



No Regrets

A Torquere Press Single Shot by Sean Michael

Prologue

Drake sat on the leather couch in his office, going through the piles of mail on the coffee table in front of him.

There was the to-be-signed pile, which contained the original letter, a brief synopsis of the letter and an eight by ten headshot. All he had to do was read the synopsis, sign the headshot, maybe include a bit of a personal message and move on to the next one. That was the biggest pile, maybe sixty in it and he was nearly done. Thank God Molly, his personal assistant extraordinaire, signed his name on the headshots that went out in response to the majority of his fan mail or he'd never be done.

The next pile was smaller, maybe a dozen letters that Molly thought he'd want to read himself. There was a headshot and a blank sheet of paper with each of those, just in case he wanted to write a letter back or give her instructions on it. There'd be stuff from the Make a Wish Foundation and

crap like that in there, folks who wanted his personal attention that Molly thought he'd maybe want to participate in.

The third and smallest pile was the real mail, as best as Molly could figure.

He made his way through the first pile, trying not to look at the picture; the blond fly-away hair and his own blue, blue eyes staring back up at him was a little freaky. It looked like him, but not, just like the huge picture from his second album cover that hung behind his desk. He groaned, throwing a pillow at the radio when his latest single came on. He was so fucking sick of the whole thing.

Drake loved the singing. There was nothing better than writing the perfect lyric, or being in the studio laying down tracks, or up on stage, connecting with fifty thousand people.

But he hadn't written in months, and his last two albums had been ninety percent material by other people. The passion of it, the fun was slipping through his fingers like so much dust and he just...

He needed to get away from it all. From the media and the label and the fans and all the things that pulled him from a hundred different directions.

He finally finished the first and second piles of letters, leaving them on the side of the coffee table for Molly, and started to look through the three letters in the last pile. Two were from his label and the third was from a Scott Dean.

Scott Dean.

Damn, why did that sound so familiar?

He flashed back suddenly to middle school and a skinny kid with a shock of hair, in creative arts class, seventh grade.

Damn, he hadn't seen Scotty since two weeks before their final exams when he'd quit school in order to go out on the road as the opening act for Van Halen.

Curious, he read the letter.

The scribble was dark and hard to read, but familiar as hell. "Hey, man. Saw you on the TV. You look tired as hell. You ought to come see me and chill some, take a rest. You always did work too fucking hard. Grins. Scott Dean."

God, Scotty Dean. Drake leaned back and let his eyes close, let some of the memories flow over him. He could remember the poster Scotty'd made for the concert he and his band had given in Perkin's barn back in the ninth grade. And they'd both played on the baseball team a couple years, though not all the way through -- coach hadn't been impressed when he'd found out baseball wasn't number one for them.

He wondered if Scotty was still painting.

Drake must have dozed off because the next thing he knew, Molly was buzzing him.

He staggered over to the desk, feeling half-drunk from the interrupted nap and hit the intercom button. "What?"

"Oh, that's nice."

He rolled his eyes. "Hi, Molly, what can I do for you?"

She chuckled. "Better. I've got Bob Andrews on the line for you."

"Tell him I can't take the call."

"And why not?"

"I don't care what excuse you give him -- tell him I'm not here, tell him I died, I don't care."

Bob wanted him to confirm a dozen appearances between now and Christmas and to set up another world tour starting in the spring, and he didn't want to do it. Oh, he likely would, like he always did -- it would be good for his career, yadda yadda.

"I'll tell him you're indisposed." He could hear the disapproval in Molly's voice. She didn't like lying for him.

"You could just tell him I don't want to talk to him."

She snorted and disconnected the intercom. He shook his head and stretched, t-shirt riding up out of his jeans. God, he was tired.

He was supposed to be writing a new album so he could go into the studio in December, and it was starting to look like he was going to be using outside material again. Especially if he was showing up at this show and that festival and... Wait.

Why exactly was he going to give in and do these appearances and the tour? Because he needed the money?

He didn't need the money; he was richer than God.

What he needed to do was take a vacation. An honest to God vacation. A month on the beach or a few weeks in the mountains or... some time with an old friend who nobody knew about.

He went back to the couch and found the letter from Scotty where it had fallen on the ground. Bless Scott Dean's heart, there was an address there, along with directions to some little town he'd never heard of in South Carolina to Scott's place in the middle of fucking nowhere.

Perfect.

He searched out the envelope and pocketed it, just making sure he had all the evidence of where he'd be with him, and headed out the door.

"Molly? Call Bob back and tell him I'm going on vacation."

Her dark hair was piled on top of her head, her fingers full of more rings than any one woman needed, her blouse a god-awful lime green with loads of frills. His assistant had a style all her own, but it worked for her.

"A real vacation, Drake? Or another one of those take my picture circuses of yours."

He resisted the urge to stick his tongue out at her. It wasn't his fault that he had a whole cadre of paparazzi on his tail wherever he went. The times he got drunk on vacation and pulled stupid stunts they took pictures. On the other hand...

He shook his head. "An honest to fuck break. I'm not even telling you where I'm going."

That set her to spluttering, and she hung up the phone and put down her pen, entire focus turning on him. "You have to tell me."

"No, I don't."

"Sure you do."

"Nope."

He leaned against the side of her desk, crossed his arms and grinned down at her. "I don't have to and I'm not."

"But I'm your assistant! What if something comes up that needs your attention?"

"Then you won't have to lie when you tell whoever that you have no idea where I am."

Her lips pursed and her fingers tapped on her desk. "What if it's an emergency?"

"Deal with it."

She shook her head. "You can't just disappear."

"I'm sure as hell going to try." He leaned over and kissed the top of her head. "Book a dinner for two under my name at La Farge tonight, and take that nice young man of yours out for a high-class meal." The booking would draw the paparazzi to the restaurant and hopefully give him a chance of slipping away unnoticed.

"Well, how long are you going for?"

He shrugged, checking his pocket for his keys and coming up with his cell phone. He passed it over to her. "I don't know."

"But..."

"No buts, honey. I'm going and I don't know when I'll be back -- you'll see me when you see me."

"How will I know you're all right?"

He snorted. "I'm sure if anything happens to me the damned vultures will find out and tell the world. I'm serious about this, Molly. I need out for awhile before I wind up babbling like a loon. I know you can keep things running along nicely here without me."

"Well, I will certainly do my best."

"I know." He came up with his keys. "Thank you, Molly."

"Take care of yourself, Drake."

"You too, honey."

He headed out the door, leaving Drake the Rockstar behind him, that letter burning a hole in his pocket.

Chapter One

Lord, for a man on vacation, Drake felt tired and strung out.

It hadn't taken him any time at all to pack up a bag and toss it into his truck. He'd even lost the bulk of the paparazzi on the first day. Then they'd picked up his trail again and he'd had to trade the truck in for an older, more beat up model that wouldn't link back to him. He got cash advances on all his credit cards so he could pay cash wherever he went -- Molly would pay the bills and he had more than enough to cover it.

Four days later it was nearing sunset and he'd been hopelessly lost for the last two hours, trying to find Scotty Dean's house.

He was bouncing over a dirt road and damn, this beat up old thing he was driving had nothing on his truck. He *missed* his truck.

He turned a corner onto a new dirt road, still no signage, nothing. The road curved, and the trees that lined it thinned and suddenly there was a big old farmhouse right in front of him. A truck nearly as beat up as the one he was driving was parked next to a large shed.

Could this be Scotty's place?

He pulled up next to the truck and turned off the engine, and headed for the front porch. "Hello? Anyone home?" Please be Scotty's place. Please.

"Well, well, well, if it ain't the prodigal son..." That low, deep drawl rang out, bright blue eyes dancing at him from under a black cowboy hat. "Goddamn, you're a sight for sore eyes."

Jesus Christ, Scotty'd grown up well.

Drake found himself grinning, as he admired the lanky form, some of the weight falling off his shoulders. "Scotty Dean. You could have knocked me over with a feather when I got your letter."

"Yeah, I saw your ass on the TV and thought you looked like you were being hunted. I didn't reckon anybody'd hunt you out here in the boonies." Scotty headed over, grinning from ear to ear. "You gonna really be able to stay awhile, honey?"

Oh, that drawled honey did something to his insides. Something his lady fans would be shocked to know.

"I can stay as long as I like. I ran away from it all, Scott," he admitted.

"Good on you. I got a whole room ready for you." He got a full-on hug, back slapped good and hard. "Come on in, honey. I was just fixin' to put a chicken on the grill."

He held on to the hug just a moment longer, craving the human contact of a friend, someone who

didn't want anything from him, didn't want to be in his life because of his money or his fame or what he could do for them.

It might have been high school since he last had that, too, his disastrous marriage a sham on both his and his wife's parts.

He let go and grabbed his bag out of the truck, hoisting it over his shoulder. "You cook?"

"Hell, yes. Otherwise I'd starve." Long and lean, Scotty looked even better from the back than he did from the front. Damn. Old, tissue-paper thin jeans that were painted on. "I go into town once every two or three weeks for supplies. Otherwise? I grow my own or trade for it. It's a good life. You like artichokes?"

"I like food, period." Though he was tired to death of fancy crap that barely filled you and the last four days had been pretty much all fast food. "I'll eat whatever you put in front of me." Hell, even burned food would be a small price to pay for not having anything to do and not worrying about anybody jumping out from behind a bush to take his picture.

"Well, there's grilled chicken and artichokes and some rice in the kitchen steaming." Scotty took him around the back of the house, the porch huge and screened, with a hammock and a few big cushy lounges. "Let me get these off the grill, and I'll give you the tour."

"Oh, this looks comfy." It smelled damned good, too. He didn't sit, worried he'd crash right out if he did. "So what are you up to these days?"

"Working, working." This giant grill got opened and Scotty turned food. "The big barn there is my studio. The little barn in the back has the horses."

"Studio? You still painting?" Too cool. He breathed in deeply. "Smells great, Scotty." His growling stomach agreed.

"Yup. I do good for myself." Why wasn't he surprised? "Saw you and Laura broke up. That must've sucked."

He grimaced. "The break-up was actually a relief -- we both got married for the wrong reasons." They'd been using each other.

"That happens to the best of us." Scotty didn't look a bit surprised. "She came to see me at my last big gallery show."

He might not have surprised Scotty, but the man had definitely surprised him. "Really? Why?"

"She's looking for a piece for her new house. Bought a big old thing for a nice chunk of change. She told me how to get a letter to you." The artichokes got turned again.

"Well, that was nice of her." Nicer than she'd managed from about one month into the marriage on.

Though to be fair, he gave as good as he got. He sighed and rubbed his face. It had been his own damned fault, living in denial, thinking marrying a hot chick would get him a get-out-of-gay-free card.

It had sure covered him with the media, but his personal life was a joke.

"I'm looking forward to seeing your work." To having time to.

"Thanks, man. I've got some stuff I'm working on. Some stuff I'm reworking." The food was plopped into a platter and lid of the grill was eased shut. "Come on in, honey. You look tuckered out. I'll feed you and point you toward a shower and a nice, soft bed."

