



Loose Id

The Pro

D.J. MANLY

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LooseId®

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Chapter One

Lee stretched one arm high above his head as instructed, while he slowly inserted the well-oiled, cock-shaped sex toy inside of himself.

“Now thrust with it.”

Lee closed his eyes, trying to concentrate. The suit jacket he was still wearing was making him sweat like crazy, and his arm was beginning to ache. The contortions Lee was doing at the moment to get this damn contraption up inside of him caused discomfort in parts of his body he didn't know he had.

“Oh, yeah,” the voice behind him groaned, this time accompanied by a little wheeze. “That's it, my beauty. I hope you're hard.”

Hard? Was he kidding? Lee laid his forehead against the door and did his best to move the object in and out of his ass. The conditions were not exactly ripe for him to get a hard-on. He began to move his hips against the door now, thinking this would excite his client a little more. He almost lost hold of the toy for a moment, then fumbled with it and managed to hang onto it with a bit of grace.

“Um, I'm imagining that it's me fucking you right now,” the voice behind him said suddenly. “I'm hard as hell, but I don't think I can come.”

Lee took this as his cue. He pulled the toy out of his ass, turned away from the door, and tossed it aside. "Let me see what I can do about that." He was completely naked except for the suit jacket Maurice Taylor insisted he wear for the performance. As a result, the top half of him was warm, and his ass was freezing cold. The wished-for hard-on was on its way, thanks to his vivid imagination, but not quite there yet.

"Don't think it will do much good." Taylor sighed. "Maybe an orgasm would kill me." He chuckled a bit, then began to cough.

Lee regarded him for minute. He was lying on his bed, his robe opened down the middle to reveal a hairless torso and fat erection. A narrow white tube ran across his face and up into his nose. A three pack-a-day habit had given him emphysema, and more recently, a predicted life span of no more than six months due to lung cancer.

"No one ever died from ejaculating," Lee told him with a smile, slowly pulling off the suit jacket and laying it on the nearby chair.

Maurice Taylor looked up at him with pain filled eyes, and moaned. "You are so beautiful."

Lee ran his hands down over his chest and smiled.

"You're hard," Maurice said softly, reaching out his hand.

Lee came closer so that Maurice could take his cock in his hand. "How I wish I could..."

All that money, now he was dying. It was all over. Maurice had been his client for a little over two years. He couldn't help but feel pity for him. Lee moved onto the bed now, and straddled Maurice's lower legs, careful not to put any pressure on him. He met his gaze, then leaned over and took his cock into his mouth.

Maurice Taylor's entire body shuddered. Lee concentrated on his cock, only his cock. He knew that getting him off would be a challenge, but he could do it. He was a pro.

Ten minutes or so later, Maurice Taylor came in his mouth, grateful tears streaming down his face. Lee crawled up beside him and kissed him on the lips, stroking his hair, which had only recently started to grey at the temples. "It's okay, baby," he whispered. "Everything's okay."

A half hour later, he was descending the grand staircase of Maurice Taylor's thirty-one-room mansion. A servant met him at the door and handed him an envelope. Lee nodded at him silently, and tucked the envelope inside his jacket.

After he'd climbed into his brand new red sports coupe, he opened the envelope. There was far more there than his regular fee of two grand. Along with the money was a brief note from Maurice that said simply, *This is for all the joy you've given me, baby. I hope we meet again Lee, but it shan't be on this earth. Goodbye, and don't smoke...those things will kill you!!!*

Lee had to smile. That was so like Maurice, with his macabre sense of humour. He put the money away in his wallet, tore the note up, and shoved it into his pocket. Discretion was everything when it came to his wealthy clients. Lee started the engine, took one last look at the grand house, and mouthed, "goodbye, Maurice," before he drove away for the last time.

* * * * *

Zachary shielded his bloodshot eyes from the morning sun streaming through the cracks in the blind. He swore as he fiddled with it for a few moments then finally gave up. He'd been meaning to replace that blind for a while now, but hadn't quite gotten around to it. He hadn't quite gotten around to a lot of things.

He couldn't find the remote, so he switched the television on manually and threw himself onto the threadbare sofa. He swirled the ice around in his glass before he lifted it to his mouth and took a sip. The woman on the weather channel was jabbering on about something, but he'd put the volume on mute.

The telephone sat beside him on the end table, his answering machine flashing furiously on and off. He blindly reached over and slammed his hand down hard on the little red light. It beeped a few times, then, went silent. He'd probably broken it. He sure "n" hell hoped so.

As if on cue, the first few notes from *Don't Let Me Down* began to play. He sipped his breakfast -- a mix of freshly squeezed lemon juice and a finger of gin -- and felt around on the sofa with his hand for his cell phone. "What?" he said absently after he'd flipped it open, his gaze on the muted television.

"Good morning to you, Zach," Officer Simon Mitchell sang. "Get up on the wrong side of the bed...again?"

"I hardly got to bed at all...four fucking o'clock before I got home last night. If I bite anyone today, blame it on the SFPD. What in hell are you so cheerful about?"

Simon laughed. "You don't know when to give up, Zach. I take it you didn't have any luck with the surveillance?"

"Arrested two, neither of them Lebeau, no one claiming to know Lebeau either, but I'm going to have another crack at them today."

"They had the goods on 'em?"

"Yeah, but nothing a judge is going to get an orgasm over, if you know what I mean."

Simon laughed again. "Okay. I'll let the director know."

"I'll be there in half an hour."

"Oh, and by the way," Simon boomed, "happy birthday, old man. Aren't you thirty, or something?"

"Yeah, it's or something. Thanks for reminding me." He grunted and closed his phone.

Zachary Freeman downed the rest of his breakfast and forced himself up off the sofa. He headed in the direction of the shower. Four years he'd been after that scumbag, Lebeau. He'd even transferred out of homicide and into the special investigations unit just to get his

hands on him. Since the death of little Valerie King, he'd made Daniel Lebeau his life's mission. Finally, after practically having to get on his knees and blow someone at city hall, the police brass had allowed him to set up a special unit, a unit whose primary task was to bring down Daniel Lebeau.

The man was evil incarnate. He was into everything from gun smuggling to racketeering, and four years ago he'd been involved in the kidnapping of four-year-old Valerie King. The little girl had been the daughter of an international diplomat. It was politically motivated, and although Lebeau had no hand in the kidnapping itself, he'd profited from it by helping to set it up. Along with the F.B.I., Zachary had almost killed himself hunting for that child. They'd found her, three weeks later. She'd been abandoned in an underground bunker outside Los Angeles. She had died from dehydration, all alone, most likely terrified. Zach would never forget what she'd looked like, lying there, rats crawling all over the fucking place.

From that time on, he'd developed an obsession with nailing Lebeau, and he'd made sure Lebeau knew it. He wanted him to be afraid. He wanted him to have to look over his shoulder, to wake up in the night whenever he heard the least little sound wondering if he was coming after him. Although Zach had all kinds of circumstantial evidence tying him to a multitude of sins, it was never enough. He needed good, hard proof, and even if it killed him, he intended to get it.

For the last year or so, Lebeau had been fairly quiet, but now his contacts, as well as his paid thugs, were starting to move again. That meant he was up to something big. Regular surveillance had turned up nothing. Lebeau was being cautious.

Zachary stepped out of the shower and glanced at himself in the mirror. He needed a shave but it could wait another day. His thick black hair was unruly, and too damned long, but he hadn't bothered to get it cut.

He hastily wiped himself with a towel and pulled on clean underwear and some jeans. He caught a look at himself in the mirror for a second, and paused. His body was hard and

toned. The one thing Zach didn't neglect was the gym. When he did get his hands on Lebeau, he wanted to be in good enough shape to do some damage.

Zach zipped up the jeans and ran a hand up over his chest. He took a minute to inspect his rock-hard pecs and abs. He'd seen some guys giving him the eye at the gym, but he had no time for romance. Damn, he couldn't remember the last time he'd fucked.

On the way to work, Zach stopped at the drive-through and got coffee. He took out the Mickey of gin he kept in the glove compartment and tipped a bit into the cardboard cup before replacing the cover. He stopped at the red light and watched as two young men walked across the street. Zach could tell by the way they were looking at each other they were in love. Shit. It was a wonder he could still remember that look.

He'd been in love once, or something like that. It seemed ages ago. The guy had been an ambulance driver. When that little girl had disappeared, Pete told him he was impossible to live with. He'd been right. They'd spilt up. Just after they'd found Valerie's body, Pete came to see him. "You're turning into a drunk, just like your old man," he'd told him. It was true. He had been drinking a lot. It seemed to keep the image of that little girl out of his dreams. Pete told him he still loved him, but that he needed to give up this obsession he had with Lebeau, and to quit drinking. Zach had been unprepared to do either. It had ended badly. He let Pete walk out the door, and now here he was, three years later, still drinking, still obsessed, and alone.

When the car honked loudly behind him, Zachary swore under his breath, and gave the guy the finger out the window. The other driver swerved past him and yelled out some obscenity. Zachary was laughing as he pulled into his parking spot at the Twenty-Eighth Precinct. What a crazy city this was.

He downed the rest of his coffee in the car, crumpled up the cup, and threw it onto the floor. It was true; he drank too much. It got him through the days, not to mention the nights, and it kept him focussed on Lebeau. If it killed him before he got his hands on that bastard, at least he knew he'd have another chance at that creep in hell.

He popped a breath mint into his mouth, got out of his car, and seconds later he was surrounded by the madness of the police station. He headed to his office quietly, hoping no one would mention his birthday again today, but knowing Simon, it had already spread all over. The guy should have been a gossip columnist instead of a cop. He closed the door to his office and glanced at the mess on his desk. He was home.

* * * * *

“I don’t want to argue with you, Lee.” Roch held out his hands. “You’ve already got me giving you far more of a cut than is...ah...natural.”

Lee glanced at Roch through the mirror, pausing in the middle of combing his dark ash blond hair. “Natural?”

“You know what I mean,” Roch said, playing with the buttons on his light green suit. “Forty percent. I don’t give any of my boys that much.”

Lee turned around and glanced at him. “That’s because none of your boys have the connections I do. Where you going to find someone like me who can speak three languages, hobnob at the opera, and discuss politics and philosophy? It’s only fair I get fifty percent, especially on repeat clients. You can up the price if you want. They’ll pay.”

Roch stood up. “That’s not good business, Lee.” He shook his artificially lightened hair as he followed Lee out onto the terrace. “You look hot in that suit, by the way.”

“Yes, and might I remind you, I paid for this suit out of my own pocket.”

“You did. You did,” he said, licking his lips. “And it looks buff on you, sweetheart, terrific.” Roch reached up and fussed with Lee’s hair for a second before Lee brushed his hand away impatiently. “We’ll talk about it.”

Lee lifted an eyebrow.

“Don’t forget, you live here rent free, and I pay the monthly fees on your car. I --”

“And you make it all back ten times,” Lee interrupted. Those are business expenses. I bring some clients here, and I can hardly show up at a charity event in a beat up old wreck.”

Roch didn’t answer; instead, he asked, “How’s Maurice doing?”

“Dying. You can cross him off the list. This was our last meeting.”

“He was a good client.” Roch shook his head. “That’s a substantial loss of...”

“You’re a real asshole.” Lee laughed harshly.

“Well, I mean...”

“Don’t worry about it. I know what you meant. Now get out. I want to rest.”

“See you at the end of the week?”

“Right.” Lee pushed Roch toward the exit. He locked the door behind him. He really didn’t need Roch so much anymore, and Roch knew that. He’d been acting all insecure lately, probably thinking that he was going to leave him. He could be independent except that Roch took care of those details he hated, like keeping track of clients. The clients trusted Roch. They trusted him to protect their privacy, and when they were looking for some company, it was Roch they knew to call. Lee didn’t relish getting phone calls day and night from his customers.

And Lee did feel a sense of loyalty to him. After all, Roch had taught him the ropes when he was just seventeen, showed him how to rub elbows with high society. He’d encouraged him to study languages and philosophy, taught him proper social manners, and how to dress. However, Roch was pushing for a bigger slice of the pie now. At almost twenty-five years old, Lee knew he couldn’t keep doing this forever. Although there weren’t many male escorts he knew about that were in his class, he wasn’t naïve enough to think that someone wouldn’t try to take his place eventually.

* * * * *

Zach leaned back in his chair. He put his hands over his face. Several members of his team stood around, bracing for his reaction. “Look,” Zach finally said, jumping to his feet, “Lebeau is having a party right under our noses here. Those guys we were holding the other day gave us jackshit.” He looked at Samuel and Cassie, two of the best street cops he had on his team. “I want you two to spend the next month tailing Lebeau. I want to know who he sees, who he talks to, and when he takes a piss, is that clear?”

“Yes, sir,” Cassie said.

Samuel nodded.

“Keep me informed of his every move.” He glanced at the rest of them. “You people keep working on the other threads we have. Go on, get moving.”

Later that day, Zach left for the gym. He spent a good two hours working off the stress then stopped by the liquor store. He bought a bottle of gin, and pastrami on rye at the deli next door. Later that night, he thought again about finding that little girl, and he drank. In the morning, the sandwich was still on the kitchen counter. He glanced at it then threw it into the garbage.

* * * * *

The following weeks were tedious. The team almost linked Lebeau to a drug smuggling activity that had been interrupted by Narcotics a month back. They had been so close Zach could taste it, but that too ended in frustration.

One Friday afternoon Cassie and Samuel came into his office and tossed a photograph onto his desk. Zach rubbed his tired eyes, and asked him what it was.

“New development,” Cassie said, looking pleased.

Samuel pushed the picture closer to Zach.

Zach sat up and peered at the photograph. It was a picture of Lebeau sitting in a club with two other men. “So? Lebeau is at Encounters. He owns it.”

“One of those guys is one of his goons, a guy by the name of Oscar Delaney,” Cassie pointed out.

“Yeah, we know Delaney. So?”

“Check out the other guy,” Samuel said.

Zach squinted his eyes. “Crappy shot. Can’t make out his face. Who is he?”

“His name is Lee Hastings. We’re not quite sure who he is yet. Cassie thinks he’s Lebeau’s new boyfriend.”

“Well, they looked pretty cosy together,” she began, “and --”

Zach stood up. “Let’s get this to the lab. I want it blown up -- get a clear picture of this guy. Meanwhile, find out all you can about him. I want to know if he has a record.”

* * * * *

A few hours later, Zach sat looking at the photograph of Lee Hastings. No record, not even a parking ticket. He was twenty-four years old, dark blond hair, hazel green eyes, about five-ten or eleven, obviously took care of himself...expensive taste in clothes. He lived in a luxury condo, drove a fancy rental car, and had memberships in the municipal library and an expensive gym. Occupation was listed as “self-employed.” There was a record of him attending night courses at the local community college.

“See how close he’s sitting to Lebeau,” Cassie told him.

“Cass has a fetish for man sex,” Samuel jeered.

“Shut up. Zach, don’t you --?”

“I think you’re right.” Zach looked at her. “But he’s not his boyfriend. Lee Hastings is most likely a male prostitute. Lebeau isn’t getting it for free.”

Samuel and Cassie looked surprised.

Zach laughed. “Close your mouth, guys. Guess you need to spend some time on Vice.”

“He doesn’t look like a --” Cassie began.

“Okay, is there some pattern?” Zach asked, cutting her off. “When does Hastings meet with Lebeau?”

“Always on Saturday nights,” Cassie said. “Around ten o’clock at Encounters. Then Lebeau takes him back to his place. He leaves early in the morning. You want us to pick him up?”

“Hastings? No.” Zach shook his head. “Knock off the surveillance for now.”

They began to protest, but Zach put up a hand. “I’ll let you know when to resume.”

They both nodded and left the office.

Zach stood looking at the picture for a few minutes; then he smiled. He’d always considered sending someone inside, but now he wouldn’t need to. He already had someone, only Lee Hastings didn’t know it yet.

Chapter Two

When Lee walked into Encounters, Daniel Lebeau's bodyguard met him at the door. He motioned to him with his hand. Lee walked in his direction. He didn't particularly like this guy. He was a big, ugly brute, and he seemed to be always leering at him.

"Mr. Lebeau said to go into the bathroom. He'll meet you there," he told him gruffly, moving his head in the direction of the men's can.

The music pumped out some old disco tune as Lee walked around the A-frame plastic sign that declared the bathroom "temporarily closed." He opened the door and walked in.

The bathroom was huge, and spotless. Lee took a look at himself in the mirror. His ash-blond hair had been ruffled some by the wind and he smoothed his hand over it. He was just noticing that his tan was beginning to fade as the door opened. He jumped a little, which caused Lebeau to laugh. "Hello, Lee, nervous about something?"

"No, I'm fine."

Daniel Lebeau was a man in his early forties, and not bad looking by any standards. Lee wasn't sure what it was Daniel did for a living. He'd told him imports/exports. Lee didn't ask about the product. He'd suspected it probably wasn't legit.

Lebeau ran his gaze over him. "I thought we'd play a little game tonight."

“Sure.” Lebeau seemed to be fond of little games. “What’s your pleasure?”

“Mon plaisir? Ummm.”

“Oui, dites-moi ce que vous voulez?”

“I didn’t know you spoke French.”

“Yes, and Spanish.”

“Very nice. I’ll tell you what I want since you asked me so nicely in French,” Lebeau replied, wetting his lips. “Get out of those clothes...as nice as they are. There’s a bag of goodies waiting for you in the last stall.”

“Are you sure we won’t be interrupted? As for me, I’m not worried but...”

“Delaney’s on guard, and we won’t be in here long. Five minutes tops.”

Lee walked to the last stall. There was a little black bag sitting on the closed toilet seat.

“Open the bag,” Lebeau instructed.

Lee unzipped the bag. The first thing he pulled out was a harness with a large butt plug. At the other end was a steel cock ring. “I guess I know where that goes.”

