickling breath made Jay squirm under him. Whether that was the reason Dean rose up to gather his face in one large hand or not, Jay wasn’t sure, but the big man’s eyes displayed nothing but concern.

“Spit will do,” Jay managed to say, but still Dean’s blue gaze searched his face.

“Can you take me?”

Even now, rock hard and pressing against Jay’s thigh, Dean asked first; the very fact that Dean checked if this was okay gave Jay all the reassurance he needed. He nodded.

Those firm hands gripped him, dragged him so that the hard edge of the desk pressed almost painfully into base of his spine where it became his coccyx. He felt the discomfort for a moment only. His legs curving back eased the pressure, but where one pressure ended, another began. Hard yet smooth, unrelenting yet gradual, that wonderful pressure filled him, reaching into depths far deeper than it could physically touch. Dean groaned just as Jay gasped. Sighing on the end of that groan, the big man’s form came down over him. He took Dean’s weight, relishing it, trying not to writhe in sheer enjoyment. The desk complained, but the furniture proved sturdy.

“You feel so good on my cock,” Dean rasped out on another moan.

Jay laughed. “You’re just a romantic at heart,” he told him.

Dean stared down into Jay’s eyes, smoothing back his hair, stroking his face. The other man’s lips finally broke into a grin. “I guess we’ll both just have to stick around to find out how much of a romantic I actually can be.”



## Chapter One

“My, we are hyper.” Jay’s grin stretched his lips tightly across his teeth.

“It’s been two weeks. What do you want from me?”

*Two weeks! Two long, interminable weeks!* The seminar had sounded like such a good idea, a great opportunity to gain contacts and add to Jay’s I.T. skills. He’d enjoyed it, thrown himself into the lectures, in fact, to forget that Dean wasn’t with him. They’d also kept phone calls to a minimum after their second attempt to talk on the phone concluded with some very heavy breathing before they finally said goodnight and hung up. That session meant a late night for Jay, and caused him to spend the duration of the next day in a distracted state. He’d told Dean he needed true time away from him, or he’d return home not having learned a thing. Dean had taken this news with the good grace that Jay expected. Okay, maybe he’d sounded a little disgruntled, but none more so than Jay felt in asking.

Two weeks and he had to come home to this. His parents were celebrating their ruby wedding anniversary and while that was indeed something to celebrate, it meant no sooner had he returned home than he’d needed to jump in the car with Dean and drive to his parents’ house. Tomorrow they would travel on to a hotel his parents had booked for a reception, which would be taking place after renewing their vows. Some guests would stay

the night; some would turn up just for the day. His parents would stay on a bit longer, a romantic break away for the two of them. They had arrived at his parents' house a day later than his mother wished, because of Jay's schedule. April was none too happy either, as it meant he and Dean hadn't helped with any of the arrangements.

Jay looked down the long line of Dean's body as the larger man leaned over him, and then, waiting for just the right expression to manifest on Dean's face, Jay leered. He'd practiced his leer in a few quiet moments during his time away until he got it just right, and he now knew he had the leer just right because of the look on Dean's face. The man's expression went from that blend of pained, frustrated desire to one of astonishment. Jay wanted Dean to see how he felt about him with just that leer. That leer said that he liked what he saw, that he knew how Dean felt about him, that he loved the way Dean made him feel. The expression also said he knew just how he affected the big man.

Said big man was on his hands and knees leaning over Jay, stripped to the waist with the fly of his jeans open. Soft curls, a touch darker than the unruly light brown hair on his head, peeked out of the waist of his trousers. Unlike the hair on his head, these curls lacked golden highlights...unless you looked *really* closely. It came as a surprise to notice Dean wore no underwear. He usually did when he went out, just not around the house, but then this wasn't their house. On the one hand, the fact that Dean was happy to have sex with him just about anywhere was heartening. So, too, was the fact that he was so open about their relationship. He'd been open from the first moment he'd made it official, but so many things about this relationship were difficult for Dean. Jay sometimes wondered if the big man failed to realise that he appreciated the effort Dean had gone through recently. Dean possessed a strong will, but Jay knew what it was like to grow up gay. Jay believed he understood on some level. After all, even he had suffered doubts and denial, but he couldn't truly imagine what it must feel like suddenly to accept you had those tendencies and then to so quickly face the world and admit to those feelings. Dean squirmed at times but refused to hide their affection. Jay loved him for it. He loved Dean.

“What’s wrong?” Dean asked, frowning as Jay’s hand on his chest stopped the man from coming down over him. Well, *stopped* might be too strong a word. He couldn’t truly stop Dean doing anything, not by physical force, anyway. Jay just trusted the man not to do anything he didn’t want. He could understand Dean’s frown as well as the waves of frustration and longing rolling off him.

Jay breathed in deeply. It felt as if he drew in all that physical energy along with the man’s fragrance. If lust possessed a perfume, this was it. Lust darkened Dean’s eyes, made his muscles tense, but love...love kept him at bay, waiting for Jay to move his hand. He wanted to, but he wanted to bathe in the heat of Dean’s gaze, too.

“Just taking a moment to look,” Jay rasped out, feeling strangely breathless.

It took a moment but a slow, almost lazy-looking smile curled Dean’s lips. His gaze flickered down, then up, side to side, back and forth. A particle of light from the bedside lamp struck Dean’s eye at one point, and, for just a second, Jay’s reflection appeared to flash in the depths of the larger man’s pupil. The image fled so quickly, the impression might have been Jay’s imagination. He didn’t think so, though, and it hardly mattered. He didn’t need a mirror to tell him he lay back against the bed, his shirt open; Dean’s grasping hands had popped the buttons and scattered them. Jay had one shoe on, one off, and the bulge at his crotch threatened to burst his trousers at the seams. His nipples had turned an all too familiar shade of rosy pink. Jay hardly credited it, but he could have sworn that his nipples were larger and darker since he’d started having sex with Dean, probably because the other man paid them so much attention. Perhaps if he didn’t squirm and shriek so, Dean would take pity on him, but he couldn’t help it. Dean knew just how to make him writhe. Right now, he didn’t think they’d have much time for foreplay. After longing for Dean for such a protracted time, he’d thought two weeks away from each other would be nothing. The time spent apart proved him wrong. He could tell Dean felt the same way by the look in his eye. That stare almost stopped him breathing. He didn’t think he’d ever get used to seeing Dean gaze at him that way. Jay rested amidst the shroud of his long chestnut hair that Dean loved so much,

and he'd lost count of the number of times he'd seen the same expression on his lover's face staring down at him like this.

Jay had never been shy about his looks, but he'd never given them much consideration, either. Now, seeing the expression in Dean's eye, knowing that he turned the other man on, aroused Jay so much he thought if he lay there much longer, he might explode just from the expression on the man's face alone.

He whimpered. Dear God, he whimpered! Dean dipped his head in a now-familiar manner that said "I want you, I need you, I've got to be inside you," and it made Jay whimper.

"Hands up. Clasp the headboard," Dean whispered, and no matter how much Jay wanted to run his hands over Dean's exquisite, expansive chest, his hands obeyed the order as though his mind had no say in the decision. Dean shifted, proceeding to strip him. The second shoe followed the first with a soft *bonk* as he tossed it and it disappeared into a corner of the room. Dean's fingers went to the fastening of Jay's trousers. Jay twisted his hips to help but did no more than that. He watched Dean's face, who glanced away when he needed to see what his hands were doing, but always looked back to Jay's face as soon as possible. They watched each other.

Because of the anniversary, they were in one of the four bedrooms of his parents' house, attempting to alleviate two weeks of sexual frustration and trying to do it quietly. Jay's parents might well treat them as if they were married, but Jay's sister occupied one of the other rooms, while Jay's grandmother took up the last one. They had endeavoured to explain to his grandmother that Dean was with Jay, but she kept referring to him as April's new boyfriend. They didn't know if she was being deliberately obtuse, truly didn't understand, or was just plain embarrassed. Seeing as she thought tomorrow was her daughter's wedding day, rather than their anniversary, they accepted her error as having no malicious intent and decided not to explain further. That hadn't stopped Jay's mother making up the spare room with the double bed in it for them. Still, they were often noisy lovers, if

they weren't careful, and even if your parents didn't mind you making love, Jay felt disinclined for them to hear him screaming at Dean to *fuck me, yes, please, fuck me, yes*, at the top of his voice. The truth was it turned him on to beg, and it turned Dean on to hear such pleas. That aroused Jay even more and he loved it when they got so out of control that Dean deliberately made him ask for more.

Despite his reservations about noise, it looked as if things might get out of control right now. Slick, wet noises came from somewhere low in the bed where Dean's fingers slid back and forth, smooth with lube. Jay closed his eyes, concentrating on the quiet and gentle sounds of their breathing, of skin brushing against skin, and the sensations assaulting him equally. Although few, any of his lovers would testify he adored sound during sex, including the snap of the lid on the tube of lube as a prelude to...Jay gasped as Dean worked his fingers into Jay's body, grinding into him. As incredible as it seemed, a coherent thought managed to swim to the surface of his mind. "Did you bring the strawberry?"

"Yeah," Dean murmured, "but we're going to have to wait to use it. It's a waste when I can't wait to be inside you."

The words sounded logical enough, and Dean kept his voice even, but the probability was equally likely that he procrastinated, even though Jay happened to agree with him about not using the strawberry-flavoured lube tonight. The comment that Dean couldn't wait to be inside him certainly hadn't escaped his notice. Still, as much as it had taken time for him to convince Dean to let him do several, considerably more intimate things that were part of a gay relationship, once he'd gotten the big man over his initial timidity, Jay couldn't get enough of Dean, coupled with the sour-sweet smell and taste of strawberries. He'd purchased the lube to help Dean over his embarrassment, and he liked Dean as nature had made him too, but the sheer idea of a strawberry-smelling-and-flavoured Dean just plain drove him crazy. He didn't know why. Maybe part of the intoxication of the idea was that it was the one time where Dean looked truly vulnerable, offering up his body, letting Jay do what he liked, even if Dean felt embarrassed. Jay couldn't help it. As Dean inserted a third finger into

him, making him grunt and driving him towards a precipice he didn't want to reach yet, he voiced his thoughts, glad of the distraction.

"Do you hate me?" Jay enquired.

Dean was still frowning, but his expression went from the frown of desire to serious questioning in an instant. He didn't stop fingering him, though. Jay lay beneath him, arms up, hands clasping the headboard, and with his legs open, his knees back. He wore nothing but his shirt and socks. Dean said that image of near nudity made him look lewd and that he loved him like this. Well, either like this, or completely naked.

"Do you hate that something you find embarrassing turns me on wildly?"

A faint tinge of pink flushed across Dean's face and his eyes went just that little bit wide. Dean clearly knew what Jay was asking.

"I don't hate you or that it turns you on."

"But you'd rather not do it?" Jay needed to ask. He hadn't thought about the repercussions before, but if Dean truly didn't like Jay kissing him rather more intimately than with which he felt comfortable, there was no way he was going to make his lover do something he hated. He wouldn't continue to persuade Dean into such an act, even if that meant he personally went without.

Saying that, if he was honest, he needed to admit he'd coaxed more often than not. Still, he'd always felt that Dean was ultimately too self-assured to truly be influenced. Maybe he was wrong. Maybe Dean would do things just to please him. That idea played havoc with his heart but, alas, guilt thrived strongest among those emotions. When Dean had accepted this relationship, he'd said he still wanted to play the role of the guy for the most part. Jay had been very happy with that arrangement, and they'd spent the last few months doing what every couple did. However, there were things he wanted that heterosexual couples seldom did. He'd hesitated even to mention them and had done so only recently, but Dean's

initial quiet reaction to his suggestions had only encouraged him. Now, doubt started to creep in. Was Dean just hesitant or truly repulsed?