"Hey, you promised me the tour." Not that food, shower and bed didn't sound like a dream come true. But he didn't want to be rude and just show up, eat and fall asleep on Scotty.

"I guess the chicken can rest. Come on." The kitchen was open and bright, all glass-door cabinets and lemon yellow walls with cobalt blue tiles and floor. Two dogs looked up as they walked in -- a huge bloodhound and what looked like a Great Dane puppy, both tails wagging.

"That's Lord and Lady."

Drake held his hand down in front of them in a fist, just grinning away. He hadn't had a dog since he'd started out on the road. It just wasn't fair. They both sniffed and eagerly accepted the attention as he gave them pats and scratches. "Which is which?" he asked, laughing as the Great Dane licked him.

"Lady's my pup. Lord's the old man of the family." Both dogs were scratched and stroked, biscuits pulled from a huge container. "Careful, Lady likes to snuggle in the bed and Lord can sniff out *anything*."

"I'll be okay -- I've gotten good at tossing ladies out from between my sheets. You would not *believe* the things groupies will do to get in your pants." His cheeks colored a little -- he let most folks believe he liked the ladies and let them stay. It made great cover. He figured he didn't need to pretend with Scotty.

Scotty hooted, clapped him on the back. "Well, honey. I ain't any different than I've ever been. You won't find any ladies here."

He chuckled and nodded. "You're lucky, you know," he said softly. "Being truthful with yourself from the start." He should have been. He had been for the last five years or so, even if no one, not even Molly knew what that truth was, at least he did now. "You'd better show me this house of yours before I become maudlin and start in on my poor little old me routine -- it isn't pretty."

He got another, sudden hug. "You just need some peace, honey. You'll find it here. I won't crowd you none."

Then his ass was patted, Scotty heading through a doorway. "This here's the front room."

The house was hilarious -- pure Scotty. The walls were covered in art and paintings, the furniture overstuffed and leather. There were bunches of tiny rooms, each one a different color, a different theme. They headed up the stairs, Scotty giving him a little two room suite, painted a deep, rich blue. The bed was huge, the chifferobe for his clothes just as big.

The window looked out onto a pond, a pasture. No houses, no buildings. Just freedom. He stood there for a long moment, looking out and breathing, wonder holding him in its grasp.

"I'm not sure how to thank you, Scotty. This is exactly what I needed." He'd been this close to breaking, to losing it, he'd felt it, felt his skin getting stretched tighter and tighter and had been just waiting for it to snap.

Hell, it still might, but he knew if it did Scotty'd be there to make sure he knew where all the pieces were.

"You just keep me company a bit, honey. I've been feeling the urge to see folks again. Your bathroom's through there. I'm across the hall."

"Oh, my keeping you company will cure you of that urge if nothing else does." He gave Scotty a wink and peeked into the bathroom. Not too shabby; it boasted a huge old-fashioned tub, as well as a little shower.

"What's your room like?" he asked, not wanting to pry if Scotty wanted to keep the space private.

"Come on over." Scotty ushered him across to a decadent room painted maroon, the bed piled with quilts, one entire wall covered in photos.

"Wow. It's gorgeous." Beautiful, yet homey. He was drawn to the pictures, crossing over to give them a closer look.

There were pictures he remembered -- of him, of Scotty, of Scotty's folks. There were pictures of strangers, some of Scotty and someone who had to be a lover, leaning close, holding each other.

He felt a pang go through him and didn't want to look too closely at that. "Who's this?" he asked. If Scotty hadn't wanted to talk about it, he wouldn't have shown him the room.

"His name was Nick MacGeorge."

"Was?"

Scotty nodded, put his hat on an old hat rack. "Yeah. He got cancer five years ago and he passed away about eight months after that. He was a song writer. You'd've liked him, I think."

"I'm sorry, man." There wasn't really anything else you could say to that.

He always felt awkward though, always felt like people expected him to have poetic words to make them feel better. Well, not Scotty, but the fans... He went over and patted Scotty on the arm.

"Thanks, honey. It was good while it lasted and he never hurt, not even a day." Scotty leaned toward him a minute, then chuckled. "Come on. Food. It's calling my name."

"Oh, now see I knew there had to be something wrong with coming here. You've got talking food."

Scotty's laugh rang out, as familiar as breathing. "Yep. It's a magical place I got here. Pure magic."

He chuckled and followed the man back down the stairs, admiring as he went. Admiring hard enough that Lady nearly tripped him up when he didn't notice her getting underfoot. He wound up careening into Scotty's back. "Oof. Shit. Sorry."

Scotty stumbled a little -- fuck, the man was solid, for all he was skinny -- but held his weight. "You got to watch her, now."

He nodded, resting a moment against that solid strength before righting himself. "Yeah, sorry. I just wasn't paying attention." He'd been more than a little distracted.

"s okay. You don't have to apologize, man. Just think of this place as home, huh?"

"Home." He shook his head. "I have a place, you know? I don't think I've spent more than four days in a row there since I bought it." He'd hired some fancy designer to decorate the place. It felt less like home than the tour bus. "It'll be nice to stay put a little while."

"I hope so, Dee. I've been missing you." The words, for once, didn't sound like a con job.

"I've been missing me, too," he admitted. "Now where do I sit? I could murder that chicken."

"Pick a chair. You want beer or tea?"

"I think I'd better have the tea." Tired as he was, he had a beer and he'd be out face-first in his dessert.

And the way that carrot cake looked on the counter? That would be a damned shame.

Scott got Dee settled in bed and then went out to the studio.

The man was worn out.

Tired.

Exhausted.

Not someone a decent man would lust after. Or seduce. Or anything.

Man, that was a fucking shame because Dee was still beautiful.

He laughed at himself, turned his stereo on loud, and got to work. Dee needed a friend and he needed company. That was good enough.

The next thing he knew it was dawn and he was panting, covered in paint and exhausted.

There was a knock at the door, a tousled blond head popping around the door. "Scotty? I hate to bother you, but I'm starving and I really am crap in the kitchen."

"Huh?" He blinked over, trying to figure out what Dee was talking about. "Let me turn down the music."

Lord, he hoped his series of Drake portraits were draped.

Dee came all the way in, wearing nothing but a pair of grey sweatpants, looking just fine from that messy hair to the bare feet. "I thought you painted the *canvas*, not yourself," Dee chuckled.

"I do." He waved over to the eight foot tall canvas, the colors bright, fierce.

"Wow. That's..." Dee walked slowly from one side to the other, really checking the canvas out, moving in closer. "It's something. Something powerful."

"Thank you." It was. It was part of a series. It was his lifeblood. "It's called Fantasy."

"Yeah? Are there more yet? This one makes me want to sing. Hey, was that a piano I saw at the back of the front room?"

"Yes and yes. Feel free to bang away." Oh, did that come out badly?

"Cool. Can I see the others?" Dee turned to him, giving him a fine view of those pretty abs, a touch of hair just above the low slug sweats.

"Sure." He wondered back through the studio, pulling out three huge canvasses -- Fear, Fury, and Fucking.

"Oh, man." Dee examined them each, fascinated especially by Fucking, eyes drawn to it and then back to Fantasy over and over. "Powerful, Scotty. Amazingly so."

"Thank you." Scott yawned and stretched, back popping. "How do you feel about blueberry muffins?"

Dee's stomach growled, and he chuckled. "Just what the doctor ordered."

"Well, there you go. Come on, let's go up to the house. Can you make coffee?" Christ, he was tired.

Dee stretched and yawned, nodded. "Coffee I can do. I've spent months living off the stuff." Only one night but Dee looked better already.

"Well, there's hope for you yet." He stopped at the little tub outside the studio, stripped down and washed off in the cold water, gasping and shivering as he did.

He could feel Dee watching him, but when he turned around, Dee's eyes were looking out over the fields.

"s pretty out there, huh? I'll have to feed the horses after breakfast, you can go look." He grabbed a pair of shorts off the clothesline as he walked by.

"I'll give you a hand," Dee suggested, falling into step beside him.

"I'd like that." He rubbed shoulders with Dee as they went up the stairs. "You sleep okay?"

Dee smiled brightly. "I did. Best sleep I've had in months. It's quiet out here, Scotty. Real quiet. Peaceful."

"It's the best place on Earth." And his, free and clear.

"Not to mention no one knows about it. I love that there's nobody with a camera about to jump out of your bushes."

Dee made a beeline for the coffee maker, nearly tripping over Lady again.

"Lady!" She was always underfoot and just fascinated by new people.

Dee shook his head and petted her. "You're just a big dog, aren't you? With those paws you can't help being underfoot." Dee flashed him a smile. "I knew you'd have dogs."

"Yeah, they're just big spoiled babies." Hell, he'd always had dogs.

"That makes you the momma."

He looked over and butter wouldn't melt in that mouth. But then Dee's eyes flashed up to meet his, just dancing wickedly.

"Bitch." He grabbed a towel, swatting Dee good and hard on the butt, just laughing.

Dee jumped about a foot and grabbed a tea towel, turning to retaliate, grinning like a fool.

"Oh, you think you can take me?" He spun his towel around, ready to play.

"Long as you don't cheat." Dee snapped his towel experimentally, and then again.

"I don't have to cheat to take your ass, Dee." He got ready, laughter bubbling out.

"I'm thinking my ass is safe." Dee danced around a little, trying to get around him, face lit up.

Dee's towel snapped, hitting him in the hip.

"Come on, Rockstar. You can do better than that..." He caught Dee's thigh, snapping with the end.

Dee jumped and feinted left then went right, snapping him good and hard on his ass cheek. "Yes! Got you!"

"Oooh. Ow." He bounced, hands on his butt. "My poor butt."

Dee laughed, making a fist and pumping it in the air. "Yes! I win!"

"Dork." Scott snorted, laughing hard enough his stomach hurt.

Dee collapsed into one of the chairs, grinning like crazy. "Maybe. But I got you." Dee sobered suddenly. "You didn't let me win, right?"

"Come look at the bruise on my ass and ask that again, shithead." If Dee got close enough, Scott'd whap the living shit out of him.

"You need me to kiss it better, Scotty?"

"Like you'd know what to do when presented with my gorgeous hiney."

Dee leaned back in the chair, head tilting. Checking his ass out. "I don't know if I'd say *gorgeous*. Not bad though."

"Hey!" He grinned and headed to get a box of muffin mix.

That chuckle was sweet, Dee stretching out on the chair. "You pull a lot of all-nighters like that?"

"Mmhmm. I work whenever I can." He grabbed eggs and milk, turned the old stove on.

"Well don't let me cramp your style -- I don't want to be in the way here, Scotty."

"You're not, honey. You're here because I missed you and because you wanted to come. Grease the muffin tins?"

"Sure." Dee got up and came to stand next to him. "How exactly do I do that?"

"Grab the Crisco and a paper towel and rub it in the holes." God, he could just kiss the clueless son of a bitch.