Lebeau came over and stood in front of the open toilet. “I bet you do, baby. I want you to wear it under your pants, all night. It locks. You can’t get out of it until I take you out of it, and I don’t want you to come.”

“All right. It might take me a little while to get this in. It’s not small.”

“I intend to supervise your preparation. I’ll put it in for you, and later you’ll be good and ready for me.”

Given Lebeau’s rather small size, he really didn’t need much preparation, but Lee wouldn’t have told him that.

“There is something else in there.”

Two nipple clamps came next with adjustable clamps. A slender gold chain linked them.

"I bought those especially for you. They'll look fantastic hanging off your chest. Expensive."

Lee gave him a seductive smile. "You're so generous."

"Now, you give me generous, my fine slut, and take off those clothes." He backed up to the sink and leaned against it, waiting.

Lee removed his beige suit jacket, then, undid the tan, pin-stripped silk shirt he wore. He draped his clothes carefully over the top of the bathroom door. "Stop." Lebeau put out his hand. "Give me the clamps. I want to put them on myself."

Lee handed the clamps to Lebeau and watched him as he ran his fingers over the fine gold chain. "Nothing is too good to lie against that skin of yours," he whispered. He let the chain trail down over Lee's chest. One thumb now flicked over his left nipple. "You have perfect nipples for a man." His gaze caressed his stiffening peak as he continued to stimulate it with his thumb. "You know I want to tie you up and rape you at this moment." Lebeau lowered his mouth to Lee's nipple and moved his tongue over it.

"Do what you want," Lee said, letting his head go back. He was rather enjoying the erotic movement of Lebeau's tongue over his nipple, until unexpectedly one of the clamps chomped down brutally on it.

"Sexy," Lebeau breathed, glancing at the other one, letting his gaze follow the length of the chain. "Now, pinch your other nipple, make it stiff, and at the same time, undo those pants. I want to see your cock. Are you hard?"

He wasn't, but he would be, if that's what Lebeau wanted. "You want me hard?"

"Yes. Stiff, hard, horny, needy. And you're going to stay that way all evening with that harness on, so by the time I get to you later, by the time I spread you out, tie you up, do everything...and I mean everything I want to with your body, you'll be loving every minute of it, even if it hurts. Now. Let's see that nipple stiffen, Lee, along with that stiff cock. Christ, your cock is...um...go on."

He backed off again as Lee began to undo his pants and play with his nipple.

“Make it harder,” he insisted, adjusting his cock in his pants. “You know I’m going to be horny all night thinking about this.”

Lee’s nipple was now standing on end. His other one was throbbing in the teeth of that clamp. Lebeau loved to mix pain and pleasure, and he could switch back and forth without missing a beat.

When the pants floated down over his slim hips, his semi-erect cock came into view. Lebeau insisted he not wear underwear, so he was always careful to leave those behind when he met with him. His cock was leaking cum. Lebeau smiled at him. “Dip your finger in your cum and lick it off.”

Lee ran his finger over the head of his cock and put it into his mouth.

“Now, clamp the other nipple -- show no mercy, and grab that harness.”

Lee lifted the other side of the chain, and without hesitation positioned it over his nipple. When the clamp grabbed onto it, his cock lunged. Exquisite pleasure. He bit his bottom lip.

Lebeau sprang forward suddenly. He leaned over and took the fine chain between his teeth. Meeting Lee’s gaze, he pulled gently. Lee moaned a little. He let it go, then reached down and slapped Lee’s cock back and forth. “Put the harness around your waist. I’ll lock it. Lift the ring and push it all the way to the base of your cock. Don’t forget to get your balls in there. It’s tight, but not too tight; we don’t want it to do damage.”

Lee began to push the ring down the length of his shaft. A leather strap hung between his thighs with the plug attached. Lebeau took it and pulled it between his legs to his ass. He locked the harness into place.

“Spread your legs,” Lebeau said. “I oiled this plug for you personally.” He came around to the front and admired the way Lee’s cock was protruding straight out from his groin,

elevated by the cock ring. "Remember, baby, your cock and balls are mine tonight, bought and paid for."

"Of course," Lee said.

"Turn around, put your hands above your head, and lean against the wall, and when I say spread them wide, I mean wide. This is a big boy."

Lee walked over to the wall. He spread his thighs and leaned over a bit, giving Lebeau complete access to his ass. He was horny now, and he almost welcomed the butt plug.

"It is especially big," Lebeau whispered, running a hand over Lee's ass, then, slapping it once. "Shit. I could bounce pennies off your ass. Okay, my fine slut, take a deep breath."

Lee prepared for the assault on his ass. Lebeau had oiled the plug well and with a fair amount of prodding and patience, he was able to take it all. God, it filled him completely. He felt stretched to capacity. "How ah...long do you want me to...?"

"For as long as I say. Now get dressed, and meet me at my table." Lebeau left.

It was going to be a challenge getting dressed, to say the least, but he'd do his best. He sure was earning his money with this one.

* * * * *

Zach ran a hand over his rough jaw and thought what the hell. He wasn't going to that club to impress anyone. He was only going there to make Lebeau nervous, and to get a closer look at his new boy toy.

He towelled off and took a fresh pair of faded jeans out of the closet. He pulled on some sports socks, clean underwear, and the jeans. He began to search around for a T-shirt that wasn't too badly wrinkled. He ended up with an old navy one, a little tight, but presentable. He shoved his feet into his scuffed black boots, grabbed his short leather jacket, and ran a brush through his unruly dark hair.

Daniel Lebeau could decide to boot his ass out of the club tonight if he chose. It was his club. But he wasn't going to give him a reason to. He left his gun and his badge locked in his glove compartment.

The club was hopping when he arrived around eleven o'clock. Some retro tune from the seventies was playing; could have been Madonna. The bouncer eyed him critically when he walked in, and Zach gave him a mocking smile. "What 'cha doing later, baby?" he threw at him sarcastically, laughing as he walked past. The big guy muttered some obscenity under his breath, and Zach laughed even harder.

The lights were fairly subdued as he entered a large room featuring an array of leather booths boxed in by round tables, a long bar on the left side, and a huge dance floor out front. The dance floor was packed with sweaty bodies, most of them male. Encounters wasn't officially a gay club, but it certainly drew the gay male crowd. Zach glanced around and then wandered over to the bar. He ordered a gin and tonic and tried to ignore the strange guy who was suddenly brushing up against him, big time. He took his drink, paid for it, then turned around and told the guy simply to "fuck off." It worked, and Zach strolled down the length of the bar.

Suddenly, he saw Lebeau. He was sitting in one of those boxed in tables with his trusted bodyguard Delaney on one side, and Lee Hastings on the other. Even from the distance he was standing at, Zach could see that Daniel Lebeau had his hand on Hastings' thigh. They were talking about something, drinking wine, and then Lebeau began to laugh, burying his face in Hastings neck. He was drunk, obviously, and his laugh sounded high pitched. It grated on Zach; He stared until Lebeau noticed him, his hatred for Lebeau simmering just below the surface.

* * * * *

Lee shifted a little uncomfortably in the booth. The plug, the ring, the clamps...damn, he had been in a state of heightened sexual tension for the last hour. He hoped they'd leave

soon, but Lebeau seemed pretty comfortable right where he was, and probably too drunk to do anything with him anyway. Although Lebeau wasn't a great lover, anything was better than this.

Suddenly, Lebeau's cell phone rang. He looked over at Lee, and while he was answering, he undid the buttons of Lee's shirt, revealing his clamped nipples. He pulled on the thin gold chain and pointed it out to Delaney. "Gold," he slurred, "nipple clamps in gold. Even whores deserve luxury," he sputtered, then spoke into his phone.

Lee sighed, noticing Delaney's eyes visually caressing the nipple clamps. He seemed mighty interested in them all of a sudden. "How do they feel?" he asked, running a tongue over his lips. God, he was so ugly. Lee didn't answer; he looked away, and when he did, Lee noticed the man standing a few feet away from them at the bar.

At first, he focused his attention on him so that he wouldn't have to engage in conversation with that buffoon, Delaney; then he found himself unable to look away. There was just something about him that excited him, even from a distance, and with his ass plugged and nipples clamped, it wouldn't have taken too much to make him blow a load right there under the table. He was tall, making it hard to miss him, really, well over six feet, with broad shoulders. He was holding a jacket under his arm, and the jeans and T-shirt he was wearing displayed the hard, muscular tone of his body. As for his face, it was harder to tell, although Lee was certainly intrigued enough to want to find out. A mess of unruly dark hair hung across his forehead, and he looked unshaven, but not at all unkempt, just very, very male.

"Fuck," Delaney said suddenly, causing Lebeau to take time away from his phone call to take a look and see why Delaney was swearing.

Lee looked at Daniel. "What?"

He was ignored.

"Want me to boot his ass out, boss?" Delaney asked, starting to stand up.

"I'll get back to you," Daniel said into the phone, waving his hand at Delaney to sit down. He closed the phone. "No, what in fuck is he doing here?"

"I don't know, I..." Delaney looked uneasy.

"Who is he?" Lee asked.

Lebeau sat back in his seat. "Just an old friend, baby." He reached over and fingered one of the clamps.

"Looks like your old friend is coming over here," Delaney grumbled.

"Stay calm," Lebeau cautioned. "No need to panic."

Suddenly, the man who'd been watching them from the bar was right in front of him. There was no more need to guess if he was one gorgeous son of a bitch. He was. The hair was unruly, but glossy black, and thick, a beautiful contrast with his startling blue, blue eyes. "Well, Lebeau," he said, not looking at Lee at all, "how've you been?"

"Fine. And you?"

"Just great."

"What brings you here?"

The man looked down at Lee now, his eyes filled with something Lee couldn't read, but it was making his cock twitch, literally. "I see you've found a new toy."

"A friend," Lebeau replied.

"Ah." He nodded, then, his gaze went back to Lebeau. "I thought you'd be missing me."

"Oh, I have missed you," Lebeau mocked.

"Good. That's why I've come round, to let you know that I haven't forgotten about you."

"I hear you have an entire task force devoted to me."

Lee's eyes widened a bit. He was a cop. *This guy was a cop.*

"Yes, we've erected a shrine in your honour."

Lee felt his pulse speed up. This was stupid. He'd never known a man to have this kind of effect on him before.

"Every day I throw darts at it. Do you feel it?"

Lebeau laughed. "You're not that good, Zach. Won't you join us?"

"No, thanks," he said, glancing at Lee again. Lee saw his gaze lower and focus on the little gold chain visibly lying across his chest. Lee hastily pulled his shirt together. He'd forgotten his shirt was open.

Zach laughed softly. He turned back to Lebeau again. "It's only a matter of time, so play while you can." He gave Delaney a little salute, and walked away from the table.

Lee's gaze settled on the movement of his ass in those tight blue jeans. He swallowed. Wow. His cock throbbed. *Don't come*. He wasn't supposed to come.

Lebeau hit the table with his fist and swore loudly. "Get that waitress over here. I want another drink."

A few drinks later and Delaney was carrying Lebeau out the door. Lee stood up and went into the bathroom. He took off the nipple clamps, sighing gratefully; suddenly he remembered Lebeau had the key to the three little locks on the stupid harness. Shit. He was never going to get out of this thing tonight.

Finally Lee slipped the nipple clamps into his pocket and tried to arrange his cock so that he didn't look like he had a tent in his pants, but he couldn't do much with it. When he walked out of the stall, he was still trying to adjust the cock ring so his cock wouldn't stand out so much.

"Why don't you just take it off?"

Lee looked up suddenly to stare into those blue eyes. "Ah, you're...?" He was damned embarrassed.

"Zachary Freeman. You can call me Zach. It looks like Lebeau can't handle his liquor very well," he said, his gaze settling on the display in Lee's pants.

“You wouldn’t happen to have keys that would fit a butt plug harness, would you?” Lee lifted an eyebrow.

“Are you kidding me?”

Lee shrugged. “You never know. You’re a cop, aren’t you?”

“That’s right.”

“I’ll try again at home. Maybe I can...”

Zach folded his arms across his chest. “I need to talk to you. How ’bout a cup of coffee?”

“What could you and I possibly have to talk about?”

“Maybe I want to hire you.”

“What would you be hiring me for, exactly?”

“A fuck, maybe.” Zachary Freeman’s mouth twisted into a semblance of a smile.

“I don’t have any idea what you’re...”

“Look, Hastings, I don’t have the time or the patience to play games with you. You can come with me for a drink, or you can come with me downtown. You choose.”

“You’re going to arrest me now? On what charge?”

“Didn’t say I was arresting you...yet.”

“So what would you take me downtown for?”

“Routine questioning --” He pointed at the tent in Lee’s pants. “-- and how you got yourself into that mess would be interesting to explain.”

“What do you want?” Lee was getting impatient now, not to mention nervous.

“A little help.”

“Help? From me?”

“Hard to believe, isn’t it?” He smiled. “Tick, tick, tick. Time to choose, coffee or jail?”

“Well, since you put it that way,” Lee muttered, and followed him out the door.

* * * * *

They walked two blocks to the coffee shop. Lee had taken off his jacket and was holding it down in front of him. He sighed with relief as he slipped behind the booth.

Zachary ordered coffee for both of them. He didn't speak for a few minutes. Zach focused on putting milk into his cup and stirring it, while Lee sat there drumming his fingers on the Formica tabletop. "So, what do you want?"

"I know who you are, Lee, but don't worry, I'm not with Vice anymore. I don't care who you fuck, or how much money you make from it. You obviously move in the money lane. You don't waste your time on the street corner."

Lee didn't reply.

"Since you're a grown man, I don't give a shit that you're a whore."

"Then what do you give a shit about, cop?"

"It's lieutenant actually."

"Lieutenant."

"The only thing I really care about," he said, sipping his coffee, "is Daniel Lebeau. He's mine. His ass is mine, and you're going to help me with that."

"You're a good looking man, Lieutenant. If you want Lebeau's ass, you'll have to..."

He laughed suddenly, then sobered. "You're a comedian. You know what I mean."

"You might get a life. Obsession is not a good thing."

He nodded. "I've been told that, among other things, but" -- He shook his head. -- "doesn't work with me." He leaned across the table. "Here's the deal. You help me, and I'll keep you out of jail and in the workforce. You fuck me, and you'll be someone's little girl in prison."

Lee moved a little on the seat. The butt plug was getting damned uncomfortable. "Would being someone's little girl in jail be worth fucking you, I wonder?"

“You really don’t want to find out,” Zach told him without expression.

They both knew what they were talking about and it had nothing at all to do with sex. “What is it you want me to do, exactly?”

“Make sure Lebeau keeps you around, and report his activities, his conversations, everything...to me.”

Lee sighed. “What did he do?”

“That’s nothing to you. The less you know about it, the better.”

“Why me?”

“Because you have a connection to him, and he might be less careful around you, given what you are.”

“Oh, and what’s that exactly, Lieutenant? Why don’t you just come out and say it?”

“Okay. You’re a whore, a paid fuck mate.”

Lee bristled. It wasn’t just the words he’d said, it was the cocky way he was saying them. If he could have, he would have wiped that fucking smirk right off his face. “Yes, a whore, one who makes more money in one night than you do in a month.”

“No doubt.”

Lee stood up, dragging his coat in front of him. “This conversation is over, Lieutenant. I’m not risking my ass to do your job.”

Zach Freeman was right behind him when Lee left the café. He placed a hand on his shoulder. Lee turned around and glared at him. “If you want to arrest me, go ahead. I haven’t done anything.”

This one had a hell of a lot more spirit than he’d imagined. “I can make your life hell, Hastings. I can make sure your upscale clients won’t touch you with a ten-foot pole.”

“You don’t even know who my clients are.”

“I can always shake down your pimp, put Roch out of business.”

Lee’s eyes widened. “How do you know about Roch?”

“I know everything about you. Now, why don’t we go somewhere where we can really talk? Maybe I can find a way to get you out of that contraption you’re wearing.” He held up his hands when he saw Lee about to protest. “Don’t worry, my intentions are purely honourable.”

“We can go back to my place.”

“I’ll follow in my car. Lead on.”

* * * * *

Zach let out a whistle as he walked into Lee Hastings condo. “You’re right about one thing; I’m in the wrong profession.”

Lee threw a glance at him. “Ha. You couldn’t do what I do.”

“Why not?” He shrugged, nonchalantly. “I can fuck.”

Lee threw his car keys onto the hall table. He looked at him. “I’m sure you can, but it takes more than that. You have the looks, the body, but not the manners.”

Zach lifted an eyebrow. “Why, thank you, Lee, I think. Did you just compliment and insult me at the same time?”

“I call ’em as I see ’em. Don’t read anything into it.” He threw his coat onto the sofa in the living room.

Zach pointed to the tent in his pants. “Well, given that you’re as hard as a rock, I’m not sure how I should interpret that.”

Lee rolled his eyes. “Can you help me get out of this thing or not?”

“I don’t know.” He couldn’t help but enjoy this a little bit. “You’ll have to take your pants off if you want me to ah...size up the situation...so to speak.”

Lee made a face. “A funny man. All right.” He began to undo his pants, then paused.

“Are you shy?” Zach laughed. He certainly didn’t expect that from a male hooker.

“No. I’m not shy. He pushed the pants down over his hips. “Look,” he said, pointing to the little padlocks on each side of the leather harness.

Oh, he was looking, all right. How in the hell could he not be looking? Zach came closer, running his gaze over the path of the harness, trying not to focus on Lee’s cock, which was protruding straight out from his groin, supported by a metal cock ring. The harness had been fastened tightly over his slender hips and locked into place.

“Ah, Lieutenant,” Lee said suddenly.

Zach lifted his head. He smiled at him. “Yes?”

“Are you going to stand there ogling me, or are you going to help me get out of this thing?”

“Can’t I do both at the same time?”

Lee muttered something.