A look that Jay could only describe as shy came over Dean's face. "I can't think of anything I wouldn't let you do to me. Or, at least, nothing you'd want to do that I couldn't share with you. Your tongue feels good, but it's the idea that it's turning you on so much that makes it good for me."

That was beautiful and all very well, but Jay needed to be certain. "So, you don't mind? I can kiss you wherever I want?"

"Yes, Angel." Dean stroked Jay's face with his free hand, his other hand still busy. The position meant Dean rested most of his weight on one elbow and the arrangement was a little awkward but that tender habit of Dean's always made Jay's heart flutter. So did his words. "You can do with me what you will." Dean leaned forwards as though he would kiss him. There hadn't been time for much kissing today. Just a quick hug and duel of tongues in the hallway at home before Jay changed his clothes and then hurried back out to a car Dean had already loaded with luggage for the trip. Dean stopped short of this kiss, his eyes glinting. His face took on an evil expression that Jay knew only too well. "Right now," he said, a little louder, putting more force into his voice, "I'm going to fuck you, but only if you ask for it."

"Kiss me first."

"Beg me for it."

Dean's mouth remained tantalising, just out of reach. Jay lifted his head, seeking to steal the kiss. Dean moved back. Jay kept trying. Dean resisted, clearly struggling to maintain his stern expression, but the amusement in his eyes betrayed him. All Jay needed to do was ask. He could stand the wait no longer, so he did.

"Kiss me. Please kiss me. I beg you."

“Like this?” Dean bestowed his mouth with the lightest of licks. Jay shook his head. “Like this?” Dean pressed hard, but the touch was still that of a closed-mouthed kiss. Jay moaned, the sound petering off on a sigh.

“No. Your tongue. I want your tongue in my mouth.”

That soft, swirling presence in his mouth reminded him of how this part of their relationship began, of how from the back Dean once mistook Jay for his sister and kissed the wrong person. That first kiss remained closed-mouthed but, later, he’d kissed Jay out of spite or something like it. That second kiss happened because Jay insulted the man’s ability to kiss -- something he couldn’t in all honesty ever bring himself to do again, no matter how angry he might be. The man definitely knew how to kiss and set out to prove it every time. Back then, Dean’s attitude about the whole thing had pissed everyone off. Now, Jay praised the heavens, for that one moment eventually changed their lives. Dean still wasn’t giving him enough, wasn’t giving Jay what he wanted, and Dean clearly knew it. Jay broke the kiss.

“Your tongue. Fuck me with your tongue,” he told Dean, gasping, breathless with need. “Fuck my mouth with your tongue.”

Dean complied. Moving over him, Dean opened Jay’s mouth with his tongue and then thrust in and out, that sinuous muscle moving back and forth in a hard, fast mockery of sex. The sensation made Jay groan loudly; a shiver of fear dissipated into lust when he wondered if his parents would hear, and then realised he just couldn’t care. When Dean let him breathe, he came up for air, bereft of both Dean’s mouth on his and empty of Dean’s stroking fingers. He didn’t worry for long. A familiar sensation, softly textured and yet with underlying hardness, teased at that hidden entrance, seeking access into his body.

“Is my tongue the only thing you want me to fuck you with?” Dean’s voice took on a hard tone that shivered down Jay’s spine. He shook his head but the gesture wasn’t enough. Dean would want to hear the words.

“No. Fuck me...with your cock.”



“With this?” Dean circled his opening. Even wet from the lube, Jay could feel Dean’s own moisture adding to the slickness. The man must be ready to burst. He couldn’t help but gasp at Dean’s iron will.

“Fuck me. Yes. With your cock.”

“And your mouth?”

“With your tongue or cock. I don’t care.”

Dean chuckled. “I’m not sure that’s true. I think you want this inside you.”

Jay groaned, his head falling back. He writhed, caught by that probing, teasing promise that drove him to wantonness, by Dean’s bulk leaning over him, and by his own grip on the headboard, which had tightened so much it turned his knuckles white.

“Yes, I want your cock inside me. Fuck me. Fuck my arse with your cock and my mouth with your tongue.”

“Say please.”

Despite the order, the words emerged sounding oddly strangled. Jay looked to Dean’s face and noted the sweat on his brow.

“Please,” he said. “Please, Dean.” He was no longer sure if he begged for his sake or Dean’s. “Please fuck me. Never stop fucking me.”

Dean’s muscles tensed as if he were about to drive his cock up into Jay’s body when they heard a noise. They froze, poised. Both their heads turned towards the door at once. Jay let go of the headboard, and Dean came down over him, but the position was different somehow, more protective, as though if someone came in Dean would use his body to shield as well as conceal Jay. The idea that Dean would shield him even it meant that left the man’s arse bare to the air and on view brought a smile to Jay’s lips. Distracted, Jay almost forgot to worry. Only the man’s attentive state reminded him that there was cause for concern. Jay could tell Dean strained to listen as much as he did. Silence ensued.

“Do you think there’s someone out there?” Dean whispered, just as they heard the noise again. It sounded like the creak of a floorboard, and could have originated from anywhere in the house. Someone could have got up to visit the bathroom, but he couldn’t hear the sound of running water. Maybe the house was just settling. Hell, the noise could be a burglar for all he knew. There was no other sound. They waited, but only silence persisted.

Dean turned his head back to him, grinning. “I do hope that wasn’t your grandmother,” he said, snuffling with gentle laughter.

“If she heard us, she probably thinks April’s having a whale of a time. She thinks you’re her boyfriend, after all.”

Dean nudged him, his eyes bright with pretend annoyance. “You’re the only woman I want.”

“Woman?” Jay dared him with his eyes to go where that comment led. Aware of more intimate details calling his attention, and that his desire even now simmered in his veins, still, other considerations had deflated his ardour a little during the interruption.

“Yep. My bitch. On your back, legs wrapped tightly around my waist. Begging for more...”

Dean made his position clear with a quick thrust of his hips, driving his point home. The movement threw Jay’s head back, forced his mouth open with sudden, delicious pleasure. Not everything had deflated as much as he thought, and Dean’s desire filled him relentlessly. He gasped, rolled his head, stared at Dean’s piercing gaze.

“You arrogant son of a...” He hesitated. He couldn’t say bitch. Dean’s mother wasn’t a bitch, and Dean wasn’t the son of one. “Arrogant sod,” he said, instead.

“Yep. And you. Love. Every inch. Of me.” Dean punctuated the words with more short, sharp thrusts before pausing.

Need crawled through Jay’s belly as well as through lower things. Dean wasn’t even touching his cock, but if he did that again...

“Oh...no...” Jay said, as Dean started again, not certain he didn’t mean yes. Each one of those small, almost vicious spikes of pleasure increased that sense of urgency. To his surprise, a tear rolled out of the corner of his eye. Dean shifted, caught it on his lips, and then took the salty taste to Jay’s mouth. The strokes went deeper, and then shortened, before Dean changed the pattern to deep once more. Jay couldn’t think. He didn’t need to. His body did all of his thinking for him. Maybe the time spent apart truly had been a long two weeks. Everything tightened just seconds before releasing. He screamed, crying out, only Dean’s mouth opening over his, swallowing down the sound, prevented him from waking the entire house.

## Chapter Two

Dean met yet another of Jay's relatives, nodded, shook hands, and took in their surprised expression as Jay's parents introduced him as Jay's partner. Some people knew Jay was gay; some didn't. Some knew Dean as a family friend; some didn't. People were surprised either to hear Jay was gay, that Dean had jumped the fence, or that Jay had found such a large man to love him. Dean could recognise when people were shocked by his size because their gaze flicked up and down or left to right, sometimes both, as they took in his bulk. A few broke out in a slight flush and he knew instantly what they were thinking. If he was that large across the shoulders, how big were other parts of his anatomy?

Of course, many worked out who he was from his presence in church. Thankfully, the service quelled their curiosity. Jay's hand in his throughout the blessing took the edge off his nerves, not least of all because he knew what was going through Jay's mind. It was too soon for them to speak of marriage, even if it could only be a civil service, but in that moment he knew Jay was thinking of their future. Dean couldn't help thinking of their future, too, although it would probably have surprised everyone to hear him say so.

He struggled at times. He could admit that to himself if to no one else. He suspected Jay knew it, too. Sometimes, he would look at Jay and catch an almost speculative look in his

lover's eye. So far, calming that speculation with kisses worked, or a hug, even a peck on the forehead put off all those unspoken questions. Jay needn't worry. Dean wasn't going anywhere and he could only prove that with time. Still, he could understand the reason behind the uneasiness that occasionally slid through Jay's eyes, darkening his gaze briefly like the shadow of a storm.

Take just last week. They'd been together for months when the guys had finally convinced him to go back to The Mixer, a local restaurant that had a bar and grill. They even said bring Jay along, which was encouraging. Dean had accepted, his reluctance having nothing to do with Jay and everything to do with one of the women who worked there. The last time he'd been in there alone, he'd insulted a waitress by refusing her advances but, apparently, Lillian had heard the news and was delighted over the idea that Dean now spent his nights in bed with another man. Evidently, the idea that he dismissed her in preference for a guy only confirmed her sexuality and power over true men. It stood to reason in Lillian's mind that of course Dean had dumped her for another man because what woman could compete with her? Clearly, only a gay man could say no to her; he'd have had no reason to walk out on her otherwise. Obviously, his sexuality was at fault, not hers. If he told her he still liked women, she'd probably laugh in his face. Wasn't there some saying that bisexual people were only kidding themselves? He didn't actually believe that and he didn't know what to call himself. He disliked labels. Thankfully though, only one person had dared hint to his face that Lillian was right, and Dean had told said person that he didn't care whether she was or not. He was where his heart dictated. That announcement went down like the Titanic. Somehow, straight guys seemed more uncomfortable with a declaration of love than the idea that his relationship with Jay was just sex. His audience was clearly shocked and Dean sensed they would have been more comfortable had he declared that he was where his dick dictated. Apparently, his cock could do what it wanted, but his heart? Oh no. He could fuck a guy but he wasn't allowed to love him.

Not everyone acted like this, but there were a few. Out of all the reactions he'd encountered, this one confused him most of all. He'd expected most not to care, others to be surprised but okay with it, and some to object. The idea that anyone would think it was okay for Dean to get his rocks off where he liked, but that love made it 'gay'... That reaction was one he'd never anticipated. Never having encountered that strange double standard before, it threw him at first. He'd once joked with Jay telling him the straight guy's idiom was that if a mate offered you a blowjob you'd say yes, never guessing anyone actually believed in that philosophy. The first time someone asked him if Jay was a good little cocksucker almost resulted in a fistfight. No one who knew him dared to ask that again. Apparently, according to some guys, it was okay to have another man down on his knees sucking your cock as long as you didn't deem to treat such a man as an actual human being, during or afterwards. Alas, Jay's sister always took his defending Jay's honour as a way to hide his own embarrassment and, damn her, she was right. He *was* a little embarrassed to be in a relationship with another guy. He wasn't going to walk away because of a small thing such as embarrassment, though. Most people got used to the idea and accepted them as a couple, albeit some slowly but no one could be taking more time to get used to the idea than he was.