"You make it sound so easy." Dee reached past him for the paper towel.

"You'll figure it out, honey. Just imagine rubbing grease into somebody beautiful."

"I don't know, Scotty. Been awhile since I did anything like that." Dee grabbed the muffin tin started rubbing the Crisco into it.

"That's a shame, honey. You ought to get some loving."

Dee shrugged and it looked practiced. "It's complicated. Hell, everything's been complicated." Sighing, Dee hunched over the muffin tin, stabbing at the last few holes.

He reached over, fingers sliding on Dee's wrist. "Hey, breathe, honey. You're not in the public eye here; you don't have to make excuses with me."

Dee nodded, hands stopping and setting the muffin tin down. "I... Scotty, I..."

"Right here, Dee." His heart was telling him that his oldest friend hadn't been held in too fucking long, so he just did it, pulled Dee close and held on.

Stiff as a board for a moment, Dee suddenly leaned into him, arms wrapping around his waist. The blond head landed on his shoulder. Scott didn't push, didn't say a word, just held on, hands petting that long spine. It was gonna be okay. He knew it.

For the longest time Dee leaned against him, seeming to soak it all up. Then he took a long, shuddering sigh and stepped away. "Bet that coffee's ready." Dee's voice was a little gruff.

"Bet it is. I take mine black." He got the rest of the muffins ready, batter plopped in the tins.

Dee poured out cups of coffee and handed one over, leaning against the counter to drink his own. "So what's your typical day like out here?"

"I paint. I feed the horses. I nap. I paint. I lay in the sun. I wander." He grinned over, licking batter off his finger. "This is not excitement central here."

Oh, that laughter was sweet. "Nothing to do sounds like a slice of heaven to me, Scotty. In fact I might want to buy a calendar just so I can write in nap and lie in the sun."

"You can put it on the dry erase board on the fridge." He popped the muffins in the oven and set the timer. That way they'd not burn, even if he sat on the sofa and fell asleep.

Dee actually got up, brushing by him and putting 'nap' and 'lie in the sun' on the erase board in big letters.

Then Dee added 'laugh' underneath.

"There you go." He collapsed on the sofa, legs sprawling. "I bet you feel better already."

"I do." Dee flopped down next to him, head lolling back against the cushions. "I haven't been this relaxed in a million years."

And that was after just one night. Give the man a week and he might actually lose those bags under his eyes.

"Good." He nodded, eyes falling shut. Very good.

Chapter Two

Drake was lying on a deck chair in the sun, half dozing. Okay, mostly dozing. He'd been doing that a lot in the last few weeks since he'd arrived at Scotty's.

He wore his old jeans and sweats, t-shirts and beat up Kodiak boots or his tennies, and didn't have to worry if he had mud on his sleeve or if he hadn't brushed his hair that morning.

It was glorious.

He'd forgotten how good it felt to get a good night's sleep, to not have every inch of his life planned and organized and timed.

Lady's head landed on his belly, waking him and making him 'oof'. She'd taken a liking to him. Lucky for her, he thought she was pretty darned cute. Kind of like her owner, though he had to admit, Scotty'd never licked his face. A shame that. The man was fine.

An old quilt dropped over him, Scotty whistling for the dogs and wandering away, tight little ass swaying. There'd been a lot of that, too. The little things that Scotty did for him to make him more comfortable, taking care of him and not making a fuss about -- like it was the most natural thing in the world.

"Hey," he called, standing and following. "Where're you headed?" He'd dozed enough for one day.

"I was going to take a ride. There's a blue norther coming and I wanted to get out before it got too cold." He got a warm, welcoming smile. "You still remember how to ride?"

"It's like falling off a bike, right?" Of course it had probably been even longer since he'd been on a bicycle.

He fell into step with Scotty, their shoulders rubbing.

"Mmhmm. Except Tarzan doesn't fall over with you." He'd met all five horses -- Tarzan, Cheetah, Molly, Polly, and Woody. Scott spent a lot of time out there, messing with them.

He chuckled. "Thank God -- he'd crush me." He tilted his head. "You sure that big old beast is the right choice? It has been ages since I was in the saddle." Not that he minded looking like a fool if there weren't any cameras around, but he didn't want to ruin Scotty's ride by needing to be rescued.

"Tarzan's big, but he's soft-mouthed and easy and just happy to be ridden." Those warm eyes met his, the grin welcome as spring rain. "I wouldn't steer you wrong."

"I know." And he did. Scotty made him feel all sorts of right. A little funny in the belly often, too. Like now, with those happy smiling eyes looking at him like that. "Let's do it. Let's go riding before this storm of yours blows up."

Scotty nodded and got the tack out, whistling tunelessly as he did. It was cute as hell, that little warble.

"So what do you need me to do? Aside from stand here looking studly."

"You're doing a damn good job of that, honey. Get the bridle on Tarzan."

He grinned, grabbing the bridle and approaching Tarzan slowly. It went over the head from the front, bit in the mouth, unless he was mistaken. Which was entirely possible. "I am, am I?"

"Yep. You make good eye candy. I, of course, want you for your mind." Scotty came over, helped him get set up, Tarzan lipping Scotty's shirt pockets.

"Yeah, because to be a singer these days you have to be a rocket scientist." He patted Scotty's pockets himself. "You hiding treats?"

"Yep." Two carrots appeared like magic. "And does that playing dumb thing work for your fans?"

He grabbed one of the carrots, holding it out on his palm for Tarzan as he blinked innocently. "I don't know what you're talking about."

Scotty arched an eyebrow, then snorted. "My ass you don't."

"Nobody cares if I can count higher than twelve, Scotty." Not his fans, not the label.

"I care. I remember. You were always smarter than me. I remember that."

Man, Scotty just kept making him feel good. If Scotty wasn't careful, he'd never leave. "Yeah? So how come I was miserable and *this* close to a breakdown while you were here in paradise?" He stroked Tarzan's nose.

"I had my breakdown in college. I started early."

"No shit. What happened?" Scotty seemed so together.

Always had.

"I found out that I can't work and deal with groups of people. I found out that too much input makes me short out." Scotty grinned, shrugged. "I found out that twelve jocks, one queer artist, and an empty warehouse? Less than entertaining."

He frowned, not liking the way that sounded. "You get bashed, Scotty?"

"Yep." Scotty patted his hip. "Up and at 'em, honey."

He stared at Scotty a moment, and then let the subject drop with a soft, "That's not right."

Foot in the stirrup, he grabbed the pommel and hoisted himself up, the movements bringing it all back to him.

They headed out, Scotty's whistle random and constant, all at once. God, it was pretty out here - quiet and simple and perfect. Felt good, the big horse between his thighs, muscles working as they roamed.

Man, he could get used to this -- was getting used to it, really. The fact that they could go for ages and not come across anyone totally rocked. Scotty took him all over the property, pointing out this and that, making it easy to just listen, to just be.

He almost didn't notice the way the sky was darkening up, but couldn't miss the way the wind suddenly made him shiver. "We should probably get back, huh?"

"Yeah, we'd best." Scotty nodded, moving them a little faster. Even the horses seemed to want in.

The sky lit up suddenly, and he counted to eight before the thunder sounded off in the distance. "Still a bit away," he noted, the horses speeding up even more.

"We'll be inside before it hits." Scotty didn't look worried. Hell, the man looked tickled.

"Yeah? Cool." He watched a bit longer and smiled, Scotty's grin infectious. "What aren't you telling me?"

"Hmm? What? You don't love the energy in the air?" Scotty leaned back, stretching, riding like he was born to it.

Drake laughed, remembering running with the rain back when he was a teenager. "It's been awhile," he'd admitted. Shit, that seemed to be his answer for everything. All that money in the bank, all those adoring fans and he'd spent the last years *not* living his life.

It was time he did something about that. He shouted "I'll race you!" and took off.

Scotty's laughter followed him, the horses heading toward the barn, knowing right where they were going. In fact Tarzan sped up even more once the barn was in sight and he nearly took a header, managing to cling in place long enough to get his balance back. He was laughing like mad by the time they hit the barn, feeling wild and free and wonderful in a way he hadn't in ages. It kind of reminded him of the rush of performing for a crowd. A rush that he'd been too tired and cranky to appreciate the last couple tours.

They were both still grinning as they hurried to put the tack away, get the horses combed and fed and settled. The thunder boomed again, close this time, just as they were finishing.

Drake jumped a little, and laughed. "You think the rain'll be too cold to play in?" He had an urge to strip down and go out there and run in it, just be.

"Probably. But you won't fucking melt." Scotty grabbed his hand, tugging him outside.

It wasn't raining too hard yet, but a flash of lightning hit the sky as they closed the barn door, the thunder right overhead now. Sure enough they hadn't taken four steps when the clouds let loose and it started to *pour*.

Drake stopped, turning his head up and let it rain on him. "Wooheee!"

Scotty hooted, grabbing his hands and dancing him around in wild circles. Around and around they went and he felt like one of those satyrs. He let go of Scotty's hands to tear off his t-shirt and sweater, the rain pelting down over his skin.

"Jesus." He heard the word moaned out, Scotty staring at him with what looked like hunger.

He stopped moving, stopped breathing, everything in him tightening at that look. "Scotty?"

Scott shuddered, that prick hard and obvious in those skin-tight, wet jeans. "I."

Jesus, steam ought to be coming off Scott's skin. Scotty wanted him. Him. Did Scotty even know he was gay?

Did it matter?

He licked his lips, tasting the rain on them. "You?"

"I." Scott blushed dark, head ducking all of the sudden. "Lemme get us some towels, huh?"

"I'm gay, too," he blurted out, the words sounding louder than the thunder in his own ears. He'd never told anyone that, never said it out loud before.

Scott's eyes clicked to his, held on. "Since when?"

He snorted. "I imagine since forever, but I didn't admit it to myself until about three days after I'd married Laura." God, he'd been such a fucking idiot.

"That's got to suck." Scotty grinned at him, eyes dancing a little. "It would have been way more convenient if you'd figured it when I was following you around high school like a love-struck puppy."

"You what? Me? You?" He blinked. "Really?"

"Yeah. You. Me. Really."

"Christ, I've been a blind fool for a really long time..."

The thunder boomed as if to agree with him, the rain cold-cold against his skin now that they'd stopped moving.

"Nah. I'm your friend, honey. Always." Scotty gave him a grin. "Come on in. It's cold. I'll make coffee."

"Yeah, okay. Just..." He licked his lips again and stepped forward.

"Just?" Scott tilted his head, staring right at him.

"This first." He took another step, bringing him right up into Scott's space. He did this, he could never turn back, never deny what he was again, at least not to himself, not to Scott.

"This first," he said again, pressing their lips together.

He'd kissed and been kissed a thousand times, but shit. He'd never felt it down to his toes, aching inside him in a rush. He felt something inside him break, a wall he'd built up come tearing down. A harsh sound tore from his throat as his lips parted.