“Okay, okay.” He laughed, holding up his hand. “I’ll see what I can do.” He walked around to the back, and let out a sharp breath. What an ass, firm, round, absolutely delightful. It had been awhile since he’d seen an ass this nice.

“What are you doing back there, exactly?” Lee snapped.

“Ogling.”

Lee turned around and threw up his hands in frustration. “Come on, Freeman!”

“Okay, look, I’m no expert at this. I could shoot them off.”

“Very cute.”

“You too, by the way; nice butt.”

Lee’s mouth fell open.

“Oh, close your mouth, lover, you have nothing to worry about from me.” Zach reached out and inspected one of the little padlocks.

“And, ah...why is that?”

Zach looked up and met his gaze. “What?”

“Why is it I have nothing to worry about from you? You do have a cock, don’t you?”

“Last time I checked,” he replied dryly, studying the padlock again.

“You do like men.”

“Yes,” he said, moving the lock around in his hand, “some men.”

“Ah, I see. You just don’t like me.”

He pulled the lock apart in one tug. “You wouldn’t respect me in the morning,” he announced, handing him the broken lock. “They don’t make these things very sturdy, do they? A child could have broken that.”

Zach moved around to the other side of Lee and did the same thing, cracking the second lock, then the third one, in his fist. “There you go.” He handed him the other locks. “Now why don’t you take that plug out of your ass and let your cock down...” He grinned. “Let your hair down...no, in your case, it’s definitely your cock, and then we can talk.”

Lee glared at him, then picked up his jacket and headed for the bedroom. “I’ll be right out, and don’t touch anything.”

Zach put up his hands again. “I wouldn’t dream of it.”

* * * * *

Lee took longer in the bedroom than he’d intended as he threw on some sweatpants and a T-shirt. He was trying to calm down. For some reason he didn’t even want to imagine, Zach Freeman had turned him on big time. Thank God, that cop didn’t seem to be aware of it. As Zach had been moving around him before, Lee had felt as if his cock was going to explode. God damn him.

“Are you having problems getting that plug out of your ass?” Zachary Freeman called out to him just as Lee came back out into the living room.

“No, I’m fine.” He put his hands on his hips, observing the way Zach had sprawled on his sofa like he belonged there. “Now, what do you want, exactly?”

Zach sat up, patting the seat beside him. “Come on, sit down. I’ll explain it.”

Lee sat on the furthest end of the sofa. He wasn’t going any where near this guy.

“God, you are really scared of me.”

“I’m not scared.”

“I hope you’re not that distant with your clients because...”

“You’re not my client.”

“So, how much do you charge, just out of curiosity?”

“Too much for you.”

“Give me a ballpark figure. Maybe I’m interested.”

“You’re full of shit.”

He laughed. “Come on, five hundred a night?”

“Ha!”

“More?”

“Two grand.”

“Two grand?” Zach sputtered. “Shit, you must be good. What do you do for two grand?”

“Anything you want.”

“Anything?”

“Wheels turning there, officer?”

Zach rolled his eyes.

“There are limits, of course. So before you let your totally perverted imagination go nuts, remember, I do have boundaries.”

“Right. Me, and my perverted imagination will keep that in mind.”

“Smart ass. Okay, enough small talk. It’s one in the morning. If I have to do something to betray my client, then...”

“Oh fuck off,” Zach said. “Don’t play Mr. Honourable with me, Mr. Two Grand a Night. That’s robbery.”

“How do you know? When you’re alone, and you have needs, and you have the money to pay someone to cater to those needs, tell you exactly what you want to hear...maybe that’s robbery to you, but to some, it’s heaven.”

“Spare me.” He leaned forward. “Okay, the way I see it, it’s like this -- you’re a criminal, and you’re connected to a far worse criminal; one I want, but haven’t been able to get. He might say things to you; things I could use. All you have to do is keep seeing him, and tell me what he...”

“And after you get him?”

“Then you’re off the hook.”

“I’m also out of a job. Do you think my clients will continue to see me if I end up testifying against one of them in court?”

“It might not come to that.”

“I’m not stupid, Of-fic-er.” He stretched out the word. “I know what this will turn into, nothing but shit.”

Zachary shrugged his broad shoulders. “Thems the breaks, kid. The way I see it” -- He stood up. -- “you got no choice.”

Lee stood up too. Zachary’s six-four frame was just too intimidating. “And if I refuse, you’ll really do what you said you...?”

“I need your help, Lee. I know you won’t do it out of the goodness of your heart.” He gave him a meaningful look.

“This is probably illegal what you’re doing!”

“Probably, so sue me.”

“Maybe if you’d tell me why you’re so damned obsessed with...”

“That’s my business,” Zach replied sharply. “Now, what I need is for you to make yourself indispensable to Lebeau. If you can get him to see you more than once a week, that would be even better.”

“He’s already asked me, but I’m booked.”

“Then un-book yourself.”

Lee sighed heavily.

“Keep your ears and your eyes open. And here...” He reached in his pocket and handed him a cell phone.

“What’s that for? I have a cell phone, and I haven’t agreed to --”

“This is a special phone. I want you to call me on this phone whenever you have information for me, or if you need to see me. Press one, and it will connect you to me, day and night.”

Lee ran his finger over the phone. “There’s something odd about me being connected to you, day and night.”

“Don’t overanalyse it,” Zach told him, one end of his mouth lifting slightly.

“I’ll try not to. What if he finds out what I’m up to, that I’m reporting stuff to you?”

“Then you’re in trouble. Make sure he doesn’t. Given the fact that you’re naked most of the time you’re with him, I won’t put a wire on you.”

“Cute.”

“Thank you. You’re kind of cute yourself.”

“That’s not what I meant.”

Zach laughed.

“You can laugh. Your ass is not on the line.”

“There’s no way he’ll find out, unless you tell him. You’d be the last person he’d suspect.”

Lee didn’t say anything.

“If I don’t hear from you, I’m coming after you. You understand that? And don’t tell anyone about what you’re doing. No one.”

“Should I be afraid?” Lee lifted his chin, his voice laced with sarcasm.

“That’s up to you. Be afraid if you want, but if I were you, I’d be more worried than afraid, worried about how you’re going to be able to afford the rent on this place if you double-cross me.”

Lee got the message, loud and clear. “You’re a bastard, you know that?”

“Sticks and stones, baby.”

Lee folded his arms across his chest. He watched Zachary walk to the door. “Leaving so soon?” he blurted belligerently.

Zach looked at him over his shoulder. “I’d hang around, but I don’t have two grand. Consider giving me a discount on a blowjob?”

“Go fuck yourself!”

He laughed and was gone.

Chapter Three

Lee waited as Thomas Carter shut off all the lights in the luxury suite. He heard the rustling of clothes, then shoes hitting the floor. He waited, giving him time to crawl into bed. “Ready?”

“Wait, wait,” he muttered. “I’m under the covers, just turning the lamp on now.”

Thomas Carter was in his thirties, the son of the late multi-millionaire, Ian Carter, the owner of Carter Baked Beans, Inc. He still lived at home with his widowed mother, and had more money than he knew what to do with. He was a little eccentric, but harmless. Lee considered him to be one of his “no sweat” clients. He was ashamed of his obese body and would never let Lee see him naked. The ritual was for him to undress in the dark, hide under the covers, then turn the lamp on so he could watch Lee do a striptease for him. Afterward he would turn the lights back off again, and Lee would get into the bed and fuck him.

The lamp was on now, and Lee smiled at him. “Anything special this time?” he asked seductively, slowly undoing the buttons on his shirt.

Thomas laughed, peeking his head up over the covers like a small boy. “Can you...well...I don’t know how to...?”

“Tommy,” Lee said, pausing. “You’re the client. Remember what I told you, I can’t read your mind. Tell me what you want.” He often found himself talking to him as if he were a small boy. He seemed to respond to that. Lee suspected his mother dominated the hell out of him, and that’s why he was so sexually immature.

“I’d like to see you ah...well, turn yourself on... I know you must have a lover somewhere...can you tell me...well, describe him to me while you, ah...stimulate yourself.”

“Tommy, you naughty boy. I didn’t know you were such a voyeur.” Lee grinned at him, which caused the man in the bed to hide his face and snigger. Lee thought for a moment. He didn’t have a lover. He had a lot of clients, and honestly, none of them qualified as sexual fantasy material. It had been a long time since he’d even stopped to consider what would turn him on in a man, although sometimes he had to fantasize to get off when he was with a client. As he removed his shirt in a seductive way, he closed his eyes. A lover. What would his lover look like? Well, he’d be tall, and broad shouldered, not skinny; toned, muscles, well equipped, and not afraid to tell him what he wanted, take what he wanted. Blue eyes. He had a thing for blue eyes and black hair. And male, very, very male. Deep voice too, smooth operator, confident and... He stopped, his fingers beginning to reach for the zipper on his pants. *Zachary Freeman*. Fuck. He’d just imagined Zachary Freeman in his head.

“Don’t stop,” Thomas protested. “You were on a roll. You were moving your body in such a...well, the guy you were thinking about must be hot.”

“He’s a jackass. Sorry, I was thinking out loud.” He put up a hand. “I’m okay.” He closed his eyes, slowly moving the zipper down on his pants. *Zachary Freeman. Fucking Christ*. The guy who was about to make his life hell, put him in danger, perhaps ruin everything for him. That he fit his sexual fantasy made it all the more frustrating. He kicked the pants away, fiddled with his underwear, and suddenly his overactive imagination went into full gear. It was Zachary Freeman lying in that bed. It was Zachary Freeman he was stripping for, only Freeman wasn’t huddled under the covers like Thomas Carter. He was

lying naked, stretched out on top of the bed in full view, watching him with those blue, blue eyes of his. “Come on, baby,” Zach said, “show me that luscious cock of yours.”

Lee let his head fall back. He began to stroke his own cock, and Zachary got up off the bed and stood behind him. Lee’s head went back on Zach’s shoulder and Zach’s mouth came down on his. Lee’s hand began to stroke faster. Zach’s cock slid along the opening of his ass, and he moaned. Strong arms came around him. “You’re going to do everything I ask you to,” he whispered beside his ear. Lee looked up into those blue eyes. “Yes, yes, anything,” he muttered.

“What? What did you say?”

Lee’s eyes snapped opened. He looked over to see Thomas Carter sitting up on the bed. “He must be hot. What does he look like?”

“Who?” Lee shook his head, reaching up to wipe the sweat off his forehead. His hand was smeared with his own cum.

“The hottie you were fantasizing about. You spoke to him.”

Lee laughed hollowly. “Yeah, well, turn off the light, lover. I’m going to do some talking to you now. You got me all turned on, time to pay the piper.”

Carter reached over and turned off the light. “Bring it on, baby, and tell me about your lover.”

“He’s not my...” He stopped. Oh, what the hell, always give the client what he wants. “His name is Zach,” Lee said, walking over to the side of the bed. “He’s over six feet, muscles everywhere.” Lee crawled onto the bed and got under the blankets. He pulled Thomas’s back up against him, and reached around to play with his erection.

“Um, go on.”

This was kind of fun. Zachary Freeman had no control over this game. “He’s got black hair to his shoulders, always looks kind of windblown, unruly, he doesn’t shave often, giving him that rough look, and it scratches when he kisses you.”

“Oh yeah, go on.” Thomas grunted.

Lee reached over onto the nightstand and felt for a condom. He continued to fondle Thomas’s cock as he undid the package with his teeth. Lee was hard as a rock again. He rolled the condom on as he continued to speak. “He has a big cock, and he knows how to use it. I love running my hands all over him, and he begs for it. He gets on his knees and I fuck him. I fuck him hard and...”

“Fuck me, fuck me, Lee. Now!”

Lee dragged Thomas up onto all fours and began to enter him. As he pumped into him, he saw those blue eyes in his head again. It wasn’t the client he was fucking, it was that damned cop, but Thomas Carter got the ride of his life.

Lee felt almost smug when he left the luxury hotel suite with his money in hand. Fantasizing about Zachary Freeman was his little secret, and in its own way, a little source of power.

* * * * *

When that damn phone Freeman had given him rang on Friday night, just before he was set to go to work, Lee almost didn’t answer it. He was hoping that this had all been a whim on the part of that cop, but as he was about to discover, there was nothing whimsical about Zach Freeman. “I’m busy,” he said, when he opened the phone.

“Really? Got a hot date?”

“Actually yes, and I’m late. What do you want?”

“I just wanted to make sure you hadn’t forgotten about our little agreement.”

“I didn’t agree to anything.” Lee fidgeted with the cushion on the sofa.

“Are you fucking with me?” There was anger in Zach’s voice.

“Actually, yes.” He smiled. “I have been, but from a distance. It’s been nice.”

There was silence.

“You wouldn’t understand.”

“Listen, Hastings, I --”

“Keep your pants on, Zach. I’ll do what I can, given that I don’t have a fucking choice, but I can’t guarantee that I’ll learn anything. I don’t see him until tomorrow night anyway.”

“I’ll be in touch,” Zach said, and hung up.

Lee glared at the phone. “Well, thank you, sweetheart. I love you too, you fucking son of a...” He threw the phone onto the sofa and headed out the door.

* * * * *

Moe Wiseman was a man of impeccable taste. He also led a double life. He held a high ranking position in the government. He’d married into a rich family, was the father of three, and was very active in his synagogue and in charity organisations. There were no flies on Moe Wiseman. On Thursday nights, his wife, heiress to the family fortune of local manufacturing giant, Kale Products, flew to Santa Barbara to visit with her ailing mother. She took the children along; and that’s when Moe invited a few friends into his privately owned condo and had himself a party. The Mrs. didn’t know anything about the condo.

Lee wasn’t always the only man for hire there. Sometimes there were a few others, but always men, or boys, some Lee suspected were underage, and off the streets.

Tonight, it was quiet as he was admitted to the small condo. Moe came out to meet him, his shirt open, a thick gold chain settled in a nest of black hair on his chest. “Sugar,” he called out, reaching up and kissing Lee on the mouth. He was in his early fifties, a short little guy, skinny, and hyper, with a cock about nine inches long. The cock was a great source of pride. “Come in, come in. You look delicious. I’m glad because we are a small crowd, only two others tonight, and you the only treat.”

Lee smiled at him, shrugging out of his jacket. "How are you, Moe?" He was wearing a pair of black pants, along with a white silk shirt bordered with black around the collar and the cuffs. It had cost him a bundle.

"Ah, can't complain," he replied, taking Lee's jacket and hanging it in the closet. "Come on, you know one of 'em, but we got a new guy tonight. He's a friend. Name's Marty. Quite the kidder."

As Lee followed Moe into the sunken living room, his ears were assaulted by Frank Sinatra's *Strangers in the Night*. Right away he recognized Hal Grossman. He was a handsome looking man in his early forties, and always very polite and respectful. The other guy sitting beside him on the sofa was a big man with blond hair and a ruddy face. He was laughing about something. "Lee, this is Marty Segal. Marty, this is our Lee. And of course you know Hal."

"How are you, Hal," Lee said with a smile. "Mr. Segal."

"My, my," the big man murmured, giving Lee the once over, "aren't you pretty."

Lee laughed uneasily. He didn't like the looks of this one. It was obvious that he'd been drinking a lot. "Thank you."

"How have you been, Lee?" Hal asked him, taking a sip from his drink.

Moe motioned to Lee to take a seat. He sat in the chair next to the sofa. "Fine, and yourself?"

"Can't complain."

Moe brought Lee a diet Coke. "Lee doesn't drink," Moe announced, smiling down at him as he took a sip of the Coke.

"Good habit." Hal nodded at him, then winked.

"How about a little something to get us started?" Moe suggested, then walked over to the television and turned it on. He leaned down to turn on the power on the DVD player, and suddenly two naked guys paraded around on the screen.

Moe went to sit in the chair opposite Lee. "Have you seen this one?"

"No." Lee didn't watch much porn.

"Military men," Hal said.

The one called Marty laughed along with him, a little too loud, saying something about "the size of those cocks." He was loaded.

Moe's eyes were on him now. It was his cue to put the empty glass down on the side table and take off his clothes. On the screen, one guy got down on his knees and began to suck the other guy off. The three men in the room were beginning to squirm a bit in their pants, and eyes turned in his direction. Lee stood up. He began to undo his shirt, and now all eyes were glued to him. He laid the shirt carefully over the chair.

The big guy began to rub his cock. Lee undid his pants and stepped out of them.

"Leave the underwear on," Moe instructed, "just take your cock out of them. I find that very sexy."

He was wearing skimpy briefs and they didn't leave much to the imagination. He lifted his cock out, and stood there, letting them drink him in with their eyes.

"Make it hard," Hal urged. "Get hard for us, stud."

Lee reached down and began to handle his cock. He took a breath, closed his eyes, and smiled. Blue eyes, black hair, rough jaw, um. Yeah...baby, man-handle me, baby. He was getting there. His cock was lifting, getting stiff. At least Zachary Freeman was good for something.

His eyes sprang open as he felt someone step up behind him. It was Moe. He pressed his lips to his shoulder and moved his hands down over his ass. He reached around and squeezed his cock in his hand, lifting it up and displaying it to his two friends. "What did I tell you?"

"God damned amazing," the one called Marty hissed. "I got to get out of these pants."

Moe fondled his cock roughly. Lee moaned a little. Zach's hands on him. "*Yeah, baby, go.*"

"Bring him into the bedroom," Hal grunted, now struggling to take off his pants. "Let's tie him down."

Moe met Lee's gaze. He always asked permission first. "Lee, is that all right with you?"

"What in hell you asking him for? He's a slut. You pay him, don't you?" the one called Marty barked suddenly.

Lee had avoided looking at him until now. He wasn't very attractive, rather bloated with a big gut and a small cock. Marty walked over to him suddenly. Two plump hands grabbed his hips.

Lee began to struggle.