As for Lillian, it wasn't her sexuality at fault; it was her personality he couldn't stand and true, a few years ago that wouldn't have worried him but couldn't a guy be allowed to change?

Dean suppressed a sigh. He was tired, not of Jay but of everyone else waiting for him to fail. That night in The Mixer, he'd slid into a booth and put an arm around Jay without thinking about it. Only when he saw the look on some of the other guy's faces who were there with their dates did he realise he'd done the wrong thing. If it weren't for John, a workmate of his, taking it in his stride and breaking the ice, Dean didn't know what he would have done. He'd stuck it out then, and over time such difficulties grew easier to bear. He waited for the day when such things really were the problem of the bigots that felt that way and not his to endure. There was one good thing to come out of it, though. For every

little thing that could have pushed them apart, every occurrence brought him a greater understanding of what Jay tolerated. The negative things somehow managed to bring them closer together. That didn't mean Dean never felt sick of it, though.

Now, they were at the reception, just a few miles from where Jay's parents lived. His folks had hired a beautiful country manor hotel for the day and night. Alas, Dean's parents, who were part of the original guest list, had been unable to make it. Jay's parents had said that Dean was a member of the family in their eyes and, therefore, any of his relatives were theirs, but Dean's father, George Chapman, was looking after the family business in Dean's absence. His father now worked part-time at the garage where they serviced vintage cars. He would go in full-time only when his son was away, and, as Jay took care of the paperwork, that would have left the garage rather unattended. They were normally more organised for such eventualities and would have left another co-worker in charge, but the only one Dean trusted was away on holiday. After a nasty incident last year, where a co-worker had threatened Jay, Dean was taking no chances with people he didn't know or trust completely. Even so, he could have done with having some of his own family here. He needed their support and only now was the true value of their easy acceptance coming home to him.

Dean suddenly experienced the overwhelming need to hug his parents, and he felt uncomfortable with it. He couldn't determine how much of that emotion was childish and how much was simply a thank-you for their understanding. Once, the emotion would only have served to embarrass him. Now, perhaps because of the very nature of this celebration, all he felt was the absence of his parents at his side.

Dean shifted, fingering his collar. Not only did the thought that Jay said he looked good in a suit made him feel hot, but the recollection of his and Jay's surprised gasps when they walked into their assigned room to find that the bedroom contained a four-poster bed did, too. There hadn't been much time to take the vision in, let alone comment on said item, as they needed to get ready for the service at the church, but the glances that Jay gave him now and then said eloquently enough that his lover was thinking about that bed.

Through most of this, Jay stood at his side. A few introductions took place while Jay was talking to someone else, of course. Mostly, though, they greeted people together. They were doing their best to put up a united front. A few mutual acquaintances eyed him warily as though they had never known him at all. He found meeting total strangers easier. They held no preconceived ideas about him. He'd been aware today would be difficult. Determined to meet this occasion with resolve, he just hadn't appreciated how difficult. Still, mostly the other guests reacted friendly enough. What didn't help was April Reid's glaring gaze from across the room. He had tried smiling at Jay's sister, but the friendly gesture made no difference, so he'd chosen to ignore her. Even so, from the corner of his eye, he could make her out, as if she were a hovering apparition hanging around solely to haunt him. When he resolutely turned his back on her, he could feel her gaze burning into the base of his skull. After a while, he fashioned some pretence to glance her way, just to make certain she remained on the other side of the room. Without evidence, he couldn't shake the suspicion that he would turn around and find her right behind him, her unyielding stare boring into his eyes as a rattling sound issued from her throat like some vengeful demon from an oriental legend.

"This is Silvia."

He'd failed to catch the woman's full name or what relationship she was to the family. Still, Dean turned to greet the next guest as someone said her name, and blinked in surprise. For one moment, he thought he'd conjured said demon. The woman was clearly of mixed parentage. She was tall with dark hair and had wide, oval-shaped eyes. This Silvia wore a Chinese dress with high slits at each side. Shoes with thin, black high heels covered her dainty feet; the shoe's design possessed tiny straps to encircle her ankles. Very feminine with just a hint of bondage; he couldn't help where his mind wandered. Yes, he looked down the entire length of her body, taking in the minutest detail, but quickly brought his gaze back to her face. They shook hands before she moved on. He tilted his head as she passed and took in



the glorious globe of her backside, high and pert, just as her breasts were, and in that tight black silk, her backside reminded him of the silk boxers Jay sometimes wore.

His gaze wandered up her back to her shoulder, and then over the curve of her shoulder and up into the wide, open gaze of April's eyes. He physically jerked. He couldn't help it, and April glared at him even more, if that were possible. The way her eyes strained in their sockets looked painful.

Turning back to Jay's parents, he excused himself first to them, and then even more briefly to Jay. Jay's concerned gaze ate into him.

"You okay?" Jay whispered. His hand touched Dean's arm lightly enough, but his expression and attitude both told Dean that Jay wanted to cling to him.

"Just a headache," he explained, speaking quietly, moving to kiss Jay on the forehead, and then remembering that they were in a hall full of people. He still wanted to bestow that parting gift of affection, but he couldn't carry it through. "Stay with your parents," he told Jay. "I'll be back in a little while." He turned in a hurry to leave the room, aware he broke free of Jay's grasp somewhat more abruptly than he intended to. He needed a headache tablet. Dark waves were beginning to wash in at the back of his pupils.

## Chapter Three

“You’re a total dick.”

Dean sighed. He’d managed to coax a couple of tablets out of one of the reception staff, and she’d even given him a glass of water to wash them down. Something about new regulations said that staff weren’t meant to hand out drugs, not even something so simple as a headache tablet, but he’d grinned in all the right ways so that she’d also suggested a quiet spot where he could sit while they took effect. He should have known April would track him down even here, in a secluded corner. The area was not quite a room, and not quite a conservatory. There was too much glass for it to be an average room, and the area too heavily filled and decorated for anyone to call the space merely a room for enjoying the garden. He didn’t care who had designed the area or why. He just wanted to spend some time alone. He simply wasn’t in the mood for one of April’s tantrums.

“April, please...”

“Don’t ‘please’ me. You don’t please me at all.”

The overly fussy pattern of chintz danced before his eyes, taking on an almost physical representation of his headache. He could argue with April, deny things, but why should he keep apologising for...for his existence almost. That was how April made him feel lately, as

though he didn't have a right to exist. He turned his head, put the empty glass down on a small side table, and then looked back at her. "So, I looked. Sue me."

She covered her astonishment quickly enough, but the way her eyes briefly widened told him he had taken her by surprise. No. He hadn't bothered to deny that he'd looked at Silvia's shapely form. He hadn't made an effort to *pretend* otherwise. He could tell her where the thought had led him, and that all roads led to Jay, but she wouldn't believe anything he said, and he didn't see why he should take the trouble. Why should he tell her that he had appreciated the woman's beauty, but thought of Jay in the same way? Before she could launch into a list of expletives or insults, he went on.

"What do you want from me, April? You want me to say I'll never look at a woman? I just looked. That was all."

"You shouldn't need to look. No one should look at someone else once they're in a relationship."

If she believed that, maybe that explained a lot about what was going wrong in her life.

"Oh, come on! It doesn't matter whether you look. It matters what you do about it. Don't tell me you expect to meet someone and never look at another movie star again."

"You shouldn't need to look," she repeated. "Not if you really love my brother. You especially shouldn't look at a woman. Not if you're *gay*." She stressed that last word.

"I don't know that I'm gay," Dean remarked. It occurred to him that maybe he shouldn't have said so, but then he didn't see why he should have to lie. "You were the one who said maybe I just loved your brother."

She had suggested that, one snowy night while Jay was lost in a storm. The fear that something could have happened to Jay was one of the things that finally forced Dean to accept he couldn't just walk away.

“So, what are you saying? Are you saying you’re bisexual?” Either April didn’t know how she sounded, or she wasn’t even trying to keep the incredulity out of her voice. She certainly did nothing to disguise her sneer.

“I don’t know.” Dean sat down, running his hands over his face, and then clasping them in front of him, elbows on knees. He needed to sit; he felt suddenly unsteady on his feet. Unsteady and sick, come to that, and not just because of April’s behaviour. He wasn’t happy with her and didn’t see why he should put up with this, but that wasn’t the only thing troubling him. He wasn’t altogether pleased with himself either, and he couldn’t decide which made him feel worse. “So what if I am?”

The tension gathered in April; he could visibly see it happening. The storm brewed.

“My brother isn’t into sharing.”

“I’ve never asked him to.” Oddly, he felt remarkably calm. His head had also cleared a great deal.

“I suppose you’re going to tell me that what he doesn’t know won’t hurt him.”

“Is there some reason I should know what that means?”

“You know what it means.”

Well, it implied that he would screw around behind Jay’s back, but the heated way she said it spoke of experience, as if she thought her suspicions were justified without proof.

“I may be a dick,” he mumbled, “but I don’t dick around.”

April snorted in overly exaggerated derision. Dean began to get the sneaking suspicion that she wasn’t just talking about her brother, but more regarding herself as well as life in general. He was well aware what some people, and April in particular, thought of him. He was well aware of what even those who liked him sometimes thought of him. Some of what they believed, he deserved, and lately, he’d be the first to say so. He wasn’t perfect and he didn’t pretend to be. He was human. He made mistakes. He was selfish at times when he didn’t mean to be, hurt people that he didn’t intend to hurt. He’d tried to make up for some

of those mistakes, and the number of women no doubt having a good laugh at his expense was recompense for some of that. Just like Lillian, they were probably rubbing their hands together with glee, saying the fact that Dean was now with a guy was a good explanation as to the way he'd treated women. The truth was he'd never promised any woman anything other than good sex. He'd never lied and mentioned the 'L' word, let alone hinted at a future together. Many of his girlfriends were happy with that and, in time, he'd come to learn to express where he stood in no uncertain terms. Some women walked away. Some were delighted he wasn't going to pressure them for anything long term and were as thrilled with a relationship based on good sex as he was. A sexual revolution had occurred where women could choose as much as any man, but apparently that transformation passed April by.

He could only admit that even when women heard the truth from his lips at the very start of a relationship, some agreed in principal but nonetheless started hinting at rings just a few weeks down the line. Even if Dean had been in the market for a wife and family, he'd always felt certain it would be with a woman he loved and, quite simply, he'd loved one or two of his girlfriends but never enough that he'd felt he wanted to spend a lifetime with them. Never loved them enough that he felt he couldn't let go. He'd felt that with only one person. Jay.

"I need Jay in my life." That statement was inadequate but true.

"For how long? How long before you get another itch you need to scratch?"

"Jay was never just an itch. I made the mistake of believing he was, that's all. I need Jay in my life, and I'll pay any price for that."

"It shouldn't be a price that needs paying."

He opened his mouth to argue, and then closed it again. Gathering his thoughts, he nodded. "You're right. I agree. I used a poor choice of words. I'm not paying a price. I've got everything I want."

April shook her head. "You're a womaniser. You'll never stay away from women for the rest of your life."

"Why not?" He marvelled at his level tone. "I may have had more than my share of women, but I never fucked around behind someone's back. I won't ever do that with Jay."

"Good intentions," April said, making the words sound filthy. "They come home to us all. Even if you don't cheat on him, you'll leave him one day."