Drake heard an answering sound from Scott, the man dragging him close enough that air couldn't get between them. He went willingly, hands wrapping around Scott's arms, fingers curling tight, holding on.

The rain poured over them, but the heat of Scott's lips nearly burned him up.

It couldn't last forever - they had to breathe - but when Scott's tongue pressed in to taste him, he fucking prayed time would stop. He wrapped his lips around Scott's tongue and sucked on it, groaning at the taste. Scott moaned, walking them back toward the house. Scott hit the wall with a thud, one leg curling around to hold him close.

Oh, fuck, this was nothing like how it was with a woman. This was hard and hot and fucking primal. He rubbed against Scott, their bodies all hard angles and bumps. It felt amazing.

They got a rhythm going, Scott humping his thigh like a madman, the kisses getting sharper and harder. The rain pushed at him, trying to steal his heat, but it was no match for Scott, for the pleasure that was building and building. Drake pushed one hand through Scott's hair, the other opened and closed on Scott's arm as he started to shake, every sensation so big.

"It's okay, honey. I got you. Come on." Fuck, had Scott always sounded so sexy?

Between that and Scott's shirt *sliding* against his skin, dragging on his nipples, he couldn't hold back for a second. Crying out, he came in his jeans like some horny teenager making out for the first time.

"Mmm..." Scott's teeth tugged on his bottom lip, drawing it out, just a little longer.

A shudder went through him, his cock throbbing inside his jeans. "Scotty... God." He pressed into another kiss, just humming.

"Mmm. Right here." Scott shifted, muscles tight and hard against him.

He rubbed his thigh against Scott's hardness. "What do you need, buddy?"

"Anything you'll give me, honey." That groan was pure sex.

He pushed his hand between them, working open Scotty's belt, the top button of his jeans. He met Scotty's eyes. "Wanna touch."

"Please." The rain came harder, plastering their hair, their clothes.

He tugged at Scotty's zipper, hand digging into the white underwear. He gasped as Scotty's prick leapt into his hand, hot and silky.

"Dee. Dee, honey." Scotty rested that fever-hot forehead on his shoulder, hips jerking.

"Yeah." He nodded and tightened his fist around Scotty's prick. "Wanna feel you come."

That was all it took, Scott sobbed, jerked and shot all over his fingers.

Oh, fuck.

Fuck, that was. Yeah, he wanted more of that.

He tugged Scotty's head up and brought their mouths together again, tongue sliding in to taste. Scott shivered and moaned, mouth liquid heat. And where their mouths met was about the only warm spot on him. "Inside?" he suggested, the rain seeming to get colder and colder every second.

"Hell, yes. Inside. Hot bath." Scott was all smiles.

He took the hand that was offered, letting Scotty tug him along, thinking he'd follow that ass just about anywhere right now. The house felt damn cold and they both stripped down, right there in the mud room, before Scotty took his hand and dragged him upstairs to the big master bath.

His teeth were chattering with the cold and he couldn't quite believe he'd just done that. That he and Scotty had... He grinned. Oh yeah, they had. Maybe they were gonna again.

It didn't take Scotty a second to get that water going, to get the bathroom filled with billows of steam. Drake grinned, wanting suddenly to sing. He didn't even care what. He hummed softly, following as Scotty climbed into the tub and those long legs slid beneath the water.

Those arms were open, reaching for him. God, that was...

Yeah.

The water was hot, felt really good on his feet and ankles, on his knees and thighs as he knelt in front of Scotty, trying to figure out how to sit close. Scotty slid over a little, turned him so that he was held in Scotty's arms, pulled back against that thin chest.

"Better?"

Drake leaned against Scotty, head on one shoulder and nodded as the water and skin on skin contact soon had him warmed right through.

He wasn't used to being held, of just letting go and trusting he'd be caught.

He liked it.

"Much," he murmured. "You good?"

"Perfect." Scotty's hands slid and stroked, petting and touching him all over.

"God, your hands... I never thought it would be so different."

"To be with a man?"

Nodding, he said, "I mean I guess I knew it would. I guess I just tried not to think about it too much, because it wasn't ever going to happen." But it had. Oh, yeah, it had.

He chuckled as his prick perked up a little, enjoying how they were sitting, Scotty's touches, and the memories of their bodies straining together out in the storm.

"Your secret's safe with me, honey. Just enjoy it." Scotty's hand slid down his belly, teased the tip of his prick.

He groaned, hips jerking, searching for more of that touch. He wasn't sure any secret was safe with the way those damned paparazzi dug, but he didn't really care right now, not at all. Scotty's lips were on his neck, licking and nibbling, even as those fingers circled his prick.

"And I thought this was good the first time." He was really digging the skin on skin they had going here in the tub.

He slid his hands over Scotty's thighs, head turning, wanting a kiss, wanting to see if it was better this time around, too. Scott's lips brushed his, tongue just teasing them open. It chased heat through him, all the way down to his belly. He touched his tongue to Scott's, electricity jumping in to join the heat inside him.

"Mmm. Hey, honey." Scott smiled, eyes searching his.

"Hey..." He smiled back, rubbed their noses together.

Then he pushed their lips together again, groaning into Scotty's mouth as Scotty's hand kept working his prick. Fuck, that hand was big and had calluses and felt so damned good. Scotty kept everything going, fingers sliding down to roll his balls, up to work the tip.

The heat of Scotty's cock snuggled up nicely against his ass, his lower back, but he couldn't reach it the way they were sitting. Of course he didn't want to turn either, what Scotty was doing made his blood sing, his heart trip hammering in his chest. He petted Scotty's legs with his hands, half wishing it was more, mostly not caring, just loving each touch of those big fingers.

"Mmm. Breathe. We got time, honey. All the time you need." Those lips traced the curve of his ear, nibbling a little.

"Feels like we don't. Feels urgent." His hips shifting, pushing his cock up through Scotty's hand. Yeah, urgent, good, necessary.

"That's just your balls talking. Here. I'll help." The touches got stronger, more sure, Scott jacking him with a firm touch.

"Just my..." his words morphed into a moan and oh, God, that was *good*.

He turned his head again, mouth moving blindly over whatever part of Scotty he could find, neck, jaw, chin. His hands dug into Scotty's thighs as his whole body tightened.

"Think, honey. Think about my mouth around you, about what it'll feel like, you buried in my tight ass." Oh. Oh, Jesus. That. He never imagined that soft, familiar voice saying those things to him.

"Scott!" He cried out, body jerking as the pleasure shot through him and out of his cock.

"There. Better." He felt Scott's smile against his skin, so fucking sweet.

He chuckled, melting bonelessly against Scotty. "What about you?" he asked, voice about as lazy as he felt.

"I'm good." Scott chuckled, the lean body floating under him.

Grinning, he tried rubbing back against Scotty, but was too melted and the water too floaty. "Yeah, you are good, that's for damned sure."

"I do my best, honey."

"Your best works for me." As if Scotty hadn't noticed him coming twice. He sighed and let his head rest against Scotty's chest. He fit just right, it seemed. "So you used to have a thing for me, huh?"

"Does it matter now?" Scott's lips brushed the top of his head.

"I guess not. We've got better things to do than worry about regrets." Besides, something told him that maybe he'd needed the time in between high school and now to appreciate being here like this with Scotty, in this quiet, beautiful place.

"I don't regret this a bit."

The words echoed inside him. That was one hell of a hook for a song...

He started humming, no real tune yet, the words flowing together. Oh yeah.

Scotty was good for his soul.

The strong heartbeat under his ear played the bass line.

Real good.

Scott could hear Dee on the piano in the front room when he stumbled in from a long day's work. He'd painted and mucked stalls and changed the oil on the Chevy and then painted some more before the image of Drake's eyes laughing escaped him.

He really needed to get the Christmas tree decorated. The house. Stuff.

First though.

Bath.

Scott didn't bother Dee; he just let the man play. It did Drake good.

Lord, he was tired. He stripped off and got the water going, slumping against the tile.

Dee's voice joined the piano, the sound clear and beautiful. He couldn't make out the words, but it was going to be a fine song, Dee's heart shining through the music. It wouldn't be long before Dee had to go, Scott knew it, but damn he was enjoying it while it lasted.

The music faded away and Dee came up the stairs, knocking softly on the door before coming in. "Hey, I thought I heard you come in."

"Hey, honey." He found his man a grin. "I was filthy."

Drake grinned right on back at him. "Yeah? You clean up real good though."

One of the towels was grabbed off the holder. "You ready to come out?" Oh, he was starting to recognize that particular husky note in Dee's voice.

"Yeah, I can be." He grinned, turned off the water, his body perking right up.

"Good." Dee's eyes ate him up, pink tongue coming out to slide over Dee's lips, wet them.

Scott pushed into Dee's arms, let the soft towel wrap around him as the kiss went deep. Dee's hands slid along his spine, warm and good, a low groan vibrating between them.

Oh, hell yes. He could use a massage. An orgasm.

Both.

Dee broke away, gasping. "Bed. We never seem to make it to the damned bed."

"Picky picky picky." He pushed a little, making Dee back up toward the bedroom.

Dee went, one step after another, color working its way up Dee's neck into his face. "I just want to try... You know."

"Going to fuck me, honey? I haven't had it in a long, long time."

"And I never have. Just don't let me hurt you, Scotty." Dee looked right at him, need and want and a bit of nerves there.

"You won't. We'll take it easy." He knew Dee. Dee would stop if he needed it.

"I don't. I don't have anything, Scotty." They'd used hands, and he'd blown Dee's mind with a blow-job or two. This was the first time it had come up, really.

He sat down on the bed, met Drake's eyes. "I'm clean, honey. Me and Nick were exclusive and I've been careful, but I got rubbers in the bathroom. Slick here in the headboard."

"There hasn't been anyone for me since me and Laura split. It's up to you."

"Well, then. C'mere and make love to me." He'd been wanting this off and on for twenty years.

"Okay," murmured Dee, still standing there, looking at him, eyes shining.

Scott figured the best way to deal was to encourage, so he lay back, spreading wide as he opened the towel. Dee whimpered and started getting undressed, fingers visibly trembling as he tugged off his sweater and t-shirt, pulled off his jeans. "Gonna remember you like that forever."

"Promise?" Scott wrapped his fingers around his cock, started pumping.

"Uh-huh. Don't get too far ahead of me." Dee came toward him, eyes watching.

"I won't. I want it." He bent one knee, spreading wider.

Dee climbed up onto the bed between his legs. Damn, that golden body was beautiful. It was easy, to reach up, stroke a line down Drake's belly, circle that cock.

Dee arched, pushing into his hand and rocking a time or two before groaning, backing off. "You're distracting me, Scotty."

"I don't want to distract you, honey. I want to inspire you."

He got him a bright smile. "I'm plenty inspired."

Bending over him, Dee brought their mouths together, their cocks kissing, sliding together. He rolled up, pushing Dee some, even as he fucked Dee's lips. Dee's fingers slid over his skin, thumb finding his nipple and rubbing over it, hips coming down to meet his.