"I'm going to fuck you dry, baby."

Moe reached over and gave the big guy a shove backwards. "Back off. We don't play like that here."

"This isn't any fun. What a fucking drag," Marty muttered. He glared at Lee. "If you bill yourself as a piece of meat for hire, better expect to be treated that way."

"Marty, you're drunk," Moe complained.

Lee sighed with relief when Hal said suddenly, "I'll take him home."

There was some protest as he pushed Marty out of the room.

Moe came over to Lee again, and reached out to stroke his hair. "You okay, baby?"

He nodded. "Fine."

"If you want to forget it tonight, I'll..."

He nodded. "Yeah, okay. If you don't mind."

Lee got dressed. Moe apologised again for Segal, and Lee told him not to worry. “Here, there’s a little something extra for you,” Moe said, handing him a wad of bills. “You know I wouldn’t have let him hurt you.”

Lee nodded, thanking him for the money.

“I hope it doesn’t mean you won’t come back.”

“Of course not.” Lee took his coat out of the closet.

“And you won’t have breakfast with me?”

Lee shrugged into his coat. “Not today. I’m kind of tired.” He really just wanted to get out of there. “Thanks. And don’t worry. I’ll come back when you want me.”

“You make me so happy. You know I’m crazy in love with you.”

Lee smiled at him, then, pecked him on the cheek. “Ditto,” he said, and lifted a hand to him before he went out the door.

* * * * *

On the elevator, Lee closed his eyes. Those words that fat fuck had said to him kept playing in his head. *If you bill yourself as a piece of meat for hire, better expect to be treated that way.* He’d had close calls before, but this one left him feeling shaky, defeated. Those words had cut him to the core. That’s not the way he thought of himself at all. He tried to shake it off as he walked out of the building and down the street to where he’d parked his car.

“You know,” a deep voice said suddenly behind him as he went to put the key in the lock, “leaving your car out here all night isn’t a very good idea. This is a tow away zone.”

Lee sighed and slowly turned around. Zach Freeman was the last person he wanted to see right now. “What are you doing, following me around now?”

“I’m not following you around.”

“How did you know where I was, then?”

"I'm a cop."

"What in the fuck do you want?" Lee didn't realise that he was crying until Zach said, "What's wrong?"

"Nothing, why?"

"It looks like you've been crying."

"I'm not crying. I got dust in my eyes."

"It's not dusty."

"Hey, will you kindly..." He stopped, swallowing.

"Did someone hurt you?" Zach placed a hand on his shoulder, and turned him around.

"I'm not a whore," he snapped, wiping a tear that flowed down his cheek involuntarily.

Zach laughed, but not unkindly. He made a face. "Could have fooled me. I thought that was your profession? Did someone call you a whore? How dare they?" He gasped, his face a mocking mask of outrage.

"What are you, a comedian?" Lee laughed a little, giving him a shove backward. "Knock it off. I might be a whore, but I'm not a piece of meat."

Zach sobered. "Look, there are insensitive slobbs out there. You got to develop a thicker skin, kid, especially if you're going to continue selling your ass."

"Never mind my ass," he muttered. "What do you want?"

"Where's your phone?"

"Where I left it."

"You need to have it on you at all times. I tried to call you, and you didn't answer."

"Have it on me at all times? Even in bed?"

Zachary tilted his head at him. "Are you ever out of bed?"

"Okay, so I don't have the stupid phone. What did you call me for?"

"To take you to breakfast," he announced, looking innocent.

“You came here, at this time of the morning, to take me to breakfast?”

“Yep. Have you eaten? You need to keep up your strength. You must be hungry after...ah...working.”

“Are you hungry after sex, Zachary?” He met his gaze.

“Isn’t everyone?” He looked away. “It’s either that or a cigarette, and cigarettes will kill you.”

Lee observed him for a moment. “You seem uptight about sex.”

“I’m not uptight about sex.”

“Okay. I’ll go to breakfast with you if you tell me what the real reason is.”

“I want to talk about your date tonight.”

“That figures. I thought you were just trying to be nice.”

“Okay, if that makes you feel better. Let’s take your car.”

“Asshole. You don’t trust me.”

Zachary gave him a feeble grin before Lee got into the car.

“Guess I got my answer.” He put the key in the ignition, then leaned over and opened the passenger door. Zachary Freeman slid into the passenger seat and closed the door. He looked kind of cramped in the front seat, his head ducked, shoulders shoved forward. Lee laughed out loud. “Are you sure we shouldn’t take your car?”

“I’ll be fine. Go ahead. There’s a little diner not far from here. Take a left and keep going. You’ll see it.”

Lee glanced at him a few times as he drove. He’d shaved since he’d last seen him, but it was more than twenty-four hours ago. His jeans looked clean, but his shirt was wrinkled, and he smelled of breath mints and some exotic aftershave that was subtle, but quite intriguing. “What aftershave are you wearing?” Lee asked, turning left at the corner.

“Soap.”

“It’s more than that.”

“No, it’s soap.”

Lee laughed. “It’s you, then.”

“Me?”

“You smell...never mind.”

Zachary raised an eyebrow. “You’re suffering from hunger. Don’t eat me.”

Lee smiled. That was an interesting thought. “You like mints?”

“Not especially.”

“Why do you suck on them all the time then?”

“What are you, the fucking police?”

Lee smirked, then, spotting the diner, he pulled into a parking space in front.

“Any more questions?” Zach asked him before he got out of the car.

“Not at the moment.”

“Good, let’s eat. I’m starved.”

They got a table near the door. The waitress brought them coffee. Lee watched as Zachary took a small silver flask out of his jacket and poured something into his coffee.

“Gin?” he mouthed. He could smell it.

“Yeah. Want some?” Zach lifted an eyebrow without changing expression.

“Hell, no. I don’t drink, and especially not at this time in the morning. Aren’t you on duty?”

“I’m always on duty.” He placed the flask back inside his jacket.

“That’s why you use mints, to cover up the...”

“Look, Perry Mason, what I put into my coffee or into my mouth is my business.”

Lee shrugged. “Okay. It’s just that when someone drinks this early in the morning, there’s usually a reason.”

Zach sat back in the booth and stretched out his legs. He laughed slightly. “Changing professions, are we, from whore to psychologist?”

Lee clenched his teeth. “Look, I’ve already taken enough shit over the last few hours, knock it off, okay?”

The waitress came over with her little note pad. “What will you have?”

“Ah,” Zach said, “brown toast, no butter, two eggs scrambled, some grapefruit juice.”

“Ham, bacon?”

“Nope.”

She turned to Lee.

“You paying?” Lee asked Zach.

“Sure, why not.”

He checked the menu. “Double order of pancakes, and French toast, with fruit salad.”

She nodded, and walked away.

“There was filet mignon on there too,” Zach said. “Sure you didn’t want to order that?”

“No. I don’t eat red meat.”

“Oh, I see.”

“Breakfast is the most important meal of the day.”

“I wouldn’t know. This is my supper.” He sipped his coffee.

You’re beautiful, Lee thought. Now, why in the hell would he be thinking that? “You know, you have a surly personality.”

“Yeah? So, sue me.”

“Look, I’ve had a rough night. Can’t this wait?”

“No. What happened?”

“Never mind.”

“Don’t say I didn’t ask.”

"I thought we'd discussed this already."

"New development. I want you to find out all you can about a guy called Carl."

"Carl. Carl who? Never heard of him."

"We only got a first name, got it off a surveillance tape. I have a hunch about him."

"Who he is?"

"A guy we think is Lebeau's front runner for drug shipments."

"Drugs?"

"Among other things. Don't you get treated to the candy store at his parties?"

"I don't do drugs."

"A hooker who doesn't do drugs, now, that's a switch."

"You don't know everything about me."

"I guess not. I want you to listen carefully if you hear anyone around Lebeau mention that name, Carl, okay?"

Lee sighed. "Okay. You do realise you're probably ruining my life."

"You ruined your life all on your own a long time ago."

"My life was fine until you came along."

"Oh, really? I used to work Vice. Do you know the age most johns want their boys, fourteen...hell, seventeen is past their prime in that business."

"Is that the age you like your boys, Lieutenant?"

"You want me to beat the crap out of you?"

Lee laughed.

"I prefer a man in my bed, thanks, not some little kid."

Lee stopped laughing. He looked at him. "And do you have a man in your bed, Officer?"

"That's...ah...none of your..."

“Or, are you too busy chasing down the bad guys to have a man in your bed?”

“Here you go, boys,” the waitress announced, setting down two plates in front of Lee and Zachary. “Enjoy.”

“Anyway,” Lee said, picking up his fork, “as far as the age thing goes, you’re talking about street hustling. It’s not the same thing.”

“Maybe not, but what ’cha going to do when you’re thirty, or forty?”

“I got money socked away,” Lee replied, taking a bite of the French toast.

“You better have lots of it. You could always work in a call center.”

“Fuck you. I’ve been to college.”

“So, what’s your degree in?” He met his gaze, spearing some egg on his fork.

“I...don’t have a...well...I took philosophy and languages and...”

“That’s what I thought. Call centers pay about...”

“Screw you,” he muttered, taking another bite of his breakfast.

Zach laughed out loud.

They ate in silence for awhile. The waitress brought more coffee. Suddenly, Zachary said, “Do you really like what you do?”

“Sometimes, yes. You find that hard to believe?”

“No.”

“Sometimes it’s like...oh there’s no sense explaining it to you.”

“Why not? I’m not bright enough?”

“No, because you’d just belittle it.”

“Go ahead. I’ll try to control myself.”

“Sometimes it’s like doing social work.”

“Social work?”

“I knew you’d...”

“Go ahead. I didn’t say anything. How so?”

“You get a guy, trapped in his life, his situation, too shy to find a guy, and...or lonely. Sometimes he just needs something, you know?”

“What about the guy who needs, and is trapped but doesn’t have money for your...ah...therapy?”

“I don’t do charity work.” Lee looked at him. Then after a second, he added, “Who were you talking about, Freeman?”

Zachary looked up at him. “Whoa...I didn’t mean me.”

Lee smiled. “Okay, because I might have...” He paused. What in hell was he saying?

“You might have what, Hastings?”

“Nothing. Forget it.”

“It’s forgotten. How’s your breakfast?”

“Very good, actually.”

“Why did you ask me if I was paying before you ordered?”

“I wouldn’t have ordered so much food.”

Zach laughed. “A guy who lives in a condo and drives a luxury sports car, but can’t afford breakfast. You kill me.”

“I’m saving for my retirement.”

Zachary grabbed the bill and stood up. “You need a good investment broker.”

Lee reached over and grabbed his arm. “And I think you need to get laid.”

Zachary pulled his arm away. “I’ll pay the bill. Leave the tip.”

* * * * *

When they were back in the car, Lee asked him where he should drop him. “My car isn’t far from where yours was parked. Leave me there.”

“You’re not going to harass my clients, are you?”

“No. I didn’t harass Moe.”

“Fuck. You know his name.”

“I told you. I’ve made it my business to know everything about you.” He glanced out the window.

“Ever wonder why everyone around you is getting laid, and you just run around watching from the outside?”

“On the outside looking in, oh woe is me. I’m living vicariously through you, Lee, didn’t you know?”

“Can’t you ever be serious?” Lee cast a look at him, then, hit a pothole. “Shit!”

“I was just about to tell you, you’re going to hit a very serious pothole but” -- He shook his dark head. -- “I wasn’t fast enough.”

“Oh, shut up,” Lee muttered, pulling to a stop on the corner where Freeman had accosted him that morning.

Zach popped a mint into his mouth.

“You could get drummed off the force for drinking on the job.”

“I keep hoping so,” Zach replied, reaching for the door handle, “but every fucking morning I’m back in the shit hole.”

“Zach,” Lee said, placing a hand on his forearm.

He paused, and looked at him. “What?”

“I’m scared.”

“We’re all scared, Hastings. It’s called life. Don’t worry about it. Get your phone, and keep it on you. If something goes wrong, you call me.”

“And you’ll come, really?”

He nodded. “Really.”

Chapter Four

Irritating. If he had to come up with one word to describe Lee Hastings, that would be it. As Zach sat in his office that afternoon, an image of Hastings came into his head. He paused and put the report down on his desk. He thought about their conversation, and at one point he laughed out loud. Social work. Hastings said he was doing social work. Well, hell, maybe he was doing social work. Maybe he was right about some other stuff too. God knows, he did need to get laid, and no matter how hard he tried, each time he saw Lee Hastings, he couldn't get the image of him in that harness out of his mind. It was craziness.

This morning over breakfast, he'd felt uneasy. Sometimes the way Lee looked at him. He couldn't quite figure it out, but there were times he felt as if Lee was looking into his soul. And then there was the sexual thing. Everything about Lee Hastings was sexual, from the way he moved his head to the way he ate pancakes. Holy Christ. He was losing it. First of all, Hastings was way out of his league. He didn't have two thousand dollars, and secondly, well, it was just out of the question. Most likely, he was caught up in the idea of Hastings being a pro. However, he knew he'd have to satisfy this itch he had in his pants sooner or later, but it sure as hell wasn't going to be with Lee Hastings.

* * * * *

Lee was stressed out all day. Even though he was exhausted, he couldn't sleep. He told himself he'd go and see Lebeau like usual. Nothing had changed, but that was a lie. He was Freeman's stoolie now, and it looked like he didn't have a hell of a lot of choice in the matter. It didn't help that Zach Freeman showed up on his doorstep an hour before he was ready to leave.

"I hate you," Lee said, swinging the door open then marching back into his living room.

"Yep," Zach said, "that's usually the first thing I say to someone who knocks on my door. I hate you."

Lee folded his arms across his chest and glared at him. "You really don't care about me at all. You're willing to sacrifice my life for this stupid obsession of yours."

"It's not an obsession," Zach replied, shaking his dark head. "Can I have an apple?" he asked, glancing at the fruit bowl on the stand.

"I don't care," Lee replied.

Zach grabbed an apple and wiped it on his T-shirt. He took a big bite out of it, the juice running down his chin.

Lee glanced at him. Those juices running down Zach's chin made his pulse speed up for some reason. There was something very sexual about it, very carnal.

Zach wiped his mouth on his sleeve. "Tasty apple."

"What you're doing to me is torture. What do you want, anyway?"

"To make sure that you don't try to wiggle out of this, and to be here, in case you were, ah...nervous."

"Nervous? I'm shitting bricks."

"Ouch," Zach said, making a face. "Look." He came closer. "All you got to do is act naturally, and listen. I'm not asking you to play James Bond or anything, so relax."

Lee took a breath. He let his gaze travel over Zach for a moment. He was wearing faded jeans, a white T-shirt, and a short black leather jacket. It was open, and Lee could see his gun

holster hanging off his shoulder. A shield hung on a rope around his neck. “What’s it like to shoot someone?”

“Huh?”

“To shoot someone?”

Zach glanced at his gun. “A good cop never has to find out.”

“Are you a good cop, Zach?” He smiled at him.

“Is that like asking me if I’m a good boy?” Zach’s gaze met his.

Lee felt a flutter of something in his gut. God, he was so male, so unpretentiously male. He needed a shave, and that suited him. His thick black hair was windblown, and that suited him too. “Are you a good boy, Zach?” He heard his voice tremble as he spoke.

Zach was standing far too close. He could have reached out and touched him. His fingers ached to do just that, to move slowly over that rough, square jaw of his, to force his lips apart, to taste his mouth.

“What’s your definition of a good boy, Lee?” Zach’s voice has softened, that deep, male tone sounded a little like gravel suddenly.

It seemed to Lee that they were seized by the moment, like two rabbits caught in the headlights. Lee couldn’t speak, and Zach was definitely waiting for an answer to his question. “I...” he began breathlessly, “I just wanted to know what it was like to shoot someone. That’s all.”

“Are you sure that’s all you wanted to know?”

Lee found himself looking helplessly into those sultry blue eyes of Zach’s. “What are you...?” Lee began.

Zach reached out for his wrist. He pulled him forward until Lee’s chest was crushed against his. “Sometimes I think you might like me, Lee, just a little bit.”

Lee could scarcely breathe. “And why in the fuck would you think that?” Lee asked, his tone not matching his words, his voice faltering, hardly able to make it above a whisper.

“Oh, I don’t know,” Zach cooed, his mouth dangerously close to his, “either that, or you enjoy playing little games with my head.”

“Maybe it’s not your head I want to play with.” Lee narrowed his eyes, wondering where in the hell that had come from.

Zach’s eyes widened. “Watch it, baby,” he whispered softly. “In your game, you can’t be giving it away for free. So, how much do you charge, anyway, to suck a man’s cock?” He released him but didn’t step away.

Lee swallowed. His cock was hard as hell. He unconsciously licked his lips, trying to think of some snappy comeback. “Regulars get it thrown in with the service. A single blowjob, with no extras, will cost you one hundred and fifty dollars.”

“What does a regular pay again?”

“I told you, for a night, two grand. Blowjobs are part of the service.”

There was silence.

Zach was looking at him.

“What? God damn it.” Suddenly he felt cheap. He’d never felt that way before. He really resented him for making him feel that way.

“How does it feel to get paid to suck a man’s cock?”

“Try it sometime. You’ll see.” He turned his back.

“No, thanks.”

“You can stand there and judge me.”

“I’m not judging you, Lee. What happens if you fall in love?”

Lee stiffened. “If you think I’m falling for you, you’re...”

“Look at me,” Zach said, placing a hand on his shoulder. He turned him around. “I’m not insinuating anything. I’m just asking you, what happens if...?”

“Would you fall in love with me, Zach, knowing what I am? Men don’t fall in love with me. They fuck me.”

Zach nodded, backing away. “That’s sad.”

“You can talk. Where’s the guy who’s in love with you?”

“There was one.” He moved across the room, picked up the ashtray off the coffee table, and put it back down. “He left me.”

“Why?”