Dean rose up from the seat so fast that April actually took a step back. Only then did he realise his hands were clenched into fists. He couldn't help it. He needed that hard, tight grip, but not because he meant her harm. The idea that he scared her so easily ate at him, though. He was so big, people often assumed that he hit, that he used his fists too frequently. He didn't like that people believed that of him -- he especially hated the idea that April Reid flinched away as though she thought he hit women -- and he didn't like that he could say little in his defence. He hated that April always made him feel this defensive. He wanted to promise he'd never leave Jay, but no one could truly do that. He might not *want* to leave. He might die. His leaving might not have anything to do with what anyone *wanted*. He wasn't about to say anything that felt as if he were tempting fate. Instead, he chose to say nothing about it at all. He shook his head.

"I'm not doing this with you."

"Doing what?" Her posture might convey alarm, but her tone still held such bitterness that it hurt to hear her voice. It crossed Dean's mind that April truly would have to get over the idea of his and Jay's relationship, before she grew too bitter to get over the fact that they were together at all. Vitriolic was the only way he could describe her behaviour of late. In part, he understood it -- he found the fierce way she stuck up for her brother inspiring -- but he didn't want her emotions to eat into her this way, and not only because he felt responsible.

"I'm not going to keep debating my feelings or our relationship, not with you, not like this. It does none of us any good."

"It makes me feel better."

He frowned in question.

"It makes me feel better just pissing you off!"

He couldn't help it. He laughed, softly, gently, but at once he anticipated a heated, angry outburst as her response. At first, it looked as if that was exactly the reaction that was coming, and then her face shifted, as if a smile pulled her expression askew. Emotions waged war across her face and finally settled for what appeared to be resolve with just a hint of tiredness.

"I heard you," she said in a quiet voice.

"Heard...?"

"Last night." The slight blush that rose to her cheeks provided the explanation. Realisation washed in.

"You were the creaking floorboard."

She looked understandably awkward but surprisingly young standing there.

"Do you usually hang around outside people's bedroom doors?" Surely, he had the right to feel outraged.

"No. I heard what sounded like a raised voice. I was going to knock and then I heard...you. I heard *you*. I heard you making my brother beg." Her fingers moved back and forth, her nails scratching, clawing almost, at her other arm. She looked up at him, her chin lowered, so that she gazed out from under her brow. The angle made the short, layered cut spiked with gel resemble a helmet of horns, though he wasn't about to tell her that she bore any resemblance to a demonic form.

"Sometimes...sometimes I just wish I could accept that you're together. I truly meant to try this weekend. I did. You may not believe me, but I want Jay to be happy. If I didn't

care about his happiness, I wouldn't find this so difficult to accept. So, I was going to try. I truly was, but then I heard... Dean, the way you treat him..."

Her voice held more than a hint of despair. She shook her head. She looked stressed out and sickened. Dean found it difficult to swallow around the lump in his throat and tasted a hint of acid as he did. The woman was going to give him an ulcer if she carried on like this. He opened his mouth to say "it's not like that," but the expression on her face never gave him a chance.

"You're a lummoX. I used to think so much of you that I thought it would be a tragedy if we lost your friendship. Now, you just make me feel sick. You're not a nice guy at all. You're such a...*man*," she said, as though that were a bad thing. That one remark coupled with the expression on her face made Dean wonder about her relationships. Had someone hurt April that much? Did Jay know?

"You're a guy's guy. Good-looking, macho, full of shit. I used to think you meant well, but not after what I heard. I..."

"It's just sex, April."

Again, she shook her head and, though contained, the gesture held a hint of violence to it. "What you're doing with my brother isn't just sex. He deserves a relationship with more than just sex."

"I didn't mean that."

"I don't care what you meant. You're taking advantage, using how he feels against him. That's not what love or sex should be." Tears welled up in her eyes. "I can't stand to look at you..." That last she said on a wail. April's hand went up to her mouth, and she turned, hurrying from the room in tears.

\* \* \* \* \*



Jay, standing in the shadows just outside the room, stared after his sister as she rushed off down the corridor. She was in such a hurry she'd rushed right by without noticing him. He moved back against the wall, farther into the dark recess. She'd shaken him, and he needed a moment alone. He couldn't believe she had said those things to Dean. She didn't know him at all, and he couldn't bear to think how awful Dean must be feeling. He needed to go to him, but right now, he couldn't move. He could hardly credit that his hands shook. Bad enough to discover that his sister had listened at the door while he begged Dean to fuck him, but that she thought Dean was sick because of it...

She had it all wrong. Jay loved Dean holding him down. He knew the threat wasn't real; it was a game. He knew Dean wouldn't hurt him. He need only to say enough or that he wanted a cuddle, and the game would end. Take last night. They'd made love twice. After that first zinging, nerve-twitching fuck took the edge off, he'd gone back to holding the headboard when Dean instructed him to do so, only his will keeping his hands where Dean told him to put them. When Jay didn't think he could stand not to touch that smooth expanse of skin any longer, he'd asked to let go. Dean had said no, increasing his longing, increasing his *need*, until Jay truly believed he would go out of his mind. The battle was his own will, not handcuffs, although some nights he wondered what that would be like, too, and Dean always seemed to know just how far to push. Just when Jay decided he truly would die if he didn't lower his hands and touch his lover, Dean said he could do so. The relief, the joy, the sheer release of all that pent-up emotion, and the warmth of Dean's strong, knowing arms having scooped him up came back to him. Picked up, held, skewered in his arse and heart both, by Dean's cock, Dean's writhing tongue, Dean's clawing fingers digging through his hair into his skull. This had brought him to climax again, his cock jerking in spasms against the large man's soft belly.

The struggle was just what he'd wanted, *needed*. April had just made their lovemaking into something sordid when it wasn't. The sex between them was private, between two people in love, two people who wanted to crawl under each other's skin. Jay wanted to

comfort Dean, but right now he struggled with tears of his own. By the time he managed to pull himself together and step into the room, Dean was gone. A gentle breeze drew his attention to the door leading to the outside. In his haste, Dean must have neglected to close it.

## Chapter Four

They would have to talk later. Every time Jay tried to attract Dean's attention, someone else made a toast or his father wanted yet another family photo taken. Dean was roped into many of the photographs, but they couldn't talk while grinning for the camera.

"No more pics, Dad," Jay protested. His face was starting to ache. "Have you seen Dean?"

"I think he went inside. Too much booze," his dad joked, obviously suggesting Dean went in search of a toilet.

"More likely he needed another headache pill," Jay muttered under his breath, and then shook his head when his father looked at him in question.

"Jay. There's someone I want you to meet."

The sound of his sister's voice caused Jay to grit his teeth, but his mother was right on her heels so he couldn't say anything. Just as well. Right now, he didn't think he could manage a righteous argument. More likely, he'd end up screaming a string of abuse at her, and all that would do would be to confirm her suspicions about his lover and what a bad influence Dean was in his life. Her behaviour came across as especially odd when she'd gone out of her way to get them together in the first place, but April had never intended that they

fuck, let alone end up in a long-term relationship. Maybe the circumstances should teach her not to meddle.

“Oh, yes, do introduce him to François,” his mother chimed in. “He’s such a nice man, and you’re bound to have lots to talk about. He’s gay too.”

Jay blinked. To begin with, just because someone else was gay didn’t mean they’d immediately strike up a conversation. The man could be a dickhead of the worse sort. Sexuality had nothing to do with personality. Secondly, if he thought for one minute that his parents didn’t like Dean and weren’t so happy for them, he would have sworn they were matchmaking. Maybe April had said something to alter their view of Dean, but he couldn’t see that being true. Currently, April was the unwed, “aging” female of the family. She and their mother weren’t seeing eye-to-eye, and April would know anything she said would likely fuel that animosity. As far as his mother was concerned, Dean could do no wrong. April’s growing anger was just making him paranoid. His mother was already talking to someone else and seemed oblivious, although April stared at him with some sort of smug expression on her face. An aunt of theirs had taken over where their mother left off, extolling François’s virtues.

“Such a nice young man, for a Frenchman,” their aunt finished. Jay had missed most of what she said whilst using most of his energy to glare at April. If they weren’t pretending to be happy with each other for the sake of their parents, he suspected they’d be pulling each other’s hair by now.

“I heard what you said to Dean,” Jay hissed at her, struggling to keep his voice quiet. He didn’t have time to say anything else but he could see she got the message by the narrowing of her eyes. Alas, she didn’t look very repentant. He was required to turn in that moment, to shake the hand of a dark-haired young man in a well-tailored suit, whose hazel eyes sparkled at him and drank him down. He gasped. He couldn’t help it. Unlucky for him, behind François, Dean’s last few steps brought him in line with the newcomer’s shoulder. Dean’s gaze met Jay’s and Dean had heard the gasp.

*Fucking foreigner. Fucking dandy, more like.* Dean watched Jay laugh at yet another of the young man's jokes and had to ease up on his grip for fear of crushing the glass in his hand. He'd escaped back to the garden room. From here, he could hide behind the curtains and watch. Jay's face was all smiles, his eyes all alight with attention. Dean could also hear, having opened a couple of the windows. Above the murmuring backdrop of voices, laughter, and chink of glasses, he focused his attention on what the stranger was saying. Alas, he only caught the occasional sentence, so he couldn't truly form an opinion as to whether the man was amusing or not. Not that he cared.

The stranger leaned in, encroaching into Jay's personal space, and the worst thing about it was that Jay was *letting him do it!*

"Ahh, gay Paris..." The dark-haired stranger pronounced it "Pa-ree" while waving a hand, clearly taking the piss out of something, but Dean caught only half the joke. Maybe the story was funny, maybe it wasn't, but Jay laughed again. When he wasn't laughing, he was smiling. Smiling! A big, broad grin suffusing his face like Dean hadn't seen, since...since...last night just after they'd made love and curled up preparing to sleep. Dean closed his eyes just for a moment in recollection. That was when Jay got that big Cheshire cat, cheesy grin, and now he bestowed it on a Frenchman!

As for April...she'd skedaddled as soon as she was certain Jay and this man were engaged in full conversation. Dean needed to lean to one side to catch a glimpse of her, so he was fairly certain she couldn't spot him in his hiding place, but there she was, a smug expression on her face, watching this latest development. The uncanny suspicion that this was what he had to look forward to came over him: April interfering at every opportunity. If not this guy, it would be another. If he wasn't unfaithful, did she truly believe putting temptation into Jay's path would alter her brother's feelings for him?

The trouble was, although Dean felt certain that Jay wanted him and no other, he couldn't help feeling belligerent. He couldn't understand why he felt that way, which made it ten times worse.

\* \* \* \* \*

François was only half French, one side of his family English, and he was a boon to both cultures. He was successful professionally and financially, naturally handsome, charming, and without pretence. His wit extended to self-deprecation, and the supposed universal dislike of the French, which half an hour in this man's company did the utmost to dispel with the wicked, almost-evil humour that the English adored. Jay couldn't help laughing at his jokes. The other thing that he couldn't help laughing at was Dean's face. If the man thought he was hiding, he was doing a poor job of it. For the last few minutes, Jay's attention split between François's very funny anecdotes, and Dean jumping up and down as if he were a jack-in-the-box. He peered round the curtain now, and then flinched back as Jay glanced that way. Dean's face underwent another change, deepening to a dark glower before bobbing out of sight. Jay laughed at another joke harder than he intended.

Dean must be smarting from the things April had said, and Jay wanted to go to him, but some little part of him surely contained just a smidge of the evil streak April carried within her, because he was enjoying the sight of Dean's discomfort far too much. He was talking to another man, and Dean clearly didn't like it. Yayyyyyyyyyy!