"Mmm." He liked that. He needed to be fucked more.

Then Dee's fingers slid away, the hard body stretching up for the headboard. Dee's eyes shone at him.

"Want you, huh? Filling me up." Oh, he liked how need looked on Dee's face.

His words lit a fire in Dee, those slippery fingers pushing behind his balls, rubbing over his hole, one after the other. "Just push in, right?"

"Yeah. Just slide in. I'll tell you if it's too much." Sweet man.

One of Dee's fingers pushed at his hole, then rubbed over it, then pushed at it again, Dee watching his fingers now, body still but for that hand, that one finger just torturing him.

"More." He rippled, trying to ride the touch.

"So tiny," murmured Dee, but then the tip of his finger pushed in, Dee's eyes widening as the length of his finger slid right in. "Scott!"

"Yes..." He nodded, belly tight as a board. "Please, honey."

"God, Scott. So tight. And hot. Oh, man." Dee took a deep breath and wriggled his finger, tugged it out and pushed it back in again.

"Good. Do it again. Need, huh?" He might have to kill Dee for teasing.

"I just can't believe..." Dee shook his head and a second finger joined the first, Dee pushing it in and then spreading both fingers apart, twisting them. Sliding them in and out.

Scott closed his eyes and rode, trying to remember every fucking second.

Dee kept murmuring, telling him how hot and sexy he looked, how tight and silky he felt inside. "Inside. Jesus, Scotty, my fingers are inside your body."

A whimper came, a deep breath and suddenly Dee pushed in a third finger, filling him so nicely.

"Oh..." He stretched, cock slapping his belly as his eyes rolled like thrown dice. "Honey. Please. So fucking *good*."

In and out, Dee's fingers moved faster and faster, each gasping breath Dee took increasing in speed right along with them. "Oh, God, I want to be in you, Scott."

Scott grabbed his knees, tugged and spread. "Yours. Please."

"Oh, fuck." Dee grabbed at his own balls, giving them a tug and a squeeze that must have ached something fierce. "Gimme a sec or I'm not even gonna get in." Dee twisted his balls and tugged again, and then came forward some, hand guiding the hard prick right to his hole.

It was like a fucking dream.

He rolled up, hole wrapping around the tip of Drake's prick. Dee's mouth opened but no sound came out as he slowly filled Scott up. Oh, hell yes. Scott moaned, shuddering with the pure pleasure of it.

"You... I..." Dee shook his head and started to move, slowly pulling out and then shoving back in with a cry and a jerk.

"Uh-huh. Again." Again. He needed. Wanted. Loved. Fuck.

Dee nodded, and thrust again, then once more, each movement more graceful, more sure than the last until Dee found his rhythm, hips pushing and snapping, fingers holding on tight, Dee's cock going nice and deep. He kept encouraging, begging, letting Dee know how much he liked it, needed it.

"Oh God, Scott." Dee's face was pure pleasure, eyes so wide as one thrust followed another.

"Yeah. Yeah, honey. More." He was gonna fucking lose it.

"More?" Dee shifted to one arm, hand wrapping around Scott's cock and jacking him. "Like this?"

"Uh. Uh. Uh-huh. *Fuck!*" He just lost it, humping and grunting and letting himself take all he needed.

"Scott. Oh, fuck, Scott. Scott." Dee went wild, and their bodies slapped together noisily. "Oh, God, I'm... Scott!"

No, turkey, you're Dee. I'm Scott. He'd've said it aloud, if he had a single breath.

Dee jerked into him, coming hard.

His own orgasm came about ten seconds later, his eyes rolling back in his head, fingers dragging Dee closer.

Dee collapsed down onto him, skin damp, breath panting hotly against his neck. "Wow, that was... wow."

"Uh-huh." He kissed Dee's temple, humming softly.

Dee chuckled and wriggled, cock sliding inside him. That had Dee groaning. "Oh man."

"Mmhmm. Do that again." He squeezed, let Drake feel it.

It earned him a jerk, Dee's cock moving inside him again. "Oh, Christ, I feel like a kid on Christmas morning," Dee told him, tongue sliding over his neck.

"Close enough." They still had three days 'til Christmas.

Dee laughed out loud, the sound bright and good.

"Mmm. Love that sound." He did. Loved the sound. The man.

"Yeah? I've laughed a lot since coming here." He could feel Dee grinning against his neck. "Which either means I never used to laugh enough or you're one hell of a funny guy."

"Maybe both. In fact, both sounds like a great answer."

Dee nodded. "Yeah, it does."

They lay together like that for awhile, Dee sighing as his softening cock slid away.

"Love you, honey." The words slipped out before he even thought.

Drake went stiff, and then relaxed against him with another soft sigh, body pushing close. "Thank you." A soft kiss was pressed to his skin. "Thank you."

He stroked Drake's back, relaxing into the mattress, melting. Oh, man. Good.

"So I guess that means you don't mind if I horn in on your holidays."

"No. I don't mind at all." Hell, he'd been sort of hoping.

"Cool." He could feel Dee's smile against his skin and the man pushed even closer, like Drake was trying to melt right into him. "Looks like it's shaping up to be a good one."

Scott just nodded. Yeah, it just might be at that.

Chapter Three

Drake had spent the last God only knew how many Christmases in hotel rooms, in the middle of appearances, tours, and whatnot. Hell, the last few the only reason he'd known it was Christmas at all was because everything was closed.

This year was different.

This year he didn't have to hide who he was or spend the day alone. There was a tree in the living room, some simply amazing smells coming from the kitchen, and he was at the piano singing carols for the man who loved him.

Shit, he didn't think he could have come up with a better Christmas present if he'd sent it off in a letter to Santa.

Chuckling, he played the first few bars of Joy to the World and then began to belt it out.

He could hear Scotty, singing along, just as out-of-tune and happy as could be. He went through a few more and then stopped in favor of sipping on the eggnog Scotty'd left sitting on a coaster on top of the piano.

Oh, it was spiked. Perfect.

Getting up, he wandered into the kitchen, the good smells intensifying. Scotty was wearing sweats and a t-shirt, and a bright yellow apron with "kiss the cook" on it. Drake stopped in the doorway a moment, just taking it all in, from the scents, to the sights, to the fact that he felt *good* all the way to his bones.

"Hey, honey. You want some cheese ball? It's got bacon." A little tray was pushed over to him, filled with a ton of little odds and ends -- crackers and veggies and olives and a cheese ball.

"Oh, munchies. Too cool."

He helped himself to some of the cheese ball, digging into it with each of the different crackers to see which one tasted best. Unfortunately it was the one that crumbled the most under the strain of dragging through the cheese ball, but he figured Scotty'd had his cock in that beautiful mouth, the man wasn't going to mind if he used his fingers to pick up cheese ball and cracker bits.

"You go all out like this every year?" he asked, watching in amazement at all the stuff that Scotty was preparing. He'd kind of gotten over being surprised every time Scotty proved that he knew how to cook, but this was all that on a whole new level.

"I used to; I haven't in a while." He got a grin, a wink. "You?"

"I usually order a bottle of Jack and a burger from room service." Which made it sound pretty

pathetic and he hadn't asked in order to hound some sympathy out of Scotty, so he snagged another cracker and scooped up some more of the cheese ball, popping it into Scotty's mouth.

"Uhn." Scotty moaned, leaning right into him.

He leaned right back, arms wrapping around Scotty and tugging the man in a little closer. "Merry Christmas," he murmured, saying it for what had to be the fifth or sixth time today.

"Mmhmm. It is. Merry merry." Scott looked happy as hell, cheeks flushed, eyes all lit up.

He pressed their lips together, tongue sliding between Scott's, slipping into the delicious heat of Scott's mouth. Groaning he pushed their hips together, electricity seeming to flow between his mouth and cock.

"Hungry man. I'm cooking." Scotty didn't really seem to be complaining.

"You can't take a break?" he asked rubbing his hips in circles against Scotty's thigh. God, the man was sexy. And hot.

"You'll have to help after." Scott grinned, nibbled along his jaw.

"If you're willing to risk my burning your potatoes, I'm happy to help." He tilted his head up, giving that hungry mouth access to more skin.

"They're our potatoes, Rockstar." Scotty's teeth dragged and stung, making him moan.

"Sure. Whatever." As long as Scotty didn't stop, he'd agree with and to just about anything.

His fingers, cold from playing as long as he had, wound their way beneath Scotty's sweater and t-shirt, finding the smooth, warm skin waiting for him.

"Mmmhmm." Scott shuddered, pressed closer.

"We should move this somewhere," he murmured as Lady came up behind him and bumped her nose against his butt.

"Somebody's jealous." Yeah, either that or she wanted to lick Scotty's fingers.

"Well, frankly, I'd rather have your face in my butt instead of hers." He winked and started heading backward, keeping half an eye out for Lady, making sure she didn't trip him up. There was a lovely couch in the living room with the tree. No reason for them not to use it.

Scott followed easy, nibbling and licking as they went. God, he loved the way Scott made love, like the man wanted to devour him.

They made it to the living room without tripping over anything or anyone, and Drake fell back onto the couch, pulling Scotty down on top of him. The solid weight felt so good.

"Mmm. Hey." Scott straddled him, lips warm and swollen where they clung to his.

He hummed, hips pushing up to rub against Scott. "Hey." He met Scott's eyes, held them. "I want... you."

"Yeah? You know you got me, yeah?"

He nodded. That he knew. It kind of blew his mind. "That wasn't what I meant though. I meant. You know... in me."

"Merry Christmas to me?" Scott stroked his jaw, his face. "You sure, honey? I wouldn't do anything you don't want to."

He nuzzled into the touches, each one of them making him that much more certain. "I saw your face when I did you, Scotty. I want to."

"Mmm. You felt like heaven, Dee. Just where I needed you." Scott started working his buttons open, fingers teasing his skin.

He pushed up into the touches, breathing deeply. "It was good for me, too." Good. He almost snorted at himself. "Amazing." God, just thinking about it had him hard, his ass clenching and releasing at the thought of Scotty inside him like that.

"Get naked for me, honey. I want to touch."

He could do that. He could so do that. He lifted himself up long enough to pull his shirt off, and then pushed his hands between his body and Scotty's, working the zipper of his jeans down. "You get naked, too."

"You think? Apron and all?"

He grinned, fingers sliding over the words. "If I didn't think it would impede the process I'd suggest you keep it on."

Oh, man. That laugh was worth a million bucks.

He arched, worked his jeans down off his hips. God, the way that rubbed them together was worth another million.

"You going to let me lick you, honey? Get you wet for me?"

Shit, he loved that, loved how that drawl sounded so sweet and was so fucking *filthy*.

He nodded, breath caught in his throat. "P...please."

"Mmmhmm. Been wantin' this, so bad."

Damn, that made him feel so good. Scotty always did, like he was something special, precious. "All yours, Scotty. Sorry I didn't wrap it."

"I'll take it." Scott spread him, scooted back between his legs, mouth on his belly and moving south.