Zach looked at him, and smiled slightly. “I fell apart and stopped focussing on him.”

“Did you love him?”

He shrugged. “Maybe.”

“Don’t you know?”

“Do you know what love is, Lee?”

“No. And I don’t want to know, thanks.”

“What about lust, do you understand that?” He came closer. “Do you understand this hunger that starts in your gut and grips your cock, and won’t let you go until...”

He was standing too close again. Lee felt breathless. “You need to get laid.”

He nodded. “Yep, so you keep saying. Lower your prices, Lee.” He laughed, moving away. “Stop worrying about this little arrangement we have. You’ll do fine. I’ll be in touch.”

“Your tactics at distracting me aren’t working,” Lee called after him as Zach headed for the door.

“No?” Zach turned around and grinned. “I think they’re working very well.”

* * * * *

Zach sat in his car for a few minutes before starting the engine. He unzipped his jeans and adjusted his cock, giving it a gentle squeeze for a minute. What in hell happened in

there? God, he'd wanted to kiss Lee so bad. Maybe he should have, told him to send him the bill. He laughed a little. This sexual attraction between them was growing more intense each time they met, and no matter what Lee said, Zach knew he felt it too. He started the engine and told himself to get a grip; only problem was that Lee seemed to be getting a grip on him.

* * * * *

As Lee made his way across town to Lebeau's house, his mind was racing. Instead of being concerned about the potentially dangerous situation he was stepping into, he found himself thinking about that damnable Zach Freeman. He could still see the juice of that apple rolling down his chin, glistening on his lips. He licked his own lips in response. What would he have done if Zach had kissed him? Zach wasn't going to kiss him. He was just taunting him for some reason. The guy was a total asshole.

He parked the car in front of Lebeau's house and sighed. As he walked up the pathway, he told himself for the hundredth time that there was no way Daniel Lebeau could know he was there to spy on him. He'd keep his ears open, but that was it. No more, no less.

He rang the bell and waited. He wondered if Daniel would be alone with his bodyguard. There didn't seem to be any cars around.

Oscar Delaney opened the door to him. That smirk appeared. "Hello, whore. Mr. Lebeau is waiting for you in the living room."

Lee didn't bother responding. He just brushed past the big guy and walked down the long carpeted hallway.

Daniel Lebeau was on the phone as he walked into the room, and Lee found himself paying a bit more attention than usual. Daniel motioned to him to come closer, and he patted the seat beside him on the sofa.

"Yeah, I know what you mean," Lebeau said into the phone, reaching over to unzip Lee's jeans with one hand as soon as he sat down on the sofa. "We'll take care of that, my friend, no problem, but extra caution is to be taken."

Lebeau lifted Lee's cock out of his pants. He fondled it roughly, placing a hand over the receiver. "Get hard," he mouthed.

Lee nodded, beginning to stroke his own cock as Lebeau released it.

"Yeah, yeah," Lebeau said again into the phone. "I know, kind of flattering isn't it, Carl?"

Carl? Lee swallowed, continuing to stroke his cock. So, Zachary was right. There was someone called Carl involved in something or another.

"He loves me; what can I say? Not sure what his fucking problem is. Cops, you know."

Lee looked up. Was he talking about Zachary Freeman?

Lebeau let out a laugh. "Guys like that usually end up dead."

Lee froze for a second. *Dead*. Then he noticed Daniel looking at him. Lee smiled seductively, and continued to stroke his own cock.

"Well, I really got to go," Daniel said suddenly, reaching over to undo the buttons on Lee's shirt. "I got something hot waiting for me, and ah...it's about to boil over." He laughed at his little joke and threw the portable aside. "Hello, baby," Daniel said, turning to him, and running a hand through Lee's hair. He pushed Lee's head back against the sofa and kissed him passionately on the mouth, all the while struggling to get Lee's shirt off. Daniel growled a little in frustration and got up off the sofa. "Take those clothes off and go up to my bedroom. I'll join you in a minute."

Lee stood up and removed his shirt. He dropped it onto the sofa. Lee pulled his pants down over his hips, flipping off his shoes at the same time. He left them in a heap on the floor.

Daniel let his gaze run the length of him. "I want to fuck you so hard. And you're hard now. Keep it that way. Go upstairs now. There's a bottle of champagne chilling, and some special sex toys."

Lee ran his tongue over his lips and winked at him. As he turned to leave the room, he felt Daniel slap his ass hard. He laughed and made his way up the stairs to the bedroom.

Lebeau had a really gaudy looking bedroom. The carpets, curtains, and bedspread were leopard skin print, and everything was made from fake fur. There were mirrors, not only on his ceilings but on his walls, and a horrible bronzed statue of a naked man with a huge erection and a big dildo protruding from his ass. Hanging off the statue were straps and cuffs. Lebeau enjoyed seeing him spread-eagled and strapped to that thing. The only nice thing about that room was the huge round bed and the heated hot tub.

Lee lay down on the bed, naked, and waited. His mind went over that telephone conversation Lebeau had been having. Dead. He'd said something about guys like that get dead. He mentioned a cop...and from the way Lebeau had acted around Zachary at the club, Lee was pretty sure who the "cop" in question was.

Suddenly he heard Lebeau enter the room. He shut his thoughts off immediately, almost afraid that Lebeau would read them. He was being foolish again. "I've missed you. What took you so long, still talking to that Carl guy?" As soon as he'd said it, he wished he hadn't.

Lebeau dropped down on the bed beside him. He didn't blink an eye, he just looked down at him and said, "Don't you worry your beautiful head about it." A hand ran down Lee's chest and to his sex. Lebeau began to gently slap it back and forth. "I want you to come with me next week. I'm going out of town to Reno. Can you clear your schedule for the week?"

Lee bit his lip. "I...I don't know...I have a few clients that..."

"I will pay whatever they pay, plus your usual fee for every night. What do you say?"

Daniel's hand squeezed his sex; then he pushed him over onto his stomach. "Chocolate scented lube, fifty dollars an ounce, expensive." Daniel always pointed out how expensive everything was. It's what made him sound like he had no class. The upper class didn't point

out how much everything cost. "I'm going to grease your fine ass with it," he murmured, running his lips down Lee's spine while spreading the chocolate lube on his hands.

"That's a lot of money," Lee said, squirming when the lube hit his anus.

"Yes, but you're worth it. I'd do anything to have you full time." He was straddling him now, beginning to roughly fuck him with his lubed finger.

"Well, I..." Lee began.

Lebeau yanked his hair back. "Get on your knees."

Lebeau got off the bed and pulled some handcuffs out of the side table. "Put your hands behind your head."

Lee kneeled on the bed, his hands cuffed behind his head. Lebeau inserted his finger into his ass again, then two, then three. Roughly, he fucked his ass, so fast this time that Lee's teeth began to chatter. He had a hard time keeping his balance. He closed his eyes. An image of Zachary came into his mind. He was sitting across from him in the restaurant, and he asked him. "How much, Lee? How much to fuck you?"

For you, nothing. "Fuck me," Lee breathed, Zach's face in his head. "Fuck me."

He could hear Lebeau behind him, grunting. "Oh I will, baby, I will."

* * * * *

Zachary watched as Lee left Daniel Lebeau's house. It was three in the morning. He slowly followed him in his car, pulling over just as Lee entered the driveway of his condo.

Lee paused at his door. He watched him as he approached. "Don't you ever sleep?"

"I could ask you the same thing. I thought you'd at least spend the night."

"Where were you exactly?" He eyed him. "Were you watching us fuck?"

Zach made a face. "How was I supposed to do that? I can't see through walls, and I wasn't about to climb a tree."

Lee moved toward his door. "How in the hell do you know where I am all the time?"

"I'm a cop." Zach shrugged his broad shoulders. "So, did you hear the name Carl?"

Lee turned and looked at him. "You're a real obsessoid."

"What's a... an obsessoid?"

"Look it up."

"I don't think it's in the dictionary. It's okay; I get it. So?"

"As a matter of fact, Daniel spoke to Carl on the phone." Lee put his key in the lock and opened the door.

Zach followed him inside.

"I don't remember inviting you in." Lee looked back at him.

"You didn't. Can I come in?"

"No," Lee said, walking into the living room.

"Thanks," Zach replied, on his heels. "So, what did he say?"

"Daniel said something about ah...I don't know...I think he was talking about you, actually."

"How sweet. What did he say?"

"Cops like you end up dead." Lee met his gaze. "Is that what you want? To end up dead?"

"Not especially, no. I enjoy breathing. Don't tell me you care?"

"No, I don't care."

Zach chuckled. "What else did he say?"

"Something about you loving him."

"Ha. He wishes, and...?"

"Ah...taking extra precautions...I think." Lee yawned, and fell back onto the sofa.

"What do you mean, you think? How do you know he was talking to Carl?"

"Lebeau said his name."

“He must have said more than that.”

“I can’t remember...I was a little distracted at the time.”

“What? He was blowing you and talking on the phone at the same time?”

“Can’t talk with your mouth full.”

“Look, you” -- Zach pointed at him. -- “this is no joke.”

Lee sat up. “You’re telling me. Lebeau was talking about you ending up dead, you or some other cop. I know it’s not a joke. It’s scary, and I don’t want to do this.”

“You’ll fuck him, but not inform on him, is that it? If he does shit, hurts people, that’s okay. Don’t let it bother you, Lee, as long as you get paid.”

“That’s not fair. You’re the cop. I can’t be responsible for the entire fucking world.”

“That’s it, Lee, just look out for number one.” He pointed his finger at him again. “You’re exactly what’s wrong with this world. People don’t give a shit.”

“You’re the cop, not me, and where in hell do you get off...” Lee sputtered. His temper was growing by the second. After a few minutes, Zach found himself smiling. He took a step back and listened to him rage for awhile; then Lee noticed his smile and got angrier. “Okay, that’s it, out. Get out.”

Zach laughed. “I’m going. You’re kind of cute when you lose it.”

Lee opened, then, closed his mouth. “Out!”

Zach threw up his hands. “Next time,” he said, moving to the door, “try to pay less attention to your cock and more attention to what Lebeau is saying, okay?”

“*You* try to concentrate when someone is stroking your cock. On second thought, you’d probably try to figure out who the suspect was, while your dick was...”

Zachary turned and looked at him. “What are you talking about?”

“Oh, never mind. Forget it. You’re impossible.”

“What is it you want to know about my dick?”

“No...nothing.” Lee shook his head. “Forget I said that, okay?”

“Getting nervous, Lee?” He raised an eyebrow.

“You need to stop playing games with me.”

“I’m not playing anything,” Zach said, folding his arms across his chest. “What exactly are you talking about?”

“Earlier. What was that?”

“What are you talking about?”

“You, eating that apple and...”

Zach narrowed his eyes. “You’re losing it, Lee. I was hungry. Is that a crime?”

“It’s the way you ate that apple.”

“I only took a bite. What’s that got to do with playing games?”

He looked completely innocent, but Lee knew he was leading him somewhere.

“You were going to...kiss me.”

“I was not.”

“You acted like...you pulled me close and...”

“Did you want me to kiss you?”

“Absolutely not. That’s not what I meant.”

“What would you do if I did?” Zach asked, leaning against the doorjamb.

“I’d...I’d...” Lee began.

Zach reached out and yanked Lee up against his chest. He looked down into his eyes for a moment. Lee was frozen to the spot. He couldn’t move. He could only anticipate that mouth coming down on his, the taste of it, the feel of it against his own...the... And then, he kissed him. He just placed one hand behind Lee’s head, and kissed him hard on the mouth. At first, Lee kept his mouth stubbornly closed, but Zach’s mouth demanded more. Lee stifled a moan in his chest. Zach’s body was so close to his. He felt his pulse pounding inside of him,

and his lips opened just a little, but a little was all Zach seemed to need. His tongue moved along the open seam and past his teeth, joining with his own in a slow, sensuous dance, which was as erotic as it was passionate.

Then, without warning, Zach released him. "You'd what?" He leaned back up against the doorjamb and tilted his head at him, as if nothing at all had happened. "I'm still waiting."

Lee stumbled backward, blinking at him, feeling completely overwhelmed, his heart hammering in his chest. Fuck, Jesus. God, what was that? He had trouble catching his breath. The words that came out of his mouth sounded hollow, insincere. He was hardly aware of what he was saying. "I did what you wanted me to. Now, go home."

"All right, but I'm not going to let up on you, Lee. I'll make a snitch out of you yet."

"Or get me killed in the process." He gave himself a mental shake. "Do you usually kiss all your snitches?"

"Only the cute ones."

Lee rolled his eyes. "Fucking smooth operator."

"Hardly." Zach snorted; then he sobered. "Lee, I'll protect you," he said, meeting his gaze. "I promise."

"Oh, get out of here. Go get laid, for Christ's sake. Go kiss one of your other patsies...maybe they'll be more receptive."

"You were pretty receptive, but that's a whole different topic. Unfortunately, at today's prices, I can't afford to get laid."

"Don't you know anyone who will do you at cost?"

Zach smirked. "Is that an offer?"

"I wouldn't do you for a million dollars."

"I'd do the devil himself for that much," Zach muttered, letting his gaze run over Lee. His fair hair was tousled, and he looked sleepy. His fancy shirt was half undone, and when he was angry, those blue eyes looked almost silver.

“You are the devil himself.” Lee threw back at him, but the anger was gone.

“I need you, Lee,” Zach said softly. “I need you.”

Lee sucked in some breath. “Really?” He moved a little closer. “Maybe I could make an exception and...”

“What are you talking about?” Zach narrowed his eyes. “I need you to help me get Lebeau. The guy is a sadistic criminal. You can help me take this guy off the streets.”

Lee swallowed. “Can’t you concentrate on anything else except Lebeau?”

“No,” Zach snapped. “I can’t.”

“If you’d confide in me a little more, tell me what Lebeau did, why you’re so...?”

He sighed. “I had a life once, and like I told you the other night, a lover. I didn’t drink, not so much anyway, and...”

“Go on.” Lee came closer.

“A few years back, Lebeau was involved in something, a kidnapping. A little girl. I...”
He stopped.

“Zach,” Lee said, reaching out, touching his forearm. “What happened to the little girl?”

He gave Lee a tight smile. “She...” he began, then, stopped. “I got to go. I’ll be in touch.”

* * * * *

The next morning, Lee sat drinking coffee at the kitchen table, thinking about Zachary. In fact, he went to bed with him on his mind, and woke up that way. He was surprised Zach had told him as much as he had. He reached for the phone Zachary had given him and dialled.

Zach picked up on the third ring. He sounded tired. “You got something for me?”

“I forgot to tell you, Lebeau asked me to accompany him for a week to Reno.”

“Reno? When’s he leaving?”

“In a few days.”

“Go. I’ll follow you out. You need to find out where you’ll be staying so that I can be close by.”

“Okay.”

“That it?”

“I guess.” There was a pause. “Zach?”

“Yeah?”

“If anytime you want to talk, you know...about stuff. I...I don’t mind.”

There was another pause.

“Zach?”

“I heard you. No sweat. Call me with details.” He hung up.

Lee sighed. He found himself thinking about Zachary Freeman. What must it be like to be obsessed with one thing, something that was obviously tearing him apart? Zach was too young to be alone, to be carrying around a flask of liquor and drinking from it at breakfast.

Lee picked up the phone and stared at it. He dialled the number and waited. Finally, on the fourth ring, it picked up. Zachary Freeman sounded half asleep. “This better be good,” he said.

“I need to talk to you.”

“About?”

“Where do you live?”

“Where do I live?”

“Come on, Zachary, I won’t become your stalker. What do you want for breakfast?”

“You got to be kidding.”

“No. One of those egg and sausage things on a bun?”

“God, no. Just bring me some coffee. I’m at 63 Carson Road, apartment 10.”

“Be there in a bit.”

* * * * *

Zachary groaned. Someone had been leaning on the doorbell for what seemed like half an hour. He stumbled out of bed and pulled on his old robe. “Hold on,” he called out, then, opened the door.

“Hey,” Lee said, a brown bag in his hand. “You look like shit.”

Zach yawned and rubbed his eyes. “Yeah, well, thanks. I usually don’t entertain at this hour.”

“It’s almost noon,” Lee said walking in and closing the door. “What a dump.”

Zach eyed him and threw himself onto the sofa.

“I brought coffee.”

“Thanks,” he growled, accepting the cup from Lee. “What are you doing here?”

Lee sat down opposite him. He wiped at the dust on the coffee table. “You’re a slob.”

Zach sighed. “You didn’t come here to inspect my housekeeping skills, did you?”

“No. Why are you still in bed?”

“I’m not in bed anymore,” he said with a sardonic sneer. He sipped the coffee. “I didn’t get to bed until almost eight this morning.”

“Oh, God, Zach, I’m sorry.”

“What’s the problem?”

“I got lonely, I guess.”

“Lonely?”

“Look, I cancelled all my regulars, and it’s a little stressful thinking about going away with Lebeau.”

“Why? Don’t you do this kind of stuff?”

“Sometimes, but Lebeau is very possessive.”

“He pays for you, doesn’t he? Look, Lee, I don’t understand how this stuff works. He pays; doesn’t he get to do what he wants?”

Lee didn’t answer for a minute.

“Lee?”

“I haven’t fucked anyone for a long time...for free. You know?”

Zach blinked. He realised that Lee was trying to communicate something to him, something real. He looked at him. “Really?”

“Really.”

“And that bothers you?”

“No. I mean, I don’t know.” He shrugged. “It’s stupid, isn’t it? I never thought about it before.” He stood up and walked to the window. “I always thought that if you had it, and people wanted it, why give it for free? You know?” He turned to look at him.

“Ah, yeah, I guess so.” Zach wasn’t sure what he wanted him to say.

“Now, I wonder what it’s like to do that...why you do that.”

“Why? Why you make love without using your credit card?”

Lee laughed. “Yeah, something like that.”