The grin stole across his face before he could help it, and, just a second later, he happened to turn his head and catch Dean's gaze. The man flinched, caught, but then covered his tracks by making a joke of it. Dean pulled several disparaging faces at François behind his back that a gurner would envy, and Jay almost choked. He hid it by lifting his drink to his lips and looking away. When he looked back, Dean had disappeared.

"My card."

“What?” He’d already taken a step, and François’s comment confused him as well as made him pause. To his further astonishment, the guy looked a little embarrassed.

“I’m...not very good at this, despite the reputation of the French as lovers. Your sister went out of her way to introduce us, so I thought...”

So, his sister was matchmaking again. Maybe she’d never learn. Dean apparently wasn’t the only one putting up with other people and their interference. Jay swore that April had just interfered with his life for the *last* time.

“I only came over to be polite, but now that we’ve talked...” François made an almost dismissive gesture, and for the first time, Jay noticed the business card in his hand. He didn’t have to look to know that this particular card would carry the man’s personal phone number and contact details.

“I’m sorry,” he began, hating the words even as they slipped out. He didn’t know how to let this guy down. Part of him didn’t want to. He liked the man, but it wasn’t an option.

François was nodding, and quietly and casually slipped the card into a pocket. The card disappeared so fast it was like watching a magician’s trick. He almost expected the man to ask if he’d chosen the jack of spades or the queen of hearts. *Hearts every time; it had to be.*

“Please,” François said in a soft tone. “Just don’t tell me you are flattered.”

Jay looked up into the other man’s very pretty eyes. “Flattered doesn’t even come close,” he told him, “but I’m taken.”

A small frown touched François’s brow. “Why then...?” He clearly questioned April’s behaviour.

“My sister disapproves of my choice.”

“Ah. Is he a bad choice?”

Was that just a touch of hope that Jay could hear there? “No. She’s the only one that thinks so.”

François smiled at him and Jay wished he wouldn't. He wanted it to be easier than this to walk away, even though he never doubted for a moment that he was going to do so.

"I, too, have family." The man's tone implied *who doesn't*. "If he deserves you, I wish you much happiness. Even if he doesn't, may you be happy."

The sentiment would be lovely if Jay didn't know that Dean felt so conflicted. He nodded and smiled as a way of farewell. The moment had arrived to go after his guy.

\* \* \* \* \*

It took Jay a short while to track Dean down to their room. Jay had just enough time to admire the thick, twisting posts at each corner of the bed, and the heavy brocade drapes that hung from the intersecting rails, before the smash of breaking glass claimed his attention and turned his head. Jay stared at the glittering remains of a crystal vase, thinking they were lucky it contained no flowers and therefore no water. Dean hadn't ruined the carpet but the vase surely cost a pretty penny. He stood there in the doorway for a moment, one hand on the door handle. Dean, running a hand through his hair, stopped pacing as he caught sight of Jay through the triangle formed by his raised arm. He looked instantly guilty. Jay finished closing the door and stepped into the room.

"If you blush, I'll think I've got the wrong guy in my room. Don't expect me to put that on my parents' tab."

"No. No, of course not. I'll pay for it."

Sometimes that was as much of an apology as you got with Dean, but experience had taught Jay how to hear things Dean couldn't bring himself to say. Right now, the man was giving him little glances as he fidgeted about the room. The room was very pretty, a little old-fashioned, a little too floral. Dean looked transported out of time as well as his own personal comfort zone.

"I thought you were busy talking to Chez Pierre," Dean added.



Several ways to approach this crossed Jay's mind, but in the end, the evil taint won.

"François," Jay clarified. "So, what do you think of him?" As if he didn't already know.

Dean gave a non-committal shrug. "He's okay, I guess. If you don't mind snail breath."

"Dean!" Jay laughed, though he expressed both merriment and shock. He sobered quickly. "You're jealous."

"What? No. No, of course not!" Dean sounded entirely too put out for the denial to take much effect.

"Yes, you are. I was talking to a gorgeous guy, and you're jealous."

A frown quickly appeared on the other man's brow. "You think he's gorgeous?"

"Very," Jay said, "and I don't care. I already have a gorgeous man. I have you."

He'd wanted that comment to have more effect than it did. Dean turned, paced, and turned back, before stopping once more. Jay couldn't put it off any longer. "I heard what April said to you." Dean's head jerked up in apparent surprise, but he still refused to look at him. "I was outside the room. I wanted to come in to you, but I was too upset. By the time I recovered enough, you'd gone out into the garden. She's wrong."

"It doesn't matter."

Jay eyed the broken glass in the corner of the room. "You smash vases for the hell of it? Don't tell me François upset you that much."

"To hell with François. I don't fear you going off with him. He's not your sort." Dean glanced across the room. "He's too...small." His tone implied more than stature. As always, Dean's odd humour brought a smile to Jay's face.

"Even though he wanted to give me his number?" He didn't know why he let that comment slip out, and he regretted saying so the moment it did. He wanted to boast just a little bit. The idea that another lovely man liked him gave him a warm, fuzzy feeling. You just couldn't help things like that. What he'd meant, though, was that someone else liked him but, hey, here I am staying with you. The expression on Dean's face chased back any

pleasure he'd hereto felt. "I didn't take it." He couldn't tell if Dean believed him or not. "And François didn't mean anything by it. April led him on, something I'm going to tell her not to do in future. I know I've said it before. I mean it this time. This time I'll make certain she gets the message.

"And you're not a lummoX," he continued, referring to the insults April had aimed at Dean. "You *are* a good guy. And you love me."

"It's not enough, though, is it?"

For the first time since he entered the room, the creeping, crawling sensation of fear truly inched through Jay's body.

## Chapter Five

“What do you mean?” Jay asked. His voice sounded hushed, subdued.

“I’m tired,” Dean said. It hardly surprised him to hear that he sounded it, too. “I didn’t expect to get this tired so quickly.”

“Tired...of me?”

The subtle tones in that question caught Dean’s attention. He looked across the room. Jay stared at the floor, standing straight, hands clutched into fists at his sides. Dean recognised that pose. He often used it himself. That tone though, the almost plea, the dread of hearing something he didn’t want to hear, the brave way Jay so evidently struggled and prepared for the worst... “No,” Dean said gently. “Not of you. Of what people think of me. Of what they expect me to do. They all expect me to hurt you.” He swallowed, fighting an odd twinge that threatened tears. That feeling was too like the onset of grief when you first heard someone was very ill, and you didn’t know if you were going to lose them or not.

“We shouldn’t be about what others expect.”

“No. I know. It’s just...” He didn’t know how to put what he meant into words, and for someone who wrote whenever he could find the time, that felt like the greatest insult of all. His thoughts kept returning to the kiss. Not the stupid incident several years ago where he’d

kissed Jay by accident, mistaking him for April, or any of the kisses in between -- not even the one where he'd first realised he was stuck in a relationship *that he didn't want to be in*.

No, that wasn't true either. Not exactly, and it was beside the point. What haunted him now was the kiss he hadn't bestowed on Jay's brow earlier today. He'd hesitated and then been unable to go through with it because there were so many people in the room, but if Jay had been a girl, he would have done more than kiss her forehead. He couldn't understand and hated the emotions ripping through him right now, but he didn't seem able to stop *feeling* so much.

"Am I that unlovable?" He wasn't even sure the question made sense but he hadn't realised he was going to ask it aloud until he heard his voice.

"You can't be," Jay told him. "I love you."

"Everyone else hates me."

"No, they don't." Jay stepped farther into the room, but something in Dean's posture must have changed his mind for he went still. About three long paces separated them, but the short distance might as well have been a mile.

"Okay. Then April hates me."

"She'll get over it."

"And if she doesn't?"

"I don't care what April thinks." Jay's voice came out more forcefully this time. Dean lifted his gaze to Jay's face.

"Not even about our lovemaking?"

Jay opened his mouth as if to answer, but then closed it again, as though he didn't know what to say after all.

"If I've ever done anything..." Dean started the sentence but didn't know how to finish it.

"No," Jay broke in. "No. Never. I love us in bed. I love you."

That was far from the first time Jay had mentioned love today. Filing the love word away yet again, Dean continued. "She caught me looking at a girl."

"So?"

"It doesn't bother you?"

"No. Yes. I don't know. No. Not if you meant what you said to her about it, about only looking. I just spent half an hour thinking how good-looking François is."

"You're attracted to him."

Jay hesitated and then said, "Yes. That doesn't mean I want to go to bed with him."

"Don't you?"

"Well..." Jay hesitated. "If I were alone, unattached, maybe. Even then, I don't know if that would have meant anything more than a one-night stand. Maybe I'm old-fashioned but I've never been very good at them. I've never liked sex all that much without more than a little affection. It doesn't matter, anyway. I walked away. I'm with you. Isn't that what you were trying to tell April?"

"Partly." Dean crossed his arms over his chest; aware that the stance was very defensive, still he couldn't move. "I still look at women. I even long for them, sometimes." He swallowed. "I'm not saying this to hurt you, but you should know. I like women. I do. I like the way they feel, their soft folds. Their taste. I love breasts."

"I could buy a padded bra."

Dean couldn't hold it back. He sniggered. He turned a gentle smile in Jay's direction. "Now you're playing me at my game. Making a joke when things get too serious."

"Funny how I know you do that."

Hearing Jay say so took Dean by surprise, but he nodded in agreement. "You're right. You're the only one who seems to notice."

"Everyone else takes it as arrogance."

“So do I, sometimes.”

“What makes you think you’re arrogant?”

He couldn’t resist. “Aren’t I?”

“Yes and no.”

“An ambiguous answer. They’re always the best.”

“I mean it, though.”

“I’m not gay,” Dean suddenly blurted out, almost laughing when he recollected how many times he had said those words both aloud and in his head when he was trying to talk himself out of a relationship with Jay. “I mean, I guess I am, but it’s not as straightforward as that.”

“I know.”

“I’m not even comfortable saying I’m bisexual. I’ve never knowingly wanted a man before you. I’ve certainly never looked at another man the way I look at you.”

Jay didn’t reply to that. He just got this odd little smile on his face and gazed down.

“April wants me to put a neat little label on what I feel for you, but I can’t. I only know what I feel.” Dean paused, not wanting to say the rest but knowing he needed to and that Jay deserved honesty. It was way past time he said some things aloud. “She’s right in some ways.” He swallowed, terribly afraid of what he was going to say. “I didn’t want this relationship, not even that day when I told my father. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that I didn’t want to want it. I don’t want to love you. My life would be so much easier if I didn’t love you...but I do. These last two weeks have felt like the longest of my life. I can’t stand being away from you. I hate standing here and not crossing the room to you.” He made a “stay there” gesture with his hand as Jay went to move. “You’re right. I was jealous watching you with François. I was jealous, and I was scared. Only insecure people get jealous.”

He laughed, but the sound contained little in the way of humour. “As for scared, I’m afraid that April’s right, and we won’t last, but not because I will leave you. Not because of

the strain I feel when I realise others expect me to fail. I'm scared because I don't deserve you, and one day you'll realise it. I think April believes love should be easy, but I don't. Not now, not if I ever did. This isn't easy. The loving you part is easy enough, but not the stuff that comes with it. Having everyone doubt that I love you is harder still. Everyone doubting that I love you hurts most of all."