He spread his legs wider, showing Scott he wanted it, that he trusted Scotty. One of his hands found Scott's hair, the other found the edge of the couch and hung on.

Those lips moved down and down, one cheek rubbing against his shaft. Oh, God. Yes. So fucking good. He couldn't have stopped his hips pushing, sliding his cock along Scotty's face even if he'd wanted to.

He didn't want to.

A low note came out of him, heartfelt, wanton.

"So fine." Scotty hummed and slid down, tongue sliding along the base of his cock, the top of his ball sac.

He was nearly trembling with anticipation, that tongue so good and so hot and moving down on him, not getting distracted at all. He made a needy noise, throwing one leg over the top of the couch, tilting his hips.

Scotty's fingers slid under his ass, thumbs spreading him for that. Oh. Oh, Jesus. Yes. That was. Damn. He grabbed onto the cushions with both hands, noises coming out of him like he couldn't believe. But Scotty's tongue. He just. God.

Scott took his time, licking and nuzzling and lapping, pushing in to fuck him before backing off again, licking away. It blew his mind, each lick, each push of that tongue into his body. Scotty's tongue in him.

Good fucking lord.

He started humping against Scotty's face, hips moving on their own, pushing him toward the amazing touches. All the while, Scott was making these sounds, deep and raw and needy, like this wasn't good for him.

"Scotty. Oh fuck, man." He was going to come from this. Any second now, each sound vibrating through his skin like the sounds themselves were right inside him, and there had to be room for more.

"Now, honey? Let me?" That heat disappeared, replaced by an even bigger heat, pressing against his hole.

He nodded, made a sound that meant yes and please and oh fuck he couldn't believe this was real. He met Scotty's eyes, fingers sliding on one stubbled cheek.

"Love you, honey. Swear to God." Scott looked at him like he was the center of the whole fucking world.

He felt that all through him, better than even Scotty's tongue had been.

"Love..." he whispered.

Then he shifted, hips restless, bumping that heat up against his hole, which made him gasp. "Come on, Scotty. Do it."

He got a nod and then Scotty started pushing in, slow and easy, just rocking into him. Scotty's rhythm was easy to find -- it was like making music -- and he rolled his hips to meet the pushes, eager for each and every sensation, even the burn as Scotty stretched him wider than he'd ever thought possible.

"You good? Not hurting?" Scotty was shaking, muscles all tight as boards.

Swallowing, he nodded. It was almost too much and every time it seemed like Scotty was going to stop outright, he just about broke. "Just do it," he ground out.

Scott nodded and that heavy cock sank in deep, spreading and spearing him, stretching him so deep.

"Oh fuck!" He panted, hands grabbing hold of Scotty's arms and holding on as his body rippled -- fucking rippled -- around the hard flesh buried deep inside him.

"Yeah. Yeah. More, honey." Scott drove into him, over and over.

He couldn't believe how good it was, his cock jerking every time Scott's pushed deep. And then Scotty shifted and this time everything lit up inside him, making him shout out, his shoulders coming up off the couch.

"Yeah. Yeah. Right there, honey." Scott hit it again and again.

Drake screamed, come shooting up over his chest as his whole body shook with it.

"Fuck..." Scott groaned, head on his shoulder, hips pistoning.

He grabbed Scotty's ass, encouraging him. "Come on now, Scotty. Give it to me."

"Dee..." Scotty whimpered, jerked, shooting.

"Scotty, I felt that..." He slid his hands up along Scotty's back, fingers sliding on the sweat-slick skin. "Merry Christmas to us."

"Hell, yeah. The best."

Yeah. Yeah, and maybe the first of many.

He smiled, held onto Scotty, watching the way the lights from the tree reflected in Scotty's eyes.

They couldn't stay on the couch forever and eventually Scotty needed to get up and poke and prod the bird in the oven. The man got dressed again, and Drake pouted when Scotty wouldn't agree to wear just the apron. Of course one enthusiastic sniff at Scotty's butt by Lord, and Drake figured Scotty'd made the right decision.

Drake puttered a bit, helped set the table, played another tune on the piano, ate more cheese ball and olives while Scotty did something mysterious with sweet potatoes.

He hummed a little tune, the song that had spawned a half dozen more. All since he and Scotty'd become lovers. Scotty and this place, they eased him, let everything else fall away so he could hear that creative spark inside him.

Maybe that's why he was drumming his fingers on the table, avoiding looking at the phone that hung on the wall. He knew he should call Molly and wish her a Merry Christmas. She was a good assistant; hell, it was thanks to her he'd been able to just drop everything and come here, she deserved at least a 'have a good one' and a reminder to give herself a big bonus this year.

Still, he hated to let the outside world intrude. His knee started going, matching the tapping of his fingers.

"Make your phone call, Dee. Then we can eat some more." Scotty's lips brushed his temple, mustache tickling.

"Yeah, yeah." He got up, eyeing the phone like it was the spawn of Satan or something -- which it might have been.

Leaning against the counter, he put the receiver to his ear and dialed Molly's cell, eyes still watching Scotty as he puttered; damn that man was sexy.

The phone only rang twice before Molly answered. "Drake Peter Rawlings if that is you and not the police informing me where to come identify the body, you'd better make them your next call because I am going to hunt you down and kill you."

He winced. She was mad. Well, he kind of figured she might be as he'd not called at all 'til now, but he'd been hoping it being Christmas might have mitigated things some. "Merry Christmas to you, too, Molly."

She harrumphed at him. "Do you know how long it's been since you left?"

"Um... a few weeks?"

"Six. Almost seven. That's nearly two months without a single call, a single fax, a single *anything* to let me know you're alive."

"I told you I needed some time off, Molly." He could feel his spine getting stiff, his muscles starting to tense up.

"Do you have any idea what the papers are saying?"

"I haven't read a newspaper since the day I left the office." It was true. He didn't even know if Scotty'd read any, he hadn't asked.

"Half of them are saying you're dead, the other half are saying you're in rehab. And they keep calling here. The label keeps calling here. Everyone wants to know where you are!"

"And what do you tell them?"

"No comment." She snapped the words off and Drake could hear her telling the reporters just like that with that little disdainful tone. "The label's threatening to fire you if you don't call them back, Drake."

Oh, he didn't think so. He shook his head. "They can't do that. I have a contract. I have to deliver one more album to them before the end of next year, and tour for that album. Every other bit of dog and pony show they've had me do is icing on the fucking cake. You tell them that they should go right ahead and fire me and I'll see them in court when my lawyer wipes the fucking floor with them for breach of contract." He knew it wasn't her fault, but he couldn't help yelling at her. Goddamn, those people would suck him dry if they could.

Scotty's hands landed on his shoulders, strong as hell, working the tension right out of him. "Breathe, honey."

Oh, fuck, that felt good, and he relaxed back into the touch, taking a deep breath. "I'm sorry, Molly. I didn't mean to yell at you. I just... I needed to get away. I needed this. I'm sorry if I worried you."

"I wasn't worried at first. But when two weeks became three and then four and then Christmas... I just expected you to check in with me at least."

"Well, I've checked in now, does that count?"

"I suppose it'll have to. And I am glad you aren't really dead. Though I was starting to believe those tabloids myself!"

"I'm sorry. I'm all right. I'm better than all right -- I'm really pretty good. I just wanted to wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year."

"Does that mean you aren't coming back yet?"

Scotty's fingers kept him loose, kept his shoulders from tensing up again. "I need to finish that album first. I've got half a dozen solid tracks. You tell the label that I'm busy working on it and that I'll show when it's ready."

"You promise you'll call in a few weeks even if it's not done yet."

"I will. Oh, and Molly, give yourself a big bonus from me."

She laughed. "I already have."

"Bitch."

"That's what you pay me for."

He laughed. "Molly? Thanks."

"You're welcome. Have a good Christmas."

"Yeah, I am. A great one. Bye."

He hung up the phone and dropped his head forward, groaning at the way Scotty's fingers were working his neck.

"Better?" Scotty was right there, touching away.

"You've got magic hands, Scotty." He looked back over his shoulder, smiling at his old friend, feeling himself settle back into the relaxation and good feelings he'd built over the last weeks.

"They know what they're doing." Scott looked a little sad for a second, then the look passed, a smile beaming out. "You hungry?"

His stomach managed to pick just then to growl, surprising him, and he chuckled. "I guess I am at that. Now that that's over with." He raised his hand, pressing it to Scotty's cheek, thumb sliding along those smiling lips.

Scott kissed his thumb, nodded. "It's hell when the real world comes knocking."

Yeah. Yeah, he guessed. Of course, he never saw Scott's phone ring, never saw the man actually work, even though most nights he'd wake up alone in the bed, the lights on in the studio.

"Tabloids are saying I'm dead. Or in rehab." He shook his head. He supposed the second one was kind of accurate, even if it wasn't for drugs or alcohol.

"Well, you're not. You're here. Living."

Grinning, he leaned into Scotty. "I'm here. Loving."

"Yeah. Yeah, loving." Scott's arms wrapped around him, holding on tight.

"Yeah." He pressed their lips together, tongue slipping into Scotty's mouth. Fuck, he didn't think he'd ever get used to how good this felt.

Scotty moaned, kissing him hard enough that his toes curled and he sort of forgot about everything else. Forgot about everything but sliding his hands down and grabbing Scotty's ass, rubbing up against all those muscles.

"Mmm... You hungry?" There was a tiny hickey on Scott's jaw. Sexy as fuck.

"Uh-huh." He licked his way over to the hickey, nibbling at it.

"The. Uh. The food is..." Scotty moaned, throat working.

"It'll wait, right?" He wrapped his lips around the marked skin, began to suck.

"Uh. Uh-huh."

He scraped at the mark with his teeth, wanting more of those less than coherent sounds from Scotty, wanting to be the one to make them happen. He got them, too, one after another, Scotty shivering and shaking in his arms. He finally pulled away and checked out the mark. It was bigger, darker, unmistakable. Groaning, he pushed their mouths back together again, losing himself in Scotty's taste.

"Need you, yeah? I do." Scott pushed against him, that heavy cock ready for him, throbbing against his hip. "Did you put Viagra in my coffee?"

"Yeah, in mine, too." He grinned, hips rubbing against Scotty's, wanting badly. "We gonna do it right here? Up against your kitchen counter?" It wouldn't be the first time.

"You want me here? Spread out for you?" Fuck, the things Scotty said.

"You know it. Hell, Scotty, I want you however I can get you."

He pushed his fingers into Scotty's waistband, groaning as he felt the heat of skin against them.

"Good." Scotty started wiggling out of his sweats, the smell of skin and musk heady.

Drake licked his lips. Damn, that was sexy, the way that Scotty wanted him, stripped down for him in the middle of the kitchen just like that. He stared a moment as that beautiful ass came into view, and he caught a glimpse of Scotty prick, shiny on the tip, and he moaned, rubbing himself through his sweats.

Then that pretty ass hopped up on the counter, thighs spreading wide. "Come and get me."