“For ordinary reasons I guess, because you want to, because someone turns you on, and you want to make them happy, make yourself happy. Hell, I don’t know, Lee. You’re asking the wrong guy. My lover left, remember?”

“Because of sex?”

Zach laughed. “No. That was good, actually. Because I was ‘emotionally unavailable.’ I think that’s what he called me.”

Lee came over and suddenly sat down beside him on the sofa. He was close, too close. “And are you...like me...emotionally unavailable?”

Their gazes met, locked. Zach found it hard to breathe. Zach’s hand moved toward Lee’s, his fingers stretching out. Zach almost touched his hand. “I guess so,” he replied.

Lee suddenly reared up on the sofa and captured Zach’s face between his two hands. He planted his mouth on his. Zach was taken off guard. He didn’t fight. Instead, he allowed Lee to devour his mouth, allowed him to take the coffee from his hands, untie the sash on his robe and spread it open. He propelled him back on the sofa, hands now moving over his chest, down his stomach to his sex, which was getting harder by the second.

“Zach,” he groaned, taking his mouth from his and placing it on his chest, licking one of his nipples, and then trickling his fingers across his shaft.

Zach placed his hand in Lee’s hair. Lee’s lips floated over his skin, moving to the base of his cock. Zach let his head go back. His eyes closed, a deep groan of need rumbling in his gut and moving up into his lungs as Lee licked his shaft, fondled his balls.

“You’re beautiful.” Lee groaned, then proceeded to capture the head of his cock in his mouth.

“Oh, God,” Zach breathed, looking down at Lee now, who was swallowing more and more of him.

He couldn’t let this happen. “Jesus,” he said, gasping. “Lee, stop.” He placed his hands on the other man’s head and slowly pulled his cock out of his mouth. He folded his robe around him and stood up, his cock still hard and throbbing.

Lee looked rather dazed as he sat there on the floor, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand. “I...I’m sorry,” he said, looking up at Zach. “I lost it for a minute.”

Zach nodded, looking away.

“Got talking about what it would be like...you know...not on the clock and...” Lee laughed uncomfortably. “You have a nice...ah...cock, and a great body.”

Zach cleared his throat. "Yeah. Thanks."

"You, ah, work out a lot?" Lee got up off the floor.

"I do, but Lee, listen, you don't have to be embarrassed. You're, ah...well...you do what you do, and I...well, I have to admit, I'm more than a little, ah..."

"Intrigued?"

"Yeah." Zach looked around the room. "It's natural, I presume. I don't have a...well...not a lot of time for sex and..."

"You're horny," Lee said. "You're young, sensational looking, healthy, very male...and..."

"Lee..." He grinned. "Focus. Let's forget it, okay?"

"Okay. Do you have to work today?"

"No."

"So," Lee said, "get in the shower, get dressed. Let's go somewhere."

"You and me...go somewhere?"

"Yeah. Got a problem with that?"

Zach laughed. "No, I guess not."

"I promise I won't try and have my way with you."

"Well then, I'm not going," Zach joked.

Lee burst out laughing. "Hurry up."

* * * * *

Lee glanced at the man walking beside him, and at the night sky. They had been together all afternoon. Lee drove them out into the country to this great little town he knew. They browsed little shops and ate ice cream. They didn't talk about anything serious. They

just laughed, and Lee noticed that Zach looked so much younger by the end of the day. He looked happy, and he didn't take out that little flask once.

Around seven, they went to eat seafood down by the water, and Zach ordered wine. Zach kept telling him these ridiculous jokes about fish, prompting Lee to throw his crab leg at him, which Zach caught in his teeth.

Now it was dark, and they were walking near the water, back to the car. Lee didn't want to take Zach home. He wanted to take Zach down on the beach and make love to every inch of him. "Tell me about why getting Lebeau means so much to you, Zach?" Lee asked suddenly.

Zach's hair was blowing around his face. To say he was handsome was an understatement. Being with him out here, where all their cares seemed so far away, made Zach Freeman suddenly the most beautiful man he'd ever seen. "She was only four," he said abruptly, surprising Lee. He thought Zach was going to blow it off again.

"Lebeau helped set up her kidnapping. I worked night and day trying to find her. I didn't sleep. I hardly ate. I kept her picture in my wallet. I still do." He reached into his jacket and took out his wallet. He passed Lee a wrinkled picture of a little blonde girl holding a doll. "I was sure I could find her. I'd look at that picture, Lee, and I'd promise her. I promised God."

Lee reached over and rubbed his back.

"I found her, but it was too late. She was dead." He looked at Lee. "They'd just left her there, all alone in the dark, no food, no water, no one to comfort her."

Lee felt the tears come to his eyes. "Zach. That's horrible."

"I was the first one on the scene. I couldn't get her out of mind. I still can't. I wouldn't have done that to a dog. She was an innocent little girl."

Lee took Zach into his arms and held him tight. They stood there under the moonlight for a long time, just holding each other, and then Zach moved back. "We've got to either fuck or stop this," he growled.

Lee's eyes widened; then he laughed. He picked up some sand and threw it at him. "I can't believe you said that."

"I call 'em as I see 'em, honey. Look at me." He glanced down at his groin.

"I could take care of that for you," Lee offered, a smile on his face.

"I told you, you're too expensive for me."

Lee grabbed his arm. "For free. I want you, Zach."

"How much you prepared to pay?" He jerked away from him. "I don't come cheap."

Lee went to hit him, Zach ducked and they went running along the waterfront. They were both breathless when they reached Lee's car. Their laughter died down after a few seconds, and they regained their breath. Lee swallowed hard when Zach reached over and pulled him close. "Kiss me," Zach said. "It's free."

Lee melted against the hardness of Zach's body, as Zach's lips crushed his, his tongue playing along his lips. Lee let his mouth fall open. He tightened his hold on Zach as their tongues met, did battle. Lee moaned as Zach's hand strayed down his back and gripped his ass. Then, Zach moved away. He gave him a crooked smile. "The best things in life are free, Lee."

Lee tasted his own lips, trying to cement the taste of Zach's mouth on them. "I've never regretted my life until now."

"Oh, God, Lee, don't regret your life. I live with so many regrets that..."

"But your regrets are not your fault."

"Some of them are."

"Yeah, well, I chose this life. I know what you think of me, Zach."

“Lee,” Zach said, looking down at him, “I’m not your judge and jury. It’s not important what other people think of you. It’s much more important what you think of yourself. Let’s go, okay?”

Lee nodded, that statement washing over him as he got behind the wheel of the car. When he dropped Zach off at his building, he watched him until he walked up the path and disappeared inside. It was true what Zach said; it was more important what you thought of yourself, but that was little consolation when suddenly, what Zachary Freeman thought about him, meant more than the entire world.

* * * * *

Zach let everyone know that he’d be gone for a week. He left Simon in charge, who really wasn’t ready to let it go without a thorough explanation. “I don’t get it,” Simon said, coming into his office and closing the door.

“You don’t get what?” Zach asked, looking up from his desk.

“You haven’t taken one vacation since this task force was set up. Why now?”

“I need one. That’s all.”

“Lebeau is leaving town, isn’t he?”

“I don’t know. Is he?”

Simon laughed. “Zach.”

“Simon.”

“You know it’s against the rules. We have no jurisdiction out of ’Frisco...”

“You don’t say.”

“Zach, what’s going on?” Simon perched on the edge of Zach’s desk and fixed him with his gaze.

“Nothing.”

“Bull. You’ve been out of the office a hell of a lot lately, keeping weirder hours than usual. You’ve called off the surveillance. You got a snitch inside. Who is it?”

“I can’t say right now. Keep that under your hat.” Zach stood up. “While I’m gone, concentrate on that Carl guy. I want to know who he is.”

“Okay,” Simon said.

“I’ll be back in a week. Hold down the fort.”

* * * * *

“Don’t forget your toothbrush,” Zach told Lee, as he sat on the sofa watching him pack.

Lee picked his toothbrush out of his suitcase and showed it to him. “Right here, Mother, and do you really need to be here right now?”

Zach smiled. “In a bad mood again? I thought we were friends now.”

Lee nodded. Friends. And by the looks of it, that’s all they were ever going to be, especially now that Zachary needed him. What happened when Zach didn’t need him anymore? “I’m sorry. I’m a little tense right now, that’s all.”

“I need to know where you’ll be staying.”

“He didn’t tell me.”

“Phone me as soon as you get there. You’re not wearing a wire so I can’t track you down.”

“Don’t worry,” Lee said, closing his suitcase. “You better make sure you’re close by. If Lebeau ever suspects that I...”

“He won’t suspect you unless you give him reason to.” Zach stood up.

“After what you told me, after what happened to that little girl...” Lee began.

“You were fucking this guy before I came along. You didn’t know about him then, and you didn’t care. Nothing is different. He’s not going to change suddenly just because you now know about him.”

Zach's hair fell forward on his forehead; those blue eyes of his looked intense, serious. There was so much depth to him. Lee knew he hadn't even scratched the surface. "It was horrible, what you told me the other night. I couldn't get it out of my mind."

"Join the club."

"Even though Lebeau helped set it up, he didn't know that the little girl would die, did he?"

"Doesn't matter if he knew, or not. Lebeau didn't care about that kid. He washed his hands. He looked the other way."

Lee saw the tension in Zach's face, noticed his fists clench at his sides. "I'm sorry. I'm not trying to excuse him. I..." Lee began. He put his hands on each side of Zach's face, then pressed his mouth to his. The kiss was like a breath. He breathed in his mouth, felt his lips soften slightly...tasted him, allowing his hands to languish in the softness of his thick black hair for a moment before moving away. It lasted seconds, but the taste of him still lingered on his mouth. Lee felt flushed, feverish even, and then ultimately, embarrassed. It seemed different now, away from that little town. The world was back.

Zach didn't move.

Lee turned his back, cleared his throat unnecessarily. "I'm sorry. I got carried away again."

When Zach didn't answer, Lee turned back around and said, "I have a right to know what to expect from Lebeau. If he's a violent man, and he discovers that..."

"Don't worry" -- Zach cleared his throat. -- "he wouldn't hurt you himself. He'd have someone else dirty their hands. He doesn't have the balls."

"That's comforting."

Zach headed for the door. "Don't forget to let me know where you are," he told him, then, left without another word.

Lee walked over to the door. He watched Zachary Freeman get into his car, then swore softly. He couldn't keep going around kissing Zachary Freeman, every time he felt like it. The last time they had been somewhere else, they had been different people. Now, it would have to be enough to use him in his sexual fantasies, wouldn't it?

* * * * *

Zach placed a few things in his suitcase when he got home, and fixed himself a drink. It had been crazy lately, and he suspected it was about to get crazier. He let his head go back against the chair. He tried not to dwell on the attraction between him and Lee. The day they'd spent in that little town had been quite weird. He'd wanted so much to make love to him, right there on the beach, but he had resisted. Lee was a snitch, that's all, a prostitute on top of that. They didn't even like each other, did they? He sighed.

It was just a bit crazy, but damn it, why did Lee kiss him again today? There was no moonlight to seduce them. It was a nice kiss, although it didn't last long; and thank God for that. There was only so much control he could wield. It had ended just when he was starting to get used to it, just when his body was starting to tell his head to be quiet. And that wasn't a good thing...the getting used to it part.

Zach shook his head and downed his drink. He'd get a few hours sleep before starting the drive to Reno, but first he had to get the taste of that kiss out of his mind. He smiled a little in confusion, then got out of his chair and headed for the bedroom.

* * * * *

Daniel Lebeau was in a very good mood when Lee climbed into the car beside him in the backseat. Delaney had put his bag in the trunk of the Cadillac and then went to sit up front with the driver. Lebeau hugged him close, gave him a peck on the cheek, and told him he was so glad he'd decided to come along.

It was a four-hour drive from San Francisco to Reno, and in spite of his enthusiasm at having Lee aboard, Lebeau seemed distracted. He spent a good part of the drive on the phone talking to a variety of people. Lee listened quietly to the conversations, a lot of it not making much sense to him, but there was probably a lot of stuff that would be useful to Zach.

Lee kept thinking about that little girl. Daniel was responsible for her death, and it was just too horrible to contemplate. He tried to put it out of his mind when Lebeau finally got off the phone for the seventh time. "You wait until we get there," Lebeau announced, "I'm going to take you to this great French restaurant. The food is unbelievable."

Lee smiled faintly at him.

* * * * *

Zach woke up and wiped a hand across his mouth, as if to wipe away the memory of Lee's kiss. He rolled over in the bed and sighed. He wasn't happy waking up with an image of Lee in his head. "Two fucking grand," he muttered, hoisting himself out of bed and heading to the shower. "Two fucking grand. He ought to be damned good for that much. Well, at least he throws in a blowjob."

Zach turned on the shower. His cock was hard. He told himself that had nothing to do with Lee Hastings. He often woke up that way. Peter used to joke about it, say that he was lucky to have "a hard man to wake up with in the morning." They used to fuck like crazy before breakfast. Hell, they used to fuck before bedtime too. It was a wonder they ever slept. Zachary smiled, moving his hand down over his chest to his erection. It had been a long time since he'd thought about Peter in that way. The fact that he was headed to Reno today probably had something to do with that.

The last time he was in Reno had been with Peter. They had taken a long weekend. Peter liked the casinos. They had splurged on a luxury suite at a fancy hotel. Zach couldn't wait to get up to the room. He'd been relieved when Peter had depleted the five hundred dollar limit he'd placed on himself that night. He hadn't won a cent, but he'd had fun. Peter

had been in a great mood that night; they both were. He had still been on the vice squad then. Life was so much simpler, cleaner than Homicide; and he was crazy in love with that firefighter. They had made love all night. God, it was the best sex he'd ever had, and when the sun came up the next day, he couldn't picture his life without Peter. But then he'd changed jobs, and everything went to shit. After that little girl died, nothing seemed to bring him joy anymore. "You don't want me any more," Peter had told him. "All you want is the bottle, and retribution."

Zachary fell back against the tile in the shower. His hand pumped his cock, and he closed his eyes. Lee's mouth pressed against his, and his entire body shuddered its release. "Peter, I still miss you," he whispered hoarsely. He let his head fall to the side, tears pricking his eyes. He suppressed a sob and turned the shower off. What in hell had gotten into him? He dried off, poured himself some gin, and then went to get dressed. It was almost ten. If he left now, he'd hit Reno about two in the afternoon. "Come on, Lee," he growled, "get me something I can work with."

Chapter Five

The hotel suite was like nothing Lee had ever seen...red carpets and velvet sofas, a huge bed with a hot tub, and a balcony looking out of the city. The view was spectacular, even in the daytime. "This must be something else at night," Lee commented as Lebeau hung up some clothes in the closet.

"You bet. You like to gamble, honey?"

Lee turned around and glanced at him. "Ah, yeah, I guess."

"Good, we'll do some of that tonight for fun, and tomorrow night, I'll take you to a show."

"Cool," Lee said with a smile.

"Now, why don't you take a nice bubble bath, or something? I got a few things to take care of. I'll be back in half an hour, and then" -- He smiled. -- "maybe we can break in that bed before dinner."

"Whatever you want."

"That's what I love about you, Lee. You never forget that I own you."

Lee opened his mouth to say something, but Lebeau had already left the room. Own him? *No one owns me.* The door closed. Lebeau was gone. Lee took the phone Zach had given him out of his pocket. He pressed the speed dial, and waited.

A few minutes later, Zach's voice came on the line. He had a deep voice, but there was a gentle quality to it, one that Lee liked. It was a very distinctive voice, one he wouldn't have mistaken for someone else. "Yeah?"

"How about, hello?"

"Hello."

Lee smiled. "Where are you?"

"On the road, about ten miles away from the Reno exit."

"I thought I heard traffic. I'm here."

"You're where?"

"Plaza Reno, in suite six."

"Ooh."

"Yeah, but ooh doesn't quite capture it."

"Where's your paramour?"

"My client's downstairs. He is not my paramour. I'm supposed to be taking a bubble bath."

"How girlie."

"What? You've never taken a bubble bath, Lieutenant?"

"Not intentionally. Then what?"

"Gambling, eating, fucking."

"In that order?"

"No, probably fucking, eating, gambling, fucking."

"Ah. Any chance you'll meet with some of Lebeau's contacts tonight?"

"I don't know. I'll keep you posted. I've got some stuff to tell you, stuff I heard on the trip down, but there's not enough time now. Maybe I could, ah...see you later somewhere?" For some reason, he was anxious to see him.

"If you can get out without arousing suspicion."

"Where are you going to stay?"

"Obviously not at the Plaza. Wouldn't do any good for Lebeau to see me, and the Plaza is a little out of my price range. Somewhere close by, where you can get to me fast."

"Okay. You know, I can train you, Zach. You could be living the good life."

"Forget it, baby. Selling my body to any creep with the dough to pay for it isn't my idea of living the good life."

Lee fell silent for a minute. "You're thinking hooker again. What I do is..."

"What you do, Lee, is the same thing some young stud does on the corner, only instead of getting thrown out in the street later, you get a limo ride back to your condo."

"You're a fucking asshole, you know that?"

"No doubt, but you don't want to face reality."

Lee fell silent.

"Is this conversation over yet?"

"Why do you always have to bust my balls?"

"Not my intention. Look, I don't mean to hurt your feelings, Lee, but I don't dabble in bullshit. You can imagine anything you want about yourself, but when it comes down to it, your body is for sale. When Lebeau comes through that door, you're going to roll over for him, whether you want to or not, because you're bought and paid for."

"Yeah, and you're a washed up drunk, an obsessed cop, alone and horny and...fucking miserable." Lee closed the connection. He almost threw the phone across the room, then

thought better of it. He needed that phone, and like it or not, he needed Zachary Freeman to be on the other end of it.