He looked up. Jay stared back at him, frozen in a stance that conveyed shock. His eyes shimmered, and a tear rose up to spill over and run down his cheek. The vision was so reminiscent of an earlier time in their relationship that Dean lost track of what day, what week, what year it was. Then he remembered Jay's parents' anniversary bash, but he couldn't focus on it, on how far they had come. He knew from things Jay confided in him that he'd caused the other man to cry for the wrong reasons not so long ago. Thinking of that clasped his heart in a grip so fierce he feared it might stop beating. The curving of Jay's lips confused him. That expression was definitely a smile.

"You said you love me."

Dean frowned. "So did you, several times." Jay blinked and Dean couldn't help the soft smile that lifted his lips. "Thought I hadn't noticed?"

"Yeah, but I've said it before."

Dean frowned again, thinking. He had no idea what Jay meant, and then just as he was about to ask the other man to explain, the horrid realisation rushed in. They'd been together for almost a year -- more than that if you counted the time when no one knew about them -- and not once in that time had Dean said he loved Jay. That was worse than chickening out over that kiss on the forehead. "Oh, hell! Jay, I never meant to make you feel I didn't love you. I never even noticed I hadn't said..."

Jay was shaking his head, crossing the room. Dean moved without thinking. They met halfway; both went to their knees. Suddenly, the world closed down to nothing more than lips and tongues, grasping hands, and soft moans. Dean broke away, taking Jay's face in his

hands, stroking over the smaller man's cheekbones with his large fingers. His fingers ran up under Jay's hairline into all that luxurious hair.

Jay grinned. "Sometimes I think maybe you just love me for my hair."

Although, he was quite certain Jay meant the comment as a joke, still Dean couldn't help asking. "You want to cut your hair?"

A slight frown touched Jay's face; he shook his head.

*Good.* Dean thought it, but he didn't say it. The truth was that Jay's long hair was part of his attraction to the man, but he hardly expected...

"What if I go grey? What about when I'm seventy? Expect me to have long hair then?"

Oddly, Jay practically spoke aloud where Dean's thoughts were taking him just a moment ago. He couldn't expect Jay always to look this way, but he didn't care. "You'll cut your hair when the time is right for you, and I'll still be here."

Jay's gaze searched his, and he returned the stare. Dean was fully aware of what he'd just said. He'd hinted to Jay at similar things before, although he'd not understood his motivation then. The difference this time was that he wasn't going to run away from it. He looked into Jay's beautiful brown eyes and knew that like it or not, rant or rile against it, he'd found the person with whom he belonged. He groaned in frustration. "I wish we had time to make love. You know what the joke is, don't you?"

Jay nodded, but just in case he didn't understand, Dean went on to explain.

"They all think I've ensnared you. They think I'm using you and will cast you aside, when the truth is it's me. I'm the one ensnared. I can't get enough of you. I don't want to love you, and I don't want to be gay. There, I admit it, but I don't care. Nothing matters except that I love you, Angel." The pet name whispered out of his mouth and made him laugh. Then he sighed. "Is man an ape or an angel?"

Jay frowned. "I don't know that one."

"Benjamin Disraeli," Dean elaborated.



Jay grinned. “Not bad for someone who never had a penchant for quotes before he met me, but if you’re implying you’re the ape and I’m the angel, I have to disagree.”

“Do you? The quote ends by him saying he’s on the side of the angels, but I don’t see how that applies to me.” He sniggered, unable to help it. “Especially not with the thoughts I’m having right now.” Rather wishing he hadn’t said anything, he tried to turn it into a joke. The gleam in Jay’s eyes told him that he didn’t quite pull it off. Dean took hold of the hand that reached for his face, brought the fingers to his lips, and kissed them. As much as he loved Jay and accepted that he was where he wanted to be, Dean just couldn’t help feeling like an ape at times, especially around someone like Jay. Jay was too good for anybody and certainly better than Dean had ever believed he deserved.

“Later,” Jay whispered.

“Later.”

“Dinner first.”

Dean nodded. “Dinner first.” He was hungry but, somehow, Dean didn’t believe that dinner was going to satisfy him all that much.

## Chapter Six

The steak at dinner was succulent and tender, but Dean might as well have been eating a burger. He ate because he suspected he would need the energy. Jay's gaze caressed him, followed every movement he made. The intensity of Jay's stare almost made him blush.

He managed to follow what most people said to him, only lapsing into nodding pretence a few times. He tried to pay attention to the speeches, but while Jay watched and clapped appropriately for his parents, Dean watched Jay. He'd told him earlier that he didn't want to love him, that not loving him would make his life easier. That statement might be true, but the knowledge sure stung, and the sheer fact that it stung to such a degree told him all he needed to know.

He turned his head to look farther down the room to another table, setting his gaze on Silvia. The woman was striking. Any man, or woman, would look twice. Watching her might make him hard, but she wasn't making his heart race. No woman had ever made his heart race. Only one person did that.

Earlier, he'd said that one day Jay would cut his hair, and he'd still be there. He didn't take that decision lightly, but he also accepted the choice was almost unconscious on his

part. He hadn't chosen; he just felt it instinctively, almost as if the universe had chosen for him.

Sensing Jay's gaze burning into the side of his face, he turned his head to look at his lover sitting across the table from him. All the couples were seated in such a way so that they sat opposite their partner or a friend with whom they had come. Mostly, it was a boy then girl arrangement. He couldn't help wondering if he and Jay had made the director of this little event scratch his or her head when trying to work out the seating arrangements. Maybe they'd sat them this way so there could be no hanky panky under the table. If they stretched out their legs, maybe their toes would reach, but there was no way he could toy with Jay's cock. Not yet. There was no choice but to reserve that for later. He glanced at the large, ornate grandfather clock over in the corner of the opposite wall, making sure Jay saw him do so. When he looked back, Jay just smiled, gave him a slow blink, and looked away.

\* \* \* \* \*

"You don't like this shirt and these socks?" Jay taunted. Dean wanted to growl in frustration. Jay was teasing about how much of his attire Dean wanted him to remove.

"No. Take them off. Take everything off. I want to feel every inch of you."

Jay raised his eyebrows and wiggled them.

"Not like that! I don't mean your cock." Maybe the exasperation in his voice was what made Jay laugh. Maybe it was his tone or his expression. The truth was, Dean topped more often than not, but, at least to start with, Dean had something else in mind for tonight. He'd suffered an interminable dinner, waiting until they could slip away at the first reasonable opportunity. He didn't know if April had seen them leave. He didn't care if she had.

"I'm teasing. This position tells me all I need to know," Jay said.

That's where his lover was wrong. The way he scooped Jay up and laid him on the bed, no wonder the smaller man thought he was receiving. He was, but not in the way he imagined.

“Happy Birthday, Jay,” Dean whispered, going in for a kiss that involved lots of exploring.

When Jay could breathe again, he said, “It’s not my birthday.”

“That’s what you think,” Dean told him, nibbling at his lower lip, skimming his hands over all that smooth flesh, pinching in all the right places. Dean followed the path of his hands as he always did, with his lips and tongue. One thing certain to drive Jay crazy was if he attacked Jay’s nipples and then swirled his tongue into the dip of his navel. Only this time, Dean didn’t stop there. Gathering Jay’s hips, he angled the other man into just the position he wanted. Hesitating, he gave Jay’s navel a few more licks. Struggling against the sensation caused Jay to open his legs in the kind of wild abandon Dean wanted. Jay’s hands braced Dean’s shoulders but he couldn’t get away. If he truly couldn’t stand it, he’d have to say, because Dean wouldn’t let go of him. He simply had the strength to hold Jay, so if Jay didn’t tell him what was wrong, he might not even be aware of it. That was one reason Dean was determined he’d never gag Jay, if ever their games ever got out of hand. Not even if Jay asked him to do it. He simply wouldn’t risk it.

His teeth now pulled at the skin just beneath Jay’s navel, sucking the tight line of the man’s abdomen into his mouth. Jay clearly enjoyed this but Dean was merely procrastinating.

*Get on with it, coward!*

He wanted to do this. It wasn’t just to please the man he loved. Dean had thought about this for quite a while, and the time was right. He wanted this, but still he hesitated, for this was crossing a line from which there would be no going back.

Dean’s lips tickled downwards. He licked and kissed, pausing only when pubic curls rasped against his lips. Continuing, he stopped only when his lips reached the slight outward curve where Jay’s body blended into the line of his cock. Dean gave the tender flesh under his mouth a little suck. The man under him gasped. Fingers curled into Dean’s hair.

The response was such that Dean happily let his lips wander down until the flesh they sucked on turned into that strange satin hardness of a hot, rigid length. He put out his tongue and trailed it wetly up and down, feeling the hard flesh jump. Jay's clean taste and the slightly musky scent of the warmest part of Jay's body filled his senses.

Eyes flickering behind his lids, Jay tried to focus on what Dean was doing. It took effort, but he put more force into his grip on Dean's hair and managed to gasp some words out. "Dean, you don't have to do this." He had no idea how far Dean even intended to take the soft licks and sucks, but the other man should know it was fine if he wanted to stop. "You don't have to prove you love me."

It sounded as though Dean equally struggled to talk. "I want to," he said softly, but although Jay could hear a little tremor in the big man's voice, there was also the almost-drugged sound of lust. He should stop him. He tugged on Dean's hair.

"If you do this and regret it..."

He didn't finish the sentence. Dean looked up the line of his body, giving him a visual he wanted someone to paint so they could hang the picture on their mantelpiece. Dean's eyes looked glazed but somehow bright and determined as well. If the man had said he wanted this, wanted Jay, in that moment he would have believed him.

He watched Dean tilt his head, part his lips, and kept watching as the soft glans of his cock slid into the dark recess of his lover's mouth.

Dean just held the ripe-plum shape in his mouth, suddenly uncertain what to do with it. He did the only thing he could. He allowed himself to feel it, taste it, stroke it with his tongue, and tightened his grip on Jay's hips, mindful he might leave bruises but struggling to hold Jay in place as the man bucked under him. For a few seconds, Jay fucked his mouth and

Dean could do nothing to stop him. He felt so shocked he wasn't sure if he was happy or petrified.

He heard what sounded like a half-hearted, "Sorry," as Jay stilled his hips. He understood a man's instinct to thrust. With the initial shock wearing off, Jay easing up almost made Dean feel dissatisfied. Finally taking their relationship to this stage felt as though he was on some kind of wild ride, one that he wasn't sure if he wanted to continue or stop. He did desire to feel Jay slide down his throat though. Taking a grip and angling Jay's cock as he wanted, he took a deep breath, trying to relax and open his throat as much as he could. He realised that something outshone his emotional discomfort and uncertainty when disappointment won out over embarrassment as he gagged. His withdrawal was none too elegant.

"How do you do that?" he couldn't help asking. Jay always made a blowjob look so easy.

"It takes practice," Jay murmured, his voice wavering a bit. Dean was certain he could hear lust and uncertainty in the other man's voice. Dean swallowed, took note of the decidedly stretched sensation in his throat, and looked along Jay's body to his face.

"Then I guess we need practice," he said with an evil grin.

Jay made a strangled sound as if he might choke. Gasping, once more his fingers reached out. "Dean. I'm not going to last."

Somehow, that came as no surprise. "How would you like to do it?"

Jay's eyes widened. He looked so surprised and shocked, and then he blushed a little, glancing away. Dean tightened his grip. "No. Tell me."

"There is...one way I'd like, just once, but..."

"What is it?"

"Dean, you've not even done this before. It's too soon."

"I don't care. I get to do what I want too often. This time, it's your choice."

“You don’t have to.”