He didn't need a second invitation. Tugging off his shirt and pushing down his sweats, he was soon as naked as Scotty. He moved to stand between Scotty's legs, arms sliding around the man's waist, pushing up good and close. "Gonna eat you all up, Scotty."

"Promises, promises." Scott's hands framed his face, those eyes taking him in.

He turned his face, just enough to lick at Scotty's skin, the flavor tempered by sugar and flour, spices. He turned back to meet those hungry eyes. "Yeah. Promises."

"It's going to hurt like hell when you go."

"I'm not going anywhere, Scotty." He wasn't finished his album. He wasn't ready to let go.

"Good." Scott pushed into his kiss, tongue fucking his lips.

His fingers moved over Scotty, pressing hard, deep, touching as much of the warm, smooth skin as he could. Scott's legs wrapped around him, holding him close, drawing him right in against that fine body. He rubbed hard, their pricks rubbing, leaving wet kisses on their bellies. It felt so good. So fucking good.

"Love how you smell, honey." Scotty reached down, fingers pushing down between them, brushing over the tips of their cocks.

He jerked, lightning going through him at the simple touch. "I smell like turkey," he teased before growing serious. "I love you how taste."

"Oh. Taste me." Scotty spread wider, hips sliding on the counter.

"My pleasure," he murmured. He started at the top, taking a quick kiss before licking Scotty's lips, and then sucking on his chin, nibbling at the underside.

"Hungry..." He loved that desperate, moaning sound.

"Starving for you." Like he'd been hungry all his life until he finally got his first taste of Scotty.

He wrapped his lips around Scott's Adam's apple, licking and sucking.

"Dee. Dee, give me more." Demanding man.

"Didn't anyone ever tell you not to eat too fast?" He nipped at the hollow at the base of Scott's throat and then licked his way down Scott's breastbone.

"I. Huh?" Scotty's nipples were hard as little rocks.

"Gotta savor my meal, man." He licked his way over to one, deliberately missing it as he swiped his tongue nearby.

"Tease...." Scott shifted, body wanting his mouth.

He chuckled, loving the need that threaded through that word. Loving it enough that he closed his lips over Scott's nipple and flicked his tongue across it.

"Yes..." Scott's head hit the cabinet door with a thud.

Humming the tune that he'd named Scotty's Song in his head, he worked his way over to the other nipple, using his teeth on this one. He loved how Scotty went wild, cussing and shifting, fingers tangled in his hair. Yeah, just like that. Scotty's cock bumped against him, impatient and needy and he ignored it in favor of continuing to move between Scotty's nipples. Scotty started humping, prick rubbing against him, pushing harder and faster. Christ, he felt like a god, with Scotty wild and desperate from these touches.

He worked his way slowly down, wanting to feast on every bit of Scotty he could get. He laughed as he hit that sweet navel, tongue dipping in and playing, Scotty's cock impatiently bumping his chin.

"I want. Dee. Honey. Please." Oh, yeah. He could so get off on the begging.

Drake looked up at Scotty's face, seeing the need there as clear as day. "Trust me, Scotty. I won't leave you wanting." He nipped once at Scotty's belly, and then bent to lick at the wet tipped cock.

"I... Oh, sweet fuck, Dee. You're so good..."

Drake snorted. He was just doing what felt good when Scotty did it to him. He nibbled his way down the shaft, the silky skin so hot, the flavor all salt and musk and *Scott*. His hands slid along Scotty's inner thighs, spreading him wider apart. There wasn't anything finer on earth than that man, spread for him and begging for it.

He explored Scotty's balls, licking them, taking each one into his mouth and sucking until Scotty's cries grew louder. Then he nudged them out of the way to lick at the soft, smooth patch of skin

beyond them, the scent here all fucking Scott and so damned good. Scott whimpered, one heel catching on the edge of the counter.

Fuck. So sexy.

Groaning, he licked at Scott's hole, tongue sliding on the wrinkled skin, feeling it as it clenched and relaxed. His own prick throbbed, his ass clenching and it was like he could still feel Scotty there, inside him. He whimpered, pushing his tongue in where his cock wanted to be. The sounds that drew from Scott had his hand around his prick, jacking fast and hard, making sure he was hard, ready to push in deep.

He held off as long as he could, fucking Scott with his tongue until he couldn't stand it for another second. A cry tore from his throat as he rose up, pushing in just like that, his cock going deep into Scotty's body.

"Yes. Fuck. Dee. Harder." Scott slid off the counter, holding his weight on those lean arms. Fuck.

He grabbed hold of Scott's thighs, pulling him close with every thrust. Oh, fuck. So deep. So hot and tight. He moved hard, faster, watching his cock going into Scotty's body, watching the lean muscles work. Those filthy words drove him faster, pushed him harder and harder, their skin slapping together.

"Scotty. Fuck. Good." He wasn't even sure what he was trying to say, but he couldn't find the words anyway, and he met Scott's eyes, held them as his hips snapped and jerked, driving him into Scotty's body.

"Uh-huh." Scott nodded, flushed, and shot, seed spraying between them.

Scott's ass tightened around him and he cried out, shuddering as he filled Scott with his spunk. He brought their foreheads together, panting, trying to catch his breath.

"Good." Scotty looked like he'd been beaned over the head with a baseball bat.

Humming, he took Scotty's mouth, the kiss long and lazy, his hand spreading Scotty's come into the skin of man's belly, that scent stronger than any of the others in the kitchen now. "Good? Best fucking Christmas ever."

"Uh-huh. Best." Ah. Scotty was all melted.

He slowly let Scotty's thighs go, fingers sliding on skin. He took another kiss, tongue sliding in Scotty's mouth. "Love," he whispered.

"I do. Have." Those eyes were dead-serious.

He swallowed. "Me, too, Scotty. Really. I know I have a lousy track record, but I never..." He shook his head. "This is different."

"Good. I can stand being different for you." Scott's grin was quick and bright. "After you get my ass off the edge of this counter, anyway."

Drake laughed, his cock slipping out of Scotty's body as he did. "Got a cranberry digging in?"

"Just the edge." Scotty winked, leaned in. "Merry Christmas, honey."

Nodding, he grabbed Scotty's ass and tugged him right off the counter, squeezing and massaging the cool flesh. "Yeah. Merry Christmas."

"Come on. Quick shower and we'll feast. Then presents!"

He let his face drop. "We were supposed to get each other presents?" The corner of his mouth twitched. He'd written a song just for Scott, had hand-written the lyrics and music out for him -- Scotty owned it lock stock and royalties.

"Dork." Scott grinned. "Yours is in the studio, still."

He chuckled, grinning back at Scotty. "I've got yours in the guest room." The room he'd started off in.

"Yeah? What is it?" Scott started moving him toward the stairs.

"Don't you want to wait until it's under the tree?" He stayed close, touching Scotty as they moved, that warm skin calling to his fingers.

"Sure. But I need to shower. You need to shower." Scotty was laughing and happy.

He goosed that happy ass. "You saying I stink?"

"Yep."

Oh, asshole.

He pinched Scotty's ass again, fingers of his other hand digging into ribs.

Scotty's laugh echoed, making the whole house sound like Christmas.

He could live his whole life on that sound.

He thought he'd like to give that a try.

The shower relaxed them, the supper made them both moan and eat until they collapsed onto the sofa together, napping hard, Dee wrapped up in his arms.

When he woke up, the sun had gone down and the clouds that had been heavy all morning were finally paying off with flurries.

Snow.

On Christmas.

"Dee. Dee, honey. Look, before it goes away!"

"Hmm? Look at what?"

Dee blinked up at him, looking adorable and all mussed up.

"Snow. Christmas snow, no shit."

"Cool." Dee grinned and grabbed his hand, heading for the window.

It was just falling down, catching the wind and swirling.

"Look at that."

Dee's arms came around him, that body snuggled up along his back as Dee's chin landed on his shoulder. "Wild. Pretty, too."

"It is. I haven't seen snow on Christmas in years."

"No? I think I saw some a couple years ago. I was in a hotel room in... New York?" He felt Dee shrug against him. "Doesn't matter. I wound up getting wasted and missing it. This is better." A soft kiss pressed against the side of his neck.

"This is perfect." He smiled, squeezed Dee's hand. "Come to the studio. I have something to show you." Something he'd never shown anyone.

"Are you gonna show me your etchings?" Dee asked, moving to walk with him.

"Something like that, yes."

Oh, cold. It was so cold, but beautiful.

Dee laughed, face turning up to the snow. Tongue sticking out, Dee tried to catch the falling flakes. His fingers itched to capture that look, that smile, but he let the urge pass and just watched. Licking

his lips and sticking his tongue out for more, Dee kept it up right until they got to the barn, dodging here and there to catch the falling flakes.

Finally he stopped, eyes twinkling. "They taste good, Scotty."

"They taste like Christmas." He kissed the tip of Dee's nose, then the soft, swollen lips.

Dee opened to him, letting him in. They kissed there in the snow for a long time, bodies pressing together against the cold.

They broke apart, Dee chuckling, snowflakes caught on his lashes.

"Come see your gift." He unlocked the studio, drew Dee into the huge space. He'd spent the last three years, working off and on with these paintings. There were twenty, now. Drake as a boy, as a young man. As a famous singer. As a tired man. As his lover.

He turned the overhead lights on, the pictures out, spread around the room, some against the wall, others on easels.

Dee gasped, standing there and looking, eyes moving from one to the next and then the next.

Scott leaned against the doorframe, watching. He didn't have to ask if they were good. He knew better.

Dee eventually started moving, going from one painting to the next much as he had the first day he'd seen Scott's other work. Finally he stopped in the middle of the room and turned, eyes glistening. "I don't... I don't know what to say."

"Say you'll take good care of them."

"Are you sure you want to just give them to me, Scott? This must have taken you... a long time." Dee came to him, stood in front of him, understanding in his eyes. "You didn't just start these when I came to visit."

"No. No, some of them are older than others." I've loved you for a long time.

"I'll take good care of them." Dee's voice was husky, and Dee reached out, fingers sliding around his arm and holding on, the blue eyes holding his.

"Good." They were the best things he'd ever done, hands-down.

"We have to go back to the house for my gift," Dee murmured, hand sliding down his arm to wrap their fingers together. "Wait!" Dee said suddenly, going back and grabbing the last picture, the one that was 'Dee his lover'. "I want to hang this one in our bedroom."

Their bedroom.

He tilted his head, nodded. "You know it."

"Cool. Come on, I want to give you my gift now." Dee bounced, and dragged him out of the studio and back toward the house.

They hurried, keeping the canvas out of the weather. Drake set it on the kitchen counter, out of the dogs' reach, then drew him into the main room.

He'd noticed Dee had brought down a firecracker shaped present after their shower, and set it under the tree. That was fetched now, handed over. Before he could open it though, Dee went over to the piano. "Go on," Dee told him with a grin. "Open it and it'll all make sense."

He opened the present, heading toward the piano as he did.