He began to run the water in the tub. He was no two-bit hooker. He was a high class professional catering to select clients. He did his job with style and class...he...oh, to hell with Zachary Freeman. Why did he even care what that bastard thought, anyway? Zach was just a drunk, a sad, pathetic...a guy who couldn't get the image of a dead little girl out of his head so he drank to kill the pain...a man...a man who really cared. Lee sighed. He hadn't meant what he'd said on the phone, but damn it, Zach had hurt his feelings. It was true clients called him a whore, said they owned him, but he allowed them to do that. It was part of the fantasy, it wasn't real. They really didn't own him. He wasn't a whore. "Screw you, Zach," he hissed, and stepped into the hot, soapy water. "You don't own me either."

* * * * *

As Zach entered downtown Reno, he thought about his conversation with Lee. He regretted being so tough on him. If the guy liked to believe he was something other than a high paid prostitute, then so be it. God knows, he'd told himself a shit load of lies over the years. He was tempted to call him back and apologise, but thought better of it. After all, Lee did say some pretty stinging things in return; things that probably weren't that far from the truth. To hell with it! He needed to keep his mind on the job.

Lebeau had been very busy over the last few years. He'd quietly expanded his operation to several major American cities. Reno was very important, especially in terms of gaming.

Zach glanced out the window as he passed the Plaza. How ironic. That was where he and Peter had spent their time when he was last here, making love in a suite. He couldn't remember what the number was. Well, it was the Family Lodge Inn for him this time, about two blocks away.

Zach laid down for a nap at the hotel after he'd paid for the room, and got up around eight o'clock. He took a shower, and decided to walk down one of the main streets. He'd grab

a bite somewhere and wait for Lee to call. He hoped to hell Lee kept his eyes and ears open. He wasn't sure he was cut out for this kind of thing. He knew he was smart, but would he tell him everything, even if he thought it wasn't important?

Zach had a hunch that a lot of stuff was going to go down here in Reno with Lebeau. He needed to know who his contacts were. Once he got that information, he'd have a better sense of what that snake was up to this time.

As he was about to enter a fast food joint, a young girl stepped up to him. She was wearing a ton of makeup, half dressed. "Hey, baby, want a ride?"

"A ride to where?" Zach inquired. "You don't even look old enough to drive."

"I can give you what you want."

"I doubt that." He dug in his pocket and pulled out a twenty. "Here, take it, eat something, and call your mother."

She took the twenty.

Zach went into the restaurant and ordered a burger. He was sitting at a table prepared to eat it when that girl came in. She slid in across from him. Zach looked up at her.

"You don't want nothin' for this?"

"No." He took a bite of his hamburger.

"I wouldn't mind doing you. You're handsome."

He swallowed his food. "How old are you?"

"Seventeen."

"Try again."

"Fourteen."

"That's better. Where you from?"

"L.A."

“You’re a long way from home. What happened?” He couldn’t help think of Lee. What in hell had happened in his life to make him turn to prostitution?

“My mother remarried. I can’t get along with her creep.”

“I see. Did he molest you?”

“No.” She shook her head. “Too many rules.”

“And this is better?”

“What are you, a priest?”

He laughed out loud. “Far from it. I’m a cop.”

She began to stand up.

“Relax, I’m with the SFPD, not on the clock right now.”

She sat back down. “You got a girlfriend?”

“No.”

“Boyfriend?”

“No.”

“So, you look like you could use some...”

“Yep, you’re right. I could, but not with you.” He met her gaze. “I used to work vice. I used to run into lots of little girls your age. Most ended up in one of three ways: on drugs and fucked up, fucked up and on drugs, or dead.”

Zach noticed the look that crossed her face.

“Got a pimp?”

“No.”

“You will. Unfortunately, they’re a necessary evil.” He studied her for a second. So young, so pretty. “How long you been on the street?”

“Three weeks.”

“Three weeks too long. Go home. Go home and follow their stupid rules, and soon you’ll be old enough to live your own life.”

There were tears in her eyes. “I almost went to the shelter last night.”

“Good idea.”

She stood up. “See you.”

He watched her leave. A momentary sense of sadness crawled over him. He wondered where she would end up. Would she call her mother? Probably not. His phone rang, the one reserved exclusively for Lee. He took it out and placed it to his ear. “Yo.”

“It’s me.”

“No shit. Where you at?”

“Lebeau is gambling at the casino. I’m in the can.”

“Ah.”

“Look, he’s getting pretty tanked already, which means I can probably sneak out to see you later. I’ve got some...well...stuff you’ll probably be interested in.”

“Did you meet anyone?”

“Not yet.”

“Okay. I’m going back to my hotel. It’s the Family Lodge Inn, room thirty.”

“Family Inn? Budget village.”

“Yeah, well it’s got a bed and a shower, that’s all I care. Come when you can.”

“I always do,” he joked.

Zach rolled his eyes and closed the connection.

* * * * *

Lee left the room immediately after Delaney had put Lebeau in his bed. He knew Lebeau would be out the rest of the night. He just had to be there next to him in the morning.

He snuck out of the hotel unseen by anyone and walked the few blocks to Zachary's hotel. He was feeling a bit high himself, what with Lebeau plying him with Zombies all night. It was that slight intoxication that carried him to the elevator and up to the third floor. He placed his palm on the number thirty for a second before knocking. The impact of him being about to enter Zachary Freeman's hotel room was beginning to settle in on him.

He knocked, and almost instantly Zachary stood there. He was shirtless, in his socked feet, wearing only a pair of rather worn blue jeans. He told him to come in. The television flashed shadows across the single bed, with its ugly brown bedspread and piled up pillows. Lee could see the impression where Zach's head had been on those pillows.

"Hockey game," Lee mumbled. "Who's playing?"

"Detroit and Boston."

"Are you a hockey fan?"

He shrugged. "I can take it or leave it. I'm more into basketball. I used to play a bit."

"Oh," Lee said, trying to avoid staring at the muscles that played across Zach's shoulders.

"Have a seat," Zach invited, indicating the lone chair next to the closet.

"Thanks." He sat down, entwining his hands.

Zach turned down the television. "So?" he prompted, sitting on the edge of the bed, his elbows resting on his thighs. "What 'cha got for me?"

Lee met his gaze. Those blue eyes were doing a number on him. "First, I want to say I'm sorry."

"For what?"

"Calling you a...wasted old drunk and..."

"If I recall, you called me a washed up drunk, you didn't say old."

Lee grinned.

Zach grinned back.

"Well, I didn't mean it."

"Yes, you did, and that's okay 'cause you were right. That's what I am." He stood up and went over to the window.

"No," Lee said, standing up. "I..."

"Like I told you, I wasn't always like this," Zach said, his back still turned.

Lee let his gaze move down over his back to the swell of that ass in those jeans. Sweet.

"Before Valerie King, I had a life. Sure, I saw shit; I saw the worst of shit, but I seemed to be able to just...well...let it run off my shoulders. I was so sure I could save her. So sure I'd find her, alive. But what I found was a little girl who had died alone, terrified, surrounded by rats and garbage, and the man who helped to do that to her is still free." He turned around, surprised to see how close Lee was. "I couldn't save her, but I can make him pay."

Lee reached up and touched his face. "Make him pay, Zach, but don't punish yourself. It's not your fault. You did your best. Let me help you and..."

Zach grabbed his hand. He put it away from him. "Don't."

"I want to touch you." Lee swallowed. "I want to make love to you. God, Zach, I know you want me too. We can't keep running away from it."

Their gazes locked together. Zach took a step back against the wall. "I...no, Lee. I can't..."

"Yes, you can," Lee replied, shrugging out of his jacket and throwing it on the bed. When he began to undo the buttons on his shirt, Zach asked him what he was doing.

Lee looked up at him. "What I do best."

Zach didn't move.

Lee threw his shirt on the chair and began to undo his own pants. When he stood there completely naked, he looked over at Zach, who had rested his head against the window. His eyes were wide open, looking at him.

Lee moved closer. He reached for the zipper on Zach's jeans, suddenly realising his hands were shaking. That was weird. His hands never shook like that when he was undressing a john, but this wasn't a john. This was Zachary Freeman.

Zach looked down at him with those eyes. His chest moved ever so slightly. Lee was afraid he was going to protest, tell him to stop, but he didn't. When he had the zipper open, he pulled the jeans down over Zach's hips and let them fall on the floor. Zach was already hard. There was a damp stain coming through the black briefs, which were straining to keep his erection contained. Lee felt an unknown hunger creep over him. He placed his fingers in the briefs and literally tore them down over Zach's hips. On his knees, he moved his hands up over Zach's well muscled calves and thighs. The erection sprang up eagerly to touch Lee's lips. As Lee's tongue moved over the engorged head of Zach's cock, Zach dropped a hand in his hair. Lee moved his hands around to his firm, round ass and allowed them to play there, kneading and fondling as he gradually moved his lips around Zach's shaft.

Lee could hear Zach's breathing grow shallower as he took his cock deeper into his throat. Zach's hand tightened in his hair. One of Lee's hands tightened around the base of Zach's cock and the other reached under to lightly run a fingernail over his balls. He teased the cock, his tongue spreading the precum around the head and up the shaft. Lee looked up at him and met those blue eyes. He increased the pressure with his lips and began to move up and down the shaft intensely, at one time backing off to ask him, "You like that?"

Zach's response was a moan as he let his head fall back again and pulled Lee's head back to the job. Lee inhaled his cock again, taking it deep in his throat, massaging his balls with his free hand and occasionally moving his hand teasingly between his ass cheeks.

"Jesus," Zach gasped suddenly as he begged Lee to stop. He was ready to come. Lee wanted to swallow him, but the thundering in Zach's cock was so volatile he was forced to

back off and let it go. Zach shot straight in the air, his body violently convulsing against the window. Lee watched him, a slight smile on his face, enjoying the way his handsome face contorted, and the way his raspy breath staggered between gasps and deep moans.

Lee wasn't about to lose the momentum. He stood up and aggressively pushed Zach's hair back off his face. He wrapped one arm around his waist, pressed him against the wall, and captured his mouth. He'd been dreaming about kissing him again, *really* kissing him, and this time Zachary Freeman kissed him back. Their mouths did a slow, sinful dance together as Lee felt Zach's tongue move around his. Oh yeah, he could kiss. He could kiss just fine.

Suddenly, Lee felt Zach push him backward, his mouth still lashed to his. He went down on the bed, his arms dragging Zachary on top of him. Zach's mouth left his and went to his throat; strong hands palmed his nipples, then reached down for a cock that was ready to go. Zach's mouth was now moving sensuously while his hand played with his cock. Lee heard a moan resonate from his own chest. He pressed his head back in the pillow and licked his lips. Zach's tongue brought both of his nipples to life while his hand snaked down to tease his anus which now was in tune with the motion of Zach's finger.

Lee dragged his head back up to his and kissed him hotly, letting his hands move over the muscles in Zach's arms. Oh, God, he was all man, hard and just a little mean, mean enough to seriously turn him on. Zach dragged his mouth away from his, giving him a wicked smile. He brought himself up to his knees, straddling his hips, those muscles of his playing beautifully under his skin. That unruly mop of black hair hung down as he moved it tantalizingly over Lee's sensitive nipples, and then between his legs where...oh, yeah...his tongue came out and ran the up the length of his shaft.

It was rare that anyone sucked his cock. Clients usually were the receivers, but Zachary Freeman was about to reacquaint him with what it felt like to get sucked off. The head ducked down again and that tongue licked his shaft. "Jesus," he groaned, which earned him a soft laugh. The tip of that tongue now flirted with the hole at the head of his cock, then swiped the circumference of the helmet, delved under the flap, and again down the shaft.

Lee made a fist, slamming it into the mattress as Zach's velvet mouth enveloped his cock, scraping his teeth lightly over the flesh as he began to deep throat it, at first excruciatingly slow, then faster, a hand roughly playing with his balls, then moving down in between his ass cheeks to tease his anus.

Lee let his hands move down over his nipples. He lightly pinched them, increasing the pleasure as Zachary released his cock and hoisted Lee's legs over his shoulders. When his tongue laved his anus, Lee let out a cry. God, no one had ever done that before. He'd been fucked, he'd been prodded, but no one had ever rimmed him. It was heavenly torment. As Zach continued to move his tongue over the opening, then prod it, one hand kept his cock firmly gripped, while the other crawled up to one of his nipples and began to tug and pull at it without mercy.

Lee began to hyperventilate, the sexual tension so intense that he began to plead with him for mercy. "Fuck me," he begged. "God damn it, Zach." He could hardly breathe. "Please. There are condoms in my...in my....ahhh....jacket."

Zach was gone only for a second, but to Lee it felt like eternity until he heard him rip the condom package open with his teeth. Zach pulled his legs up further over his shoulders. He positioned himself and bore down on him, looking into his face. "You sure?" he asked.

No one had bothered to ask before. "Oh, yes, yeah."

When Lee felt the head of Zach's cock begin to enter him, his gentleness surprised him. Usually a cock just rammed into him, without care. He was used to that. But Zach took his time, moving past the first set of muscles, then the second, swaying his hips from side to side, each movement designed to increase Lee's pleasure. When he was deep inside of him, Lee closed his eyes. Never had a cock felt so like it belonged there, but his did. It filled him in ways that seemed impossible. As Zach began to move slowly in and out of him, his gaze never left his, so intense, so filled with desire that Lee had to look away. Zach increased his pace, faster, deeper, the control he had slowly eluding him, eluding them both, and covered in sweat both of them reached orgasm practically at the same time.

Zach eased out. Lee pulled him down on top of him, feeling his bulk between his legs, his weight on his stomach and his chest. Zach's damp hair fell across his cheek and Lee tightened his hold on him, his hands slowly moving over his back, down to his ass. He listened as Zach's breathing returned to normal, kissed the side of his face, and then Zach rolled off of him. There wasn't enough room for both of them to lie together on that bed unless Zach slept on top of him, and Lee knew he couldn't stay here anyway. He'd have to get back.

Zach disappeared into the bathroom. Lee sat up. He wasn't sure if he should start getting dressed or what. He wasn't sure of anything anymore.

Zach glanced in the mirror and pushed his hair back. His face and his chest were gleaming with sweat. There was cum smeared on his cock and his thighs. He closed his eyes. What in hell was that? Wow. He was still excited. He felt as if he'd just climbed Mount Everest, and he was standing on the top of it, the fucking king of the mountain. That had been good. That had been too damned good. He was still standing there when Lee came in. "Got to pee," he said.

Zach gave him room to enter. "We need to talk about..." he began.

Lee turned to look at him. "Yeah. I need to tell you..."

Zach nodded silently. He wanted to reach out to him, to pull him into his arms, to kiss that sweet mouth of his, to make him...make him what? Make him want to stay here tonight, not go back to Lebeau? But that was stupid.

Zach left the bathroom. He walked over to the window and looked out again.

"You look beautiful, standing there naked like that," Lee told him when he came back out.

Zach walked across the room, reached for a robe he hung in the closet and put it on. "Sorry."

“Don’t say sorry. I...” Lee began.

Zach cleared his throat. “So, what did Lebeau say on the way down here?”

“Ah, well...he was talking to a few people, that Carl again, and they mentioned some shipment...I heard something about next week and the harbour in New York.”

“Okay. Did you get the impression that this Carl guy was in Reno or New York?”

“New York, but I think he’s coming to Reno. I don’t know when yet.”

Zach nodded. “Okay. Good. You better get back then.” He turned around. Zach didn’t want to look at him. He was afraid he wouldn’t let him go. Insanity. This was insanity, not to mention pathetic.

Lee swallowed the lump in his throat as he got dressed. He wanted Zach to turn around, to look at him, but he didn’t. Lee felt almost weepy, although he didn’t know why. This was impossible. “I’ll, ah...be in touch, okay?”

“You do that. Be careful,” he said to the window.

“You too,” Lee replied, and walked to the door. He took one last look at the bed -- the pillows were on the floor, the mattress askew -- and then one last look at the man standing at the window. “Bye,” he said, placing a hand on the door handle. He hesitated for a second, holding his breath. There was no answer. He made his way to the elevator.

* * * * *

Lee crawled into bed beside a loudly snoring Daniel Lebeau. He tried his best to sleep, but sleep wouldn’t come. Lee didn’t want to think about what had just happened, but the memory of it was acute. He felt as if he could reach out and touch Zachary.

When he felt a hand fondling his cock, he almost said his name, then, turned over, somewhat startled to see Daniel Lebeau leaning down over him. He bit his tongue.

After Zachary, Lebeau's hands felt scathing and foreign. Lee pushed him away playfully. "Stop. I have to pee."

"Okay." Daniel frowned. "Hurry up. I'm horny. I was too ripped to do your ass last night."

Lee took his time in the bathroom. He closed his eyes for a minute before coming back to bed. God, he would have done anything to have had Zachary lying there at this moment, but it wasn't Zachary. It was Daniel Lebeau, and he was eager to get started.

Chapter Six

It was almost eleven in the morning when Zach finally opened his eyes. He couldn't remember the last time he'd slept like that. He stretched his arms over his head and sat up, suddenly famished. He stepped into the shower, then afterward pulled on some clean clothes. A half hour later, he was having breakfast in the hotel restaurant. He fingered the phone in his pocket a few times. He wondered when Lee would meet with Carl. He hoped it was soon. He suspected that "Carl" had another name, a real name, and although his investigative team hadn't found out anything significant yet, he was positive there was a rap sheet somewhere with this guy's name on it.

The latest from the unit was that "Carl" fit the profile of a few different guys, but they hadn't been able to make a positive I.D. Zach hoped Lebeau would meet Carl in a public place, so that he could make a discreet appearance and make sure it was the same guy.

He was on his third cup of coffee when the phone rang. His heart beat a little too fast in his chest for a moment, and he pushed the coffee away. Probably indigestion. "Lee," he said, realising that he sounded a little anxious.