“I know that. Stop telling me that.” He couldn’t help the slight irritation edging into his voice but, quite honestly, he found this difficult enough without Jay adding to his doubts. This must be what a girl felt like when she wanted to lose her virginity but knew she was supposed to wait until she found the right guy. Some views might be outdated in this day and age, but it took years for their influence to disappear entirely. In many ways, it truly did feel as though he were about to lose his virginity all over again. “I want to do this. I mean to do this. I’m nervous, but I don’t care. Now tell me what it is you want.”

He could not be doing this. He could not be doing this! Dean could not be letting him do this! Amazingly, he was. Dean lay on his back under him. Jay settled his knees by Dean’s shoulders, angled his hips, and started thrusting. He clasped the headboard, but this time, he used it for leverage. Keeping the strokes as short and steady as he could manage, concern keeping at least part of his mind coherent, Jay almost lost it when he looked down to watch his cock plunging back and forth.

He’d warned Dean the position wasn’t easy -- for the recipient -- but Dean said if Jay wanted to do it like this, then he wanted it too. For someone as unused to this as Dean, Jay couldn’t push too far forward without choking him.

The bed shook. Jay’s limbs trembled. Dean grunted, huffed a little around his cock, fighting for a deeper breath, but those large hands held him, telling him not to let up, and Jay was too far gone to stop thrusting. He watched Dean’s face and even as the big man finally managed not to fight his movements, those blue eyes looked up at him. Jay opened his mouth to cry out a warning, but something in Dean’s gaze, and the grip of his hands, said the other man already knew. That look came from a man who wanted to taste him.

He was going to choke. Even as the idea crossed his mind, Dean wasn't sure he cared. He didn't know if he liked the taste or not. He couldn't think clearly enough to decide. What overwhelmed his senses more was the feel of Jay's tender flesh between his teeth, of the throbbing pulse and steady rhythmic contractions he could feel in that long length of flesh as Jay flooded his mouth and throat. Jay's voice whispered down to him, "Swallow me," and he obeyed, as much as he could, anyway. Finally, he coughed, unable to cope with all of Jay's length and the sheer deluge. He barely had enough time to wonder if Jay always produced this much, or if the other man was just so turned on he couldn't help himself. He closed his eyes, swallowing one more time, as Jay slipped from his mouth and moved down the length of his body.

His lover's mouth kissed his lips. A tongue flicked out and licked, cleaning his face, his chin, where he hadn't been able to cope with such a copious offering. He began to suspect his face must surely be clean, when Jay kissed him. He fought against the kiss for one moment and then opened his lips and let Jay lap at his teeth and tongue. He'd always thought the idea of this a little gross, though he'd watched, fascinated, when two men behaved so intimately, sharing fluids. He'd seen this in movies, and he could hardly forget some of the things he'd seen when living away from home to attend college. It occurred to him that he hadn't watched a porn movie of any sort for ages.

"Look at me," Jay whispered, easing back. Dean did what he asked. Those rich brown eyes gazed at him, adoring. Fingers stroked his face. Only then did Dean discern the concern in his friend's face and movements. "Tell me you're okay."

"Shell-shocked," Dean answered, honestly, "but okay." He stroked Jay's face in turn. "I wanted it." He didn't want Jay to think otherwise. "I...needed it." Oddly, that was true, too. If he was going to be in a gay relationship then he needed to give Jay every part of him. To do any less was unfair. This night was about him crossing a line, going further than he was truly comfortable with, and putting aside his doubts and fears.



“We don’t have to do it again. If you didn’t like it...” Jay’s gaze searched his face, and it crossed Dean’s mind how much Jay was saying in so little. Grasping Jay’s face, he leaned forward and kissed him again.

“Can you taste yourself on my lips?” Dean asked him, their lips still pressed together so that his words sounded muffled yet as intimate as what they’d just done. Jay nodded. “Want to taste me?” Dean shifted his hips to make sure Jay noticed his hard-on. Again, Jay nodded, and a soft moan slid from his mouth into Dean’s. “Then get down there and take care of me. When we’re done, just make sure you hurry on back here to kiss me again.”

He let go so that Jay could lean back enough to stare at him. Shock and disbelief waged war for a moment, and then delight rushed into Jay’s face.

“I’m not going to run, Angel,” Dean told him. “I’ll take you. I’ll take it all, if you’ll have me. Fuck what anyone else thinks. I’m yours, completely, if you want me.”

Carefully studying Dean’s expression, Jay searched for anything that signified that Dean was more than a little uncomfortable. He was no fool to think Dean felt completely at ease; they’d just taken their relationship to another level, one he hadn’t expected for a long time, if it happened at all. “Want?” Jay drew in a breath so deep it made him shudder. He would do as Dean suggested and then... “Promise me we’ll use these four posts before we leave in the morning. No matter how tired we are.”

A slow, lazy smile slid over Dean’s lips as he promised. “I never said I felt tired,” he said.

No. Jay didn’t feel tired either. Energised was more like it. Right now, he wanted to suck, and then he wanted half an hour’s kissing and cuddling. After that, he wanted Dean to use the corded tie-backs from the curtains -- he’d checked earlier, and they were long enough -- to tie him in any manner the big man wanted.

## Chapter Seven

Jay knocked on April's door. "Can I have a quick word?" he asked, not giving her time to refuse. As he entered, she opened her mouth almost as wide as the door, probably to complain, and then apparently conceded. She closed the door and then walked across the room to the bed. She sat down, tucking a cosmetics bag into her suitcase before closing the lid, concentrating on the zip fastening. Jay glanced around. The tastefully decorated room contained a double bed, but it wasn't a four-poster. The idea that his parents had chosen a romantic room for him and his lover brought a smile to his face. April studiously avoided his gaze.

He went up to her and hugged her from behind. She stiffened in his arms before relaxing a little bit. He stepped back, struggling not to yawn. He'd woken after only a couple of hours' sleep during a long and exhausting night. Dean had fallen asleep at four in the morning, but Jay didn't know how long he'd lain there in the big man's arms, just watching him. Dean would be fine though. The man could exist on as little as four hours of sleep if you let him. At least he could if sex was the reason for staying awake. Thankfully, they served breakfast until ten-thirty and checkout was at eleven.

“I know what you think of Dean,” he told her, keeping his voice low and calm, “but you’re wrong. I’m not going into long-winded explanations as to why. You’ll just try to argue with them, anyway. I even know why you believe the things you do, and why some other people believe them too. You’re wrong, and you’re just going to have to take my word on that.”

He moved a little to the side so he could see more of her face, but she still wouldn’t look at him. He experienced the sudden urge to tell her that she could be as stubborn as Dean, if not more so, but he wasn’t that brave.

“The truth is, some people don’t like Dean. They feel something towards him, something nice, but they also discover they have just this little bit of dislike. They find it confusing.”

A sound escaped her, almost a laugh, but more ugly than a laugh should ever sound.

“Fine. Sometimes, it’s a lot of dislike. I’m not asking you to like him. All you have to do is accept that he’s mine. That I love him. I’m not asking you to share our lives.”

She did look at him then, and opened her mouth. Jay rode over her unspoken protest with more words.

“I’m not asking you not to be part of our lives, either. That’s your choice, but make no mistake; if I have to choose between a sister who should support me and the man that I love, then I choose Dean.”

“So when he breaks your heart, I’m supposed to pick up the pieces but not say I told you so?”

Jay sighed. He hated that the sound slipped out, but it did. “I think that’s called being family,” he said quietly. “I think I’ve done it enough times for you, but I didn’t do it to expect the same in return. I never once said I told you so, and I know you’ve had more bad relationships than you care to admit or you’ve even told me about. I’m not going to pay for your mistakes, and, from now on, neither is Dean.”

“You speaking to me like this,” she said carefully, “it’s not like you.”

“No, but I didn’t have the confidence before that I do now.”

She looked up. “Dean?” She made his name the whole question.

Jay nodded. He’d tied his hair back in a ponytail for convenience while they packed, but Dean wouldn’t let him keep his hair that way for long. If he said that aloud, April would just think he was letting Dean dominate him again. What she didn’t get, *couldn’t* get, was that he looked forward to Dean driving home, to the moment when the man realised he still had his hair in a scrunchie, and he would reach out and pull the elasticised ring of fabric free with this adorable, irritated look on his face. Of course, that was Dean taking control. The funny thing was, Dean wouldn’t even realise that he did it. Only Jay knew that if he needed his hair tied back out of the way, then Dean wouldn’t say a word. In the car on the way home, there wouldn’t be a reason to have his hair up, so he’d let Dean have his way. Maybe their relationship was a little too subtle for some, but they both knew where the lines were drawn. They hadn’t planned it this way, yet that was how their relationship worked, and as the saying went, if it wasn’t broken then there was no need to fix it.

For now, his face was free of his hair, his eyes clear. He refused to blink. April lowered her gaze.

“I know you love me. I know you’re doing what you think is best, but you’re getting out of control.” When her gaze shot back up, Jay hurried on before she interrupted. “You’re getting worse than a parent interfering with their child’s life. You can love me, want to protect me, but you have to let me live my life, and right now, my life includes Dean.”

“What about when it doesn’t? What about when he walks?”

Jay took a moment, letting the question hang in the air. “If that time comes, then it comes. It’s a risk we take just by being in love. Even if we spend the rest of our lives together, one day, time will take me, or it will take Dean. As sad as that is, I wouldn’t miss a minute in between. April, I love him. You’re not going to knock that out of me. You need to start

looking at your own life. What I do with my life, including how I have sex, is not your concern.”

She flushed. “I...didn’t mean... It was an accident. I didn’t intend to listen.”

“I know, but you didn’t walk away, right off.”

Her colour deepened, confirming his accusation. “I was trying to understand how you could let him force you to say those things.”

Jay suppressed his sigh this time. “He wasn’t forcing me.” This time, despite her colour, her eyes blazed as she looked at him. He could see that she didn’t believe him. Jay was close to losing his patience, and he had promised himself that he wouldn’t get angry. He was very aware Dean waited for him though, and that they had never got around to using the strawberry lube. He wanted to get Dean home, get the man all squeaky clean, and then have what he hoped would be his very wicked way with him.

“I know you think he dominates me, and he does, a great deal of the time --” He wasn’t going to tell her his thoughts of strawberry lube and Dean lying back with everything exposed just because Jay asked him to do it. “-- but how can you say what you’re trying to do is any better?”

His question made her flinch. This time, her rosy cheeks appeared to contain a tinge of green, or maybe that was just his imagination. Maybe her expression made him think so.

“I wanted him,” Jay told her. “In the beginning, I wanted him so much I admit I would have agreed to almost anything. I had so much lust...”

“I don’t want to hear this,” April practically squealed, saying as much by the way she moved and hunched her body. Jay went on as if he failed to notice.

“...that it blinded me, but only for a short time. Then I made a decision. I thought Dean couldn’t be mine, not truly. I chose to have what time with him I could. I was all prepared to let him go.”

“That’s all very well!” April snapped. “That doesn’t explain the sex.”

Jay tilted his head, a smile tugging his lips.

“Take that bloody soppy smile off your face!”

Her order only made him laugh. “My face? You should see yours, sister darling. I luvvvvv the sex.”

If her colour got any deeper, he’d have to check her pulse. He leaned over, hands balanced on his knees so he could look into her face. “I love begging. I tell him to make me beg. I love screaming his name. I love him holding me down, knowing that he’ll do it only so much as I want, and maybe a bit more than I think I want, but never too much or too hard. I abso-fucking-lutely enjoy every moment and love. Every. Inch. Of. It.”