It was a song, "I Don't Regret This A Bit" by Drake Rawlings, the music drawn in carefully by hand, lyrics at the end.

Dee started to play, the tune one he'd heard now and then over the last few weeks. Then that clear, strong voice began to sing, Dee's eyes on him.

"Oh..." He sat down, stunned, listening to hear every word. His song. Oh.

The last note faded, Dee's fingers resting lightly on the piano keys. "It's going to be the first single on my next album. All the royalties, everything, are going to be yours." Dee smiled. "And there'll be a dedication."

Dee pointed to the print he'd missed underneath the title. "For Scotty, who I'll never regret."

"I..." He didn't have any words; he just looked at Dee, staring, so in love it hurt. "Play it again?"

Dee reached out and touched his cheek, and then nodded, playing the song again, eyes closing this time, the words ringing out with truth, with emotion.

As the music faded, Scott rested against Dee, breathing in deep.

It was the best present he'd ever gotten.

Ever.

Chapter Four

At the end of January, Drake had his album and he was itching to get into the studio and record it.

At the same time, he didn't want to go. Oh, the recording itself would be great -- it always was, and he was really excited about this album. It was the best work he'd done in years. But recording meant leaving and an album in the can meant touring. Which meant leaving Scotty and this place where he'd found love, and peace, and happiness deep inside.

So he ignored the finished songs and the end of January slipped into February.

He took rides with Scotty, and played the piano, and sang. He dozed while Scotty painted, and learned how to make cornbread and apple pie.

Again and again, he was back at the piano, tweaking the songs he'd written, singing them until he felt like he was doing it in his sleep. Today was no different and when he couldn't play for another minute he went out, despite the rain and the chill in the air, wandering around the place, kicking at the stones he found.

Finally he ran smack-dab into Scotty, who looked at him with sad, sure eyes. "It's time for you to go, honey. You're ready."

He sighed and leaned into Scotty's strength. "I know. I need to get this album recorded. I can feel it in my blood. But I don't want to leave."

"There will always be a place for you here, Dee. I'm not going anywhere."

"I was hoping you'd say that, because I'll be back."

His contract was up after this album and he figured after that he'd maybe earned the right to be his own man -- put out the albums he wanted as he had them ready and maybe do a little touring, but nothing that took him away for long.

"Good. I'll miss you." Scotty kissed him, the touch slow and lingering. "But you have to share your music."

"I do." And Scotty understood that -- understood him in a way no one ever had. "Come to bed with me one last time before I go?"

"No. No more last times for me."

"What?" He took a step back, searching Scotty's eyes. "You don't want to?"

"I want you, but I don't want a last time, you get it? I want. I mean, I need to know that." Scott sighed, rubbed his forehead.

"Oh. Hey. Scotty." He waited until Scott's eyes met his. "I'm coming back, yeah? I know these songs inside and out, it's not going to take me more than a week or two to lay down the tracks and then it'll take them a few weeks to get any sort of tour set up and I'm spending the intervening time here." He kissed Scott hard. "I need this place, Scotty. I need you."

Scott looked at him, then a tension he hadn't even seen dissolved. "It's yours. I'm yours."

Of course it was, he had a key, half of the closet. It was theirs, now. Home.

All he had to do was come back.

Epilogue

The place was lit up bright enough that someone could see it from space. Scott whistled as he carried a tray of hot chocolate and cookies into the front room, nudging the dogs out of the way.

"O Holy Night" slid into "All I Want For Christmas Is You", just like that and Scott laughed, Drake's eyes smiling over at him. God, Dee was a beautiful man.

He'd come home two days ago after nearly seven months on the road, and spent most of those two days sleeping hard. But he was awake now, cell phone turned off and tucked away in a drawer, the heavy bags under his eyes almost gone.

The song trailed away and Dee stood, stretched, letting him see a bit of belly as Dee's sweater rode high.

"That smells like heaven, Scotty." Drake's gaze slid up from his feet all the way to meet his eyes again, making him think Dee maybe wasn't thinking about chocolate or cookies.

Oh. Oh, hell yeah. He let his thighs part, let Dee know that he was feeling it, feeling them. "You're looking fine, honey."

"And you are a sight for damned sore eyes." Smiling wide, Dee took the tray from him and put it on the coffee table. "I was so tired when I got back the other day -- did I get a proper hello?"

"No. You let me run you through the shower and then hold you in our bed." It had been good, really, holding Dee.

"Well, then, I think you ought to do me right -- just so I know I'm welcome." Dee's eyes twinkled at him

"Spoiled rock star." Spoiled rock star with a new number one album.

Scott stepped up close, drew their lips together, kissing Drake like he'd been needing to for the weeks since Drake had flown him to Chicago for his birthday and a long weekend in the fanciest hotel he'd ever seen. That low, desperate sound came from Dee, the man's arms circling him and tugging him in nice and hard against Dee's body as Dee opened right up for his kiss.

They rocked together, one of his legs wrapping around Dee's hip, bringing their cocks together. One of Dee's hands found his ass and squeezed nice and hard, the other slid between them to rub at his nipples. He groaned, teeth grabbing Dee's bottom lip, tugging hard. More.

"Oh, God. I haven't tasted you in too long." Dee tugged at his sweater, pulling it up over his head along with his T-shirt.

"You haven't tasted. Haven't touched. Haven't spread me out and fucked me."

Groaning, Dee started on his belt, fingers nearly ripping it off him. "Gonna. Gonna do that right now, Scotty."

"Promise?" He nodded, working Drake's clothes off, needing it. Needing Dee.

"Fuck, yes." Dee's mouth wrapped around his neck, tugging up a mark.

"Shit. Yours. Want you, honey." Words poured from him, his need huge.

Dee moaned and whimpered, sounding just as needy as he was. Long fingers tugged at his ass and pulled him back toward the sofa. Scott went easy, straddling Dee's thighs, cock hard as hell. Fingers warm and eager, Dee stripped his t-shirt and sweater up over his head, and then that mouth found one of his nipples, licking and sucking like Dee was a starving man.

"More." He held Dee close, shuddering as he felt Dee start humming, singing to him, making music on his skin.

Dee moved to his other nipple, hands sliding on his skin, pushing into his jeans to grab at his ass, making the front of them squeeze him hard. That got him busy, his fingers working Dee's shirt open, his jeans. Anything to get them both to bare skin. Dee helped, sort of, ass lifting for him as he pushed the jeans down, and it was Dee's fingers that opened his jeans, getting them down over his hips along with his boxers.

They both kind of got stuck at that point though and Dee suddenly stood up, bringing him up as well, laughing as they were finally able to push the damned pants down and off. Dee's smile was happy and horny and all fucking his. He pushed right into Dee's arms, moaning as their skin slapped together.

Dee's mouth met his, that smile against his lips for a few moments before pressing turned into kissing, Drake's tongue hot, and eager. They rubbed together, his cock catching on Dee's hip, and sliding against the hard heat of Dee's cock.

"God. Love." Dee's fingers were back on his ass, squeezing and tugging him in closer.

"Uh-huh. Want to ride you, honey. Want to feel you balls-deep inside me."

"God. Yes." Dee nodded, falling back onto the couch and bringing him down as well. He landed hard against Dee's body, long fingers sliding down to explore his crack.

Scott rolled his hips, begging for more of the touch as his cock slid and spread wet kisses on Dee's belly.

Dee's fingers found his hole, touching and pressing against it. "Scotty. Where's the slick?"

"Uh..." Lube. Lube. He grabbed Dee's wrist and brought those fingers up to his lips, sucking and wetting.

Dee's mouth went slack, a low grown sounding, as Dee focused on his lips. "God. Sexy."

Scott slowed, giving Dee a show, letting this rile them both up. Oh yeah, that noise that sounded as if it had been pulled up from Dee's toes was worth every second of delay. Each lick and suck earned him another noise, Dee's breath beginning to pant out of him.

Finally -- finally -- he let Dee's fingers slide from his lips with a pop. "Come on, now. Need."

"I know," Dee ground out, fingers reaching behind him and two pushing against his hole, sliding around it, pushing again. And then just like that they were inside him.

Scott's head slammed back so fast he damn near hurt himself. Oh, shit. Yeah. Yeah, please. Goddamn. Dee's fingers spread and pushed, stretching him quickly, the burn so damned good, full of promise.

"You, now. Your cock." He shifted, demanding. Now.

"Sure that was enough?" Dee asked, even as his fingers slid away and Dee's hands wrapped around his hips, tugging him into place.

"I'm sure." It burned and stretched, but that heavy cock was just what he needed, just what he wanted.

Dee's eyes sort of rolled back into his head as his cock slid deep, but then they snapped open again, Dee's smile a little wild, and bright in his face. "Scotty." His name was a song, Dee starting to hump up into him.

"Yeah. Yeah, honey. Welcome home." They laughed together as he leaned down, taking a hard, deep kiss.

Their mouths clung together, Dee's arms wrapped around his back, and he shifted so that Dee's cock brushed past his gland, and then again as Dee's hips rolled. His eyes went wide, body rocking, keeping Dee's prick right there.

"Yeah. Scotty. Oh, damn. That's." The words came, jerky and hoarse, Dee biting at his lower lip.

"Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Don't stop."

"Never," grunted Drake, hands holding him tighter, bringing him down harder.

Their bodies slammed together noisily, breath panting from them both, the old couch starting to rock with their movements.

"Fuck. Love. Dee. I." Oh, yeah. Babbling.

Dee just nodded, eyes holding his, head bobbing in time to their movements. Then Dee bit his lip, a soft whimper passing his lips -- it wasn't going to be long. He nodded, moving faster, ass squeezing tight.

Eyes going wide, Dee gasped and one hand made a grab at his cock, wrapping tightly around it and pulling on him. "Come on, Scotty. Come on."

Scott groaned, hips jerking, seed pouring out of him.

"Scott..." Dee groaned, hips bucking up hard, filling him with heat.

Panting, Dee leaned their foreheads together.

"Hey. Hey, honey. Merry Christmas."

Dee laughed, kissing him. "Yeah, Scotty. Merry Christmas. Love you, yeah?"

"Love you." Home. His Dee was home.

"Good." Dee's arms held him, head resting on his shoulder. "You should know. Your lover is now an unemployed bum."

"Unemployed?" He stroked Dee's hair, smoothing it out. "You didn't renew your contract?"

"Nope. I figured they'd had enough of my soul. Which sounds cheesy and melodramatic. Let's say I was tired of dancing to their tune."

"You'll write music, honey. You'll write and be happy. It'll work."

"I hear there're some indie labels out there that treat their artists really well." Dee shrugged. "Hell, it's not like I need the money. You think you can put up with me hanging around here a little more?"

"I think that you belong here. With me. At home. Your home."

Dee shook his head. "No, Scotty, not my home. Our home."

"Yeah. Yeah. Our home." Oh, God. Yes. "Merry Christmas to us."

Dee just laughed, face happy and bright.

Oh yeah, Merry damned Christmas to them.

No Regrets

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