He’d been right about the green. Jay stood up, unable to resist teasing, just a little bit. “Do you think I never get to play turnabout?”

He could see he’d surprised her yet again, but she didn’t say anything. Maybe she couldn’t speak.

“I know why you were afraid for me. You thought Dean would swamp me with more than his size. I get that. For a while, maybe he did. Somewhere, somehow, something changed. I’ve found the balls to talk back to you. Do you think Dean gets to do what he likes unless I’m happy for him to do so? He wouldn’t even try that with me, not now. We work well together. He’s what I want. I’m what he wants. He’s just dominant enough. I’m just submissive enough.”

April cringed slightly at the mention of submissive, and her reaction made Jay frown. He leaned over again. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing.”

Her words said one thing, but the expression on her face suggested he’d struck a nerve. He hesitated, uncertain how to deal with this. He’d never truly considered there might be personal reasons for April’s animosity, but perhaps there were. He didn’t know how to broach the subject though, and right now, he didn’t have time. “If there’s something that

happened to you that I don't know about, I can't help you if you won't tell me. If you don't want to tell me, then tell someone else."

"It's not that."

He didn't believe her entirely, but he stood up again and took a step towards the end of the bed. This conversation was ending, at least for now.

"You're so weak around him."

"Weak?" That took him by surprise.

"You don't seem to have any control."

He and his sister really were going to have to talk in a few days; he could see that now.

"Don't judge by appearances." He didn't want to explain, but just a few words on the subject couldn't hurt. "I've never felt weak around Dean. Frustrated and angry, maybe." *Not to mention turned on and lustful as all hell.* "I'm not being abused, if that's what you think. I like what we do."

"I..." Again, she hesitated, chewing at her lips. Jay had never seen her look so uncertain. "One guy I dated liked to get a little rough."

"How rough?" He couldn't help the anger entering his voice. If some bastard had...

She shook her head. "I guess not rough at all really, judging on what I know now." She made a sound that he couldn't interpret, almost a laugh and a sigh combined. "I'm wondering now if maybe I couldn't even handle the mild stuff, and blew it out of proportion. I guess the truth is that I just don't like that kind of thing. I don't understand it."

"We have to check out," Jay said, hating that she would mention this now when there was no time to talk more. "If you want to discuss things then I'm here for you. As to what did or didn't happen to you, please don't compare it with the way I feel about Dean. I'm not you," he reminded her. "Don't try to live my life, and I won't try to live yours. You stand up for me, and I thank you and love you for that. You'll just have to trust me that right now the only thing I need you to do is to stop baiting Dean. Give him a chance, for my sake. Please.

He's beaten the odds you set him already. We've been living together for almost a year. Let that count for something."

It took her a moment, but then she nodded. The movement contained some stiffness, but at least indicated agreement.

Jay hovered for just one more moment. "I know you don't get him. Not many people do."

"You know what makes him tick, I suppose."

He could tell she still wasn't happy. "I do," he answered, nevertheless. "I know when he's truly angry. I know when he's upset. I know when he's sad and when he's happy. I know when he's nervous."

She laughed. "Dean? Nervous? Now that I'd like to see."

"Don't hold your breath. There's not much left for him to be nervous about, but yeah, I know when he's feeling uneasy. I know it even when he's trying to hide it from me, or, often, before he even knows it himself." The frown lining April's brow told him how much he confused her.

"Dean's not like that," she said. "He doesn't --"

"What? Have feelings? The trouble with Dean is, he often feels things he doesn't want to."

She blinked then raised her eyebrows. "Actually, that...makes a peculiar kind of sense." She turned her head towards him.

"He's not a bad guy. He's not perfect. He's my guy." Jay gave her a dopey smile. It took her another moment, but then she returned something like the same smile, even if, clearly, she struggled a little.

"I guess I'm just afraid that you'll agree to anything to keep him."

"No. I wouldn't do that." More likely, that role had reversed, but he didn't think she could take hearing that right now even if she believed it, which she wouldn't. Such details



were none of her business, anyway. “I’ve never been confused or conflicted about what I want. I wanted Dean. If I couldn’t have him for long, then I wanted him for as long as it lasted. I know you don’t believe it will last even now, but the same rule applies. He’s what I want.” There was a long pause.

“Then you’d better not keep him waiting,” she said.

Jay took the two steps that would take him back to the bed, leaning in to kiss her cheek. “I love you too, sis.” She made a tutting noise and slapped at him. He left her room, chuckling.

Dean stood by the car out in the driveway. His intent gaze and frown asked the question for him. Jay answered with a smile. “Tell you on the way home,” he said. He turned as his parents came out to wish them a safe trip. They were staying the week.

They’d driven about two miles when Dean looked at him. “So, are you ever going to tell me what you said to April? Should I protect my nuts next time I see her?”

April had threatened to crush or remove Dean’s testicles on various occasions, in numerous ways. Jay chuckled.

“It’s not funny,” Dean scolded.

“What’s not funny is the two and a half hours it’s going to take to get home. I can’t wait to use the strawberry lube.”

The car swerved just a little bit. Dean’s eyes widened as he glanced at Jay. “Don’t say things like that when I’m driving.” He concentrated on the road for a minute, and then looked across at Jay again. “Oh! So, you’re in one of those moods.”

Jay, who lounged at a comfortable angle in his seat so that he could look at Dean all the way home, grinned. “You sound both thrilled and put out.”

Dean shrugged. “It’s fine. Do we have to talk about it? I told you I’m fine with it. After last night I thought we’d be past all this.”

“But you’re not fine.” Jay kept his voice low, patiently waiting for Dean to work his way through his dilemma.

Finally, Dean replied, “You’re right. I’m not okay with it. It feels so odd to lay back --”

“Or bend over.”

Dean shot him an exasperated look. “It feels odd to let you take control like that. To do something that makes me squirm even if it feels good. Straight people don’t do that. It’s...it’s...”

“It’s called rimming,” Jay said. “If you can’t say it, you shouldn’t do it.”

Dean’s glare this time threatened physical harm. Jay remained unrepentant. Dean shook his head as though to clear his mind.

“It’s so...so...”

“Gay?”

“I was going to say intimate, embarrassing, but yeah.”

“So does that mean you’ll never do it to me?”

Dean stared at the road. He looked stunned. “You want me to crash or something?”

“You almost did something like it the first time we had sex.” He meant the time Dean had come into his bedroom, and their friendship had finally boiled over into sex. He’d like to call it love from the start, but things were more complicated back then. What they had shared was far different from the love they shared now.

“Not to the extent you do it.” Dean managed to sound uncertain, nervous, lustful, and excited all at once, though Jay didn’t think he meant to sound like any of those things.

Dean’s tongue had travelled the full length from behind his testicles to the base of his spine -- sweeping the valley, Dean had once called it, joking -- but he was right, and the act was nothing as intimate as the things Jay liked to do to Dean.

He could still recall the first time so vividly, passion ruling out common sense, and Dean's unexpected and almost violent reaction. Dean had grabbed him, flipped him over on his back, held him down, his face darkening and his eyes wide in what looked like anger. Only the furious colour of red crawling up over Dean's face and causing the rest of his body to flush had told Jay that he'd embarrassed the man. He thought that so sweet. To think anyone like Dean could be embarrassed... Jay struggled not to smile.

Jay waited for Dean to glance at him again. They slowed at a busy intersection so Dean had time to look across at him.

"I'm sorry," Jay said. "I couldn't help teasing. I won't push. I waited nearly a year for a blowjob from you, longer if you count the time from when this all started, and we were hiding the fact that we were having sex. I have patience."

Dean made a choking sound in his throat. Jay contemplated that it was just as well the car wasn't moving. As he selected a gear and moved off, Dean muttered, "Who's driving this thing?" He clearly wasn't talking about the car.

This time, Jay shrugged. "Does it matter?"

They came to another intersection, slowing down. Dean gave him another look, just as Jay glanced at the road. Jay gazed back at once, but Dean was already reaching out. With a grunt, he tugged at the scrunchie holding Jay's hair in place. As always, he managed it with a surprisingly gentle touch. Jay laughed even more.

"What?" Dean asked, his gaze flicking from the road to Jay's face and then back again. "What!"

Jay turned in his seat as much as the seatbelt would allow. "Now, how did I know you were going to do that?"

Dean glanced from Jay to the road, to the scrap of elasticised fabric he had tossed onto the dashboard, to the road, then back to Jay before returning to the road once more.

“Because you know me too well,” he said. The warmth in Dean’s voice filled the interior of the car and seemed to echo Jay’s thoughts.

*Yeah, I do know you. I know everything both good and bad about you, and I love them all. I love you.* Jay said the words aloud even as he thought them. Dean stared at the road, but his lips twitched as if a smile tugged at them.

Finally, he replied, “I love you too. I don’t know why you put up with me sometimes but I love you so much I can’t remember not feeling this way about you.”

Silence finally caused Dean to glance his way. Jay was already smiling when he did. He leaned forward so that he could lower his voice and make what he had to say seductive.

“Took you long enough to admit it,” he told him, “but when I get you home, I want you to tell me again. Tell me you love me and that you love all the things we do together.”

He watched the lump in Dean’s throat bob as the other man swallowed. “*All* the things we do together?”

Jay nodded. “Yep.”

Dean squirmed, and for one brief moment, it crossed Jay’s mind that maybe he’d pushed a little too hard, too soon. This relationship was a little like sex even concerning their emotions. You needed to feel your way. Then he recognised that movement for what it was, Dean’s cock growing hard.

“There’s only one problem with that,” Dean rasped out. Jay waited in silence. “I’m not sure I can wait until we get home.”

“You’re going to have to.” Jay slid back to his side of the seat.

“You think?” Dean glanced around. “What if I find a field?”

“What if I say no?”

“What if I don’t give you a choice?”

“What if I don’t want you to?”

Slowing once more, waiting to turn a corner, Dean and Jay took the opportunity to look at each other. Jay never doubted for a minute that his gaze danced with the same delight and amusement he could see in Dean's face. They both laughed. They could explain their relationship until...well, until the cows came home, but people wouldn't understand because they didn't want to. The truth was, he and Dean were perfect for each other. They fed each other's needs. They thrived on moments such as this.

Dean's hand came down over his and squeezed in a grip that could crush the bones. Jay didn't care if he was the only one to believe Dean would never hurt him like that. He didn't care if the rest of the world believed Dean was the one in charge of this relationship. In many ways, neither of them was in charge. They took turns, went with the mood, and it worked for them. You didn't have to justify things like that. You just needed to have faith and trust in it. Just over two hours later, they pulled into the drive, but they sat there another five minutes while Jay told Dean exactly what he planned to do with him for the remainder of the day and into the evening.

 THE END 

## **Sharon Maria Bidwell**

Sharon Maria Bidwell was born one New Year's Eve within the London area. Since having her first short story accepted and the editor announcing her as "a writer who is going places," her work -- poems, short stories and articles -- have appeared steadily in print and online publications. Previously, she kept the erotic side of her writing separate. The genre appealed though as it allows her the freedom to create something more expressive, less oppressive. She firmly believes that having a chance at such "free reign" reflects favourably in her work. It has always been a part of her personality in that she likes surprising and delighting people. She links her most favoured and often most successful work closely to fantasy, though her writing crosses genres.

She loves reading, the movies and going to the theatre and spending time with a few very special people. Her friends are waiting to discover something she isn't good at. She often thinks about moving but lives primarily in a world of her own. Visit this diverse writer's site at: <http://uk.geocities.com/theviewoveraonia>.