"Hi," was the reply.

"Where's the master?"

"In the shower."

"A little reckless."

"Nah, he likes long showers. How are you?"

"Okay."

"What are you doing?"

"Lee?"

"Yeah?"

"Do you have something to tell me or...?"

"I just wanted to hear your voice, so sue me." He laughed. "Isn't that what you always say?"

"Yeah." He couldn't help but smile. "Do you know where you're going tonight?"

"Not yet."

"Let me know when you can."

"Why?"

"I want to see this guy for myself."

"What if...?"

"He won't. Don't worry. I'll be discreet."

"Maybe I should come by tonight...you know...if I get a chance."

Zach swallowed. "Yeah. We'll see how it goes."

"Okay. Got to go," Lee said, and hung up.

Zach stared down at the phone. *Come by tonight?* There was nothing he'd like more than for Lee to "come by tonight." It probably wasn't a very good idea.

* * * * *

Lee's ass was sore. Lebeau had been none too gentle this morning, and Lee wasn't into it at all. Lebeau didn't notice, but he wouldn't have. Lebeau never concerned himself about Lee's pleasure; then again, why should he? He was the client.

"Ready to go to breakfast?" Lebeau asked him, humming as he came out of the bathroom, doing up his shirt.

"Sure."

Lebeau came over and grabbed his hair. He dragged back his head and kissed his mouth. "I love seeing you eat cock. My cock. I'd like to have a party this week, see you service a few of my wilder friends. Would you like that?"

"I'd rather service you."

"You will, oh you will."

"When, ah...is this party you're talking about?"

Lebeau released him.

"Tomorrow night. Some friends are coming in from out of town."

"Oh. Sounds fun."

"Lee," Daniel said. "I want you to give up all this shit when we get back home. I want you to come live with me, full time."

"Ah, Daniel," Lee replied, stunned. "I'd love to live with you but..."

"I'll give you everything, money, clothes, drugs. Nothing would be off limits if you'd be mine alone."

Lee pursed his lips.

"Don't answer yet. Come on. Let's get some fuel in that body of yours." He swung his arm around Lee's shoulders and propelled him out of the suite.

* * * * *

The day seemed to stretch out before him. Lebeau gambled, ate, drank, talked on the phone, and Lee sat around, waiting for instructions, thinking about Zach, trying to make sense of what he'd felt in his arms last night. What did it all mean? What did it mean to Zach? Probably not much, except that he'd had sex with a pro for free. Zach could never love him; as if that's what he'd want anyway, to be loved by Zach Freeman. He was just a prostitute to Zach. The sex had been good -- no, the sex had been fantastic, the best sex he'd ever had -- but big deal.

"Hey," Daniel said to him as they made their way to some fancy restaurant Daniel liked, "you look sad. What's up?"

"Sad?"

"Yeah, you've been moping around all day, baby."

"Missing you." Lee gave him a bright smile. "You've been ignoring me all day."

"Sorry, sweetie. Come on, we're going to have a blast tonight, guarantee it. I got us the best table in the house."

* * * * *

Zach paced his hotel room, checking his watch every few minutes. It was after ten. Why hadn't he called? At eleven o'clock, the cell rang. Zach scrambled to get it out of his pocket. "Lee?"

"It's me."

"Any developments?"

"No, but, ah...some news. Can I come over?"

"Where's Lebeau?"

"He had some emergency. I'll tell you all about at the motel. I'll be there soon."

Lee hung up before he could tell him not to come. He wasn't even sure he would have told him not to come anyway. He paced a little as he waited. He tried to tell himself that his hard cock was no indication he wanted Lee again. What a God damned lie that was.

When the knock sounded on the door, Zach took a breath. He unnecessarily did up the top button of his shirt, and cleared his throat. "Who is it?" he asked cautiously, but he already knew.

"It's me. Lee."

Zach opened the door then quickly walked over to the window. He tried to put some distance between them, but as Lee looked at him, he knew that this was a fight he wasn't going to win.

"I can't stop thinking about you," Lee said, standing on the other side of the bed, fiddling with the bedspread.

"This is insanity," Zach murmured.

"I know. You're the last man I thought I'd..."

Zach was surprised that Lee had heard him. "I think we should just forget it."

"Ha...easier said than done." Lee met his gaze, and then let out a staggered breath. "Clinging to the window isn't going to save you, Zachary."

"Probably not." He laughed some, feeling a little giddy. "What's the news?"

"Tomorrow night. Daniel spoke to me about a party...some friends coming in."

"Did he mention Carl?" Zach let his gaze move over Lee's body. He was wearing a pair of black leather pants, and an open neck silk shirt in the palest shade of blue. It was almost the same colour as his eyes. That baby-fine ashy hair of his was windblown, and his mouth...his mouth looked moist. The entire picture aroused him, further stiffening his cock.

"No, not yet, but..." Lee paused. He licked his lips. That simple act played itself over several times in Zach's mind. He shifted his weight. He found it hard to breathe suddenly.

There was complete silence.

“Do you really think I’m, ah...just a whore, Zach?”

“What?”

“A whore. Do you think I’m just a...whore...because Lebeau says he wants me? He says he wants me to give up this life and...”

Zach blinked. He took a few steps and reached out for Lee. He took him roughly by the shoulders, and looked down into his eyes. “Fuck Lebeau. Lebeau’s ass is going to be in prison when I get done with him. Tonight,” Zach breathed, moving his cheek down beside his, “you’re mine, and if you’re a whore, you’re my whore. There’s no Lebeau, and I’m not a cop...”

“Yes,” Lee moaned, grinding his groin into Zach’s thigh. “Christ, yes.”

“God, you turn me on so much,” Zach told him, hastily undoing Lee’s shirt. “You’re driving me out of my mind.”

Lee began to undo Zach’s shirt at the same time. “Believe me, baby,” he whispered, “it’s the other way around. I can’t...” He didn’t get to finish his sentence. Zach threw Lee’s shirt aside, along with his own, and pulled him in hard for a kiss. The kiss drove them both into the wall, knocking off the sign that listed the fire safety instructions.

Lee moaned under his mouth, frantically grappling with the zip on Zach’s pants. He noticed a marked difference in Zach tonight. He was aggressive and demanding, more so than last night. Lee was losing all control. Zach’s hand turned his head to the side of the wall, his lips sucking the skin of his throat. One of his hands had already made far more progress with the zipper on Lee’s pants than Lee had. Zach’s hands roamed his chest, then moved around to his waist and squeezed his now naked ass cheeks as the leather pants gradually made their way to the floor.

Zach sank to the floor, his hands still on Lee’s ass cheeks, his mouth paying serious attention to Lee’s swollen cock. A finger snaked up inside of his ass while Zach’s tongue

moved in small circles up the length of his shaft. Lee groaned, smashing his head against the wall, his hands pulling on Zach's mop of hair.

The finger continued to move up inside of him, making it impossible for Lee to stand still. He looked down to see Zach's head bobbing between his legs, his cock moving deeper into Zach's throat as one of Zach's hands undid his own jeans and snaked a hand down inside to touch himself. The image was very erotic. Zach pumped his own cock, working his hips in rhythm with his head, bringing Lee's throbbing cock close to the brink.

"Please, baby...please," Lee pleaded breathlessly, pushing Zach's head back, and grabbing his own cock, which was spitting like a volcano of cum.

Zach sat back on the floor, his pants around his ankles, thighs spread, his cock engorged and slick. His head was back, those eyes looking into his. Christ, if he had ever seen a sexier sight, he couldn't recall it.

Zach pulled his jeans and underwear off, and pushed them across the floor. Lee struggled to get his breath, his body still shuddering with orgasm. "Come here, baby," he said, extending his hand. Zach lay flat on his back. Lee stepped out of his leather pants, which were now at his ankles, and reached down for a condom and the lube in his pocket.

Lee placed his knees on either side of Zach's hips and handed him the lube.

"I want to fuck you," Zach said. "I want to fuck you so bad. I don't think I've ever wanted to fuck someone like I do you right now. I'm going to make you forget every man who's ever fucked you before."

Zach reached up and ran his thumbs over Lee's nipples. "Do you remember the night we met?"

"Yes," Lee breathed, letting his head go back, his nipples tingling from Zach's touch. "Ooh, yes, God, don't stop."

Zach flicked both nipples lightly now, teasing. "You, in that harness. God, what an ass you have."

“Um...” Lee licked his lips. “I’ll wear one for you. Anytime.”

Zach pinched them now between thumb and forefinger. “Just the image is enough.”

“Ah.” Lee was thoroughly enjoying the sensation of not having to worry about the client’s pleasure. He didn’t have to time it. He didn’t have to fantasize about anything else. It was all happening here, in this moment.

He felt Zach’s hand move down his chest to his stomach, and then lightly cuff his sex back and forth. “That’s it, baby,” Zach said. “Get hard again for me. What a beautiful cock. What a beautiful boy.”

Lee smiled at the word “boy.” It had been a long time since someone had called him that.

Zach cuffed his cock again, continuing to tweak one nipple, then the other. “Move your hips back and forth...yeah...like that...God, I’m so turned on. I don’t want to fuck you yet. I want you to be ready...so ready...”

Lee moaned as Zach’s squeezed his cock, then slapped it again. “Oh God, ah...Zach...” He took Zach’s cock in his hand and began to pump it slightly. “So big, so hard. Your have a beautiful cock.” Lee let his gaze move over it. “It must be eight inches or so...and it’s thick, so thick.”

Zach wrapped his fist around the base of his own cock after Lee released it and met Lee’s gaze. With the other hand, he reached up under Lee and inserted a slick finger up inside of his ass.

Lee grunted then bore down on his finger. He closed his eyes, fucking Zach’s finger. It gave him a taste for the real thing. He wanted his cock.

“Come on,” Zach urged, removing his finger. “Use my cock.”

Lee undid the condom with his teeth and rolled it down onto Zach’s cock. That simple motion caused Zach’s face to contort. Lee laughed a little and pressed his mouth to his. They kissed deeply. Lee played with Zach’s cock and then positioned it to his opening.

“Say you want it.” Zach grunted as he felt his cock begin to enter Lee’s tight channel.
 “Say it. Say you want my...uh...cock.”

Lee licked those lips of his again. “Yes,” he hissed. “Oh, yes. I want your cock.”

Zach saw those hungry eyes looking down at him and felt Lee swallowing his cock. He felt as if he was swallowing his soul. He lay back and let him go, let him take complete control, use his body the way he wanted, the way he needed. Lee’s pleasure became his. He pumped and moved his hips in a way that was driving Zach to the brink fast. He tried to hold on for as long as he could, turning his face to the side, gritting his teeth. Lee cried out his name, Zach felt the warm cum hit his chest, his chin, and he let himself go, let the release seize him, lift him out of himself, out of reality. He didn’t realise that there was a single tear on his cheek until Lee lay down on the floor beside him and wiped it away. “What?” Zach asked softly.

Lee stared intently into his eyes. “Did I hurt you?”

Zach laughed slightly. He pulled him closer. The thought that Lee could really hurt a big guy like him struck him funny for a moment, then he sobered. He could hurt him big time, but not physically. He had given him that power now. “Why did you ask me that?”

“There was a tear on your cheek.”

Strangely, Zach didn’t feel embarrassed. He sighed. “I’m feeling a little emotional. Didn’t know I had those, did you?”

“Emotions? No, I didn’t.”

“Thanks.” Zach smiled, pulling his head down on his chest.

“What is this, Zach?”

“I don’t know. Insanity.”

“I...”

“Let’s not.”

“We have to.”

“Do we? Who says?”

Lee raised his head, and looked at him.

Zach pushed his head back down. “Can I ask you something?”

“Sure,” Lee said, “and the answer is yes.”

“You don’t even know what I’m going to ask you yet.”

“Okay, go ahead.”

“How did you become...well...why did you decide to...?”

“Be a male escort?”

“A prostitute.”

There was no answer for a few minutes. Zach figured he wasn’t going to answer. Then he said, “I didn’t want to be poor.”

“What?”

“I grew up really poor. I was ashamed of my parents. My father couldn’t hold down a job. They should have never had kids. They told me I was worthless.”

“I’m sorry, Lee.”

“Well, I certainly felt that way until I got to be around fourteen. People started to pay attention to me, tell me I was cute. People propositioned me sexually, and I felt good about myself suddenly. Then one night when I was around fifteen years old, a man around sixty, well dressed, wealthy, asked me to go home with him. He had this wonderful house, big, with a swimming pool and” -- He lifted his head and looked down at Zach. -- “he told me I was the most beautiful boy he’d ever seen, and he offered me a hundred dollars just to take off my clothes. I’d never even seen a hundred dollars before. After that, he connected me with a few people. I met Roch. He taught me some things, and then I decided to make this my life.”

“It makes sense.”

“Not any more,” Lee said, looking at him. “The only thing that makes sense right now to me is you. All I want is you.”

Zach cleared his throat. He released him and sat up. The words stunned him. He didn’t know what to say.

Lee sat up as well. Neither one of them said anything. “I don’t expect you to...I mean, given my life and...”

“Why would you want...me? I’m just a cop with a...who drinks too much and...”

Lee smiled. “You’re beautiful, and you care. That’s enough. Not to mention the way you make love. You make me happy, Zach. You turn me on. You leave me craving more. I’ve never felt like this, in bed or out. It’s...sweeping me away.”

Zach was too choked up to respond. He felt exactly the same way.

Lee got up and got dressed. He had done it now, gone and poured out his heart to Zach, who had been strangely silent for the last ten minutes. “I guess I’d better get back, before he does.”

Zach nodded, coming over to stand in front of him. “Call me as soon as you know where you’re going to meet these friends of his.”

“I will. Well, goodnight then.”

Zach looked at him. He pulled him close, and kissed him, then released him. “Talk to you soon.”

Lee nodded, and left him.

* * * * *

Zach didn't sleep much that night. He kept thinking about Lee, the things he'd told him. He couldn't help picturing a poor little boy with no self-esteem, a little boy whose good looks were the ticket to a life of exploitation by rich, closeted perverts.

At three in the morning, he got up out of bed and walked over to the little bar. He had consciously tried not to drink lately, but it was hard. Right now, he felt that familiar tickle in his mouth, the one that told him a drink would make everything all right.

He opened a tiny bottle of rye and sat back on the bed, sipping from the miniature bottle. Lebeau was with Lee right now, lying beside him, maybe even inside of him. He closed his eyes. Why hadn't he told him? Why hadn't he just said, "Yes, Lee, God yes, I feel exactly the same. I don't want any other man touching you ever again. I want you. I...I...love you." Did he? Was he in love again? It certainly felt like it.

* * * * *

When the phone rang at ten in the morning, it roused Zach out of a sound sleep. He swore when he saw that he'd managed to empty several little bottles of booze. They were all lined up in a row on the night table. "Hello."

"Hey," Lee replied, "were you sleeping?"

"Not anymore. What is it?"

There was silence.

"Lee? I'm sorry. I had a hard night."

"Okay, look, tonight around ten o'clock, we'll be at a place called the Cock and Bull."

"How appropriate."

"It's on Maple Road, corner of Sand. That guy Carl is supposed to be coming. I heard Daniel talking to him on the phone this morning. He gave him the address. Carl is bringing two men with him. I don't know who they are."

"Okay. I'll be there."

"If he sees, you..."

"He won't see me."

"Zach, about last night...I...well, I can't stop thinking about you. I need to know how you feel. I..."

"It's not the time now, Lee. We'll talk later." He hung up before Lee could answer. He'd been abrupt with him, and he regretted that, but there was this little part of him that resented Lee right now for making him feel this much. He put his head in a spin, and he wasn't used to being this much out of control. He was so close to getting Lebeau. He had to stay focussed. He looked at all the empty little bottles of booze in disgust and then swept them off the nightstand with his hand.

Lee's heart sank. He stared at the phone in his hand then tucked it away. Had he dreamt all this? He had opened his heart to Zach, but maybe it was just sex to him. Maybe...someone like Zach could never really love someone like him, given all the stuff he'd done, the men he'd balled. When Lebeau came in the door, he forced a smile he didn't feel. All he could think right now is what he'd do if Zach really didn't care.

* * * * *

At a little after ten o'clock, Zach was in his car, checking the street map he'd picked up. Twenty minutes later he paid the cover price and walked into the Cock and Bull. It was big and crowded, which was an advantage. It was easier for him to blend in and stay out of sight. Zach scanned the room, spotting Lee right away. Lebeau was sitting close beside him at a table near the front, too damned close. Delaney was on the other side. Several other people were there as well, a couple of lewdly dressed women and three men. Zach made his way to the bar and picked a quiet corner in the shadows where he could watch. He wouldn't stay long, just long enough to get a good look at those three men with Lebeau.

When a scrawny little red-headed guy got up and made his way to the bathroom, Zach craned his neck to get a look at him. He knew him. He'd been the one on the police surveillance video. His name was Jones, Erin Jones, and he'd been in and out of the joint the last ten years. He was a mean bugger, and had been linked with the mob in New York and with drug smuggling. He needed to get to Lee. He needed him to record the conversation tonight.

Come on Lee, you must have to piss. He waited, and although, with this job, he was used to waiting, he was impatient. Finally, he saw Lee stand up and make his way to the bathroom. Zach kept his head down and hurried off into the direction of the bathroom himself. When he put a hand on Lee's shoulder as he was doing up his fly, he jumped.

"Jesus Christ," Lee muttered when he saw Zach. "Are you trying to give me a heart attack? What are you doing? Do you know how dangerous this is? Daniel could come in here any minute."

"Daniel, is it? Did you suck his cock tonight?"

Lee narrowed his eyes. "What?"

"You heard me," Zach said from between clenched teeth. "Did you fuck before coming here tonight?" Zach didn't know what in the hell had come over him. He couldn't believe those words were coming out of his mouth. What in hell was wrong with him?

"Zach, you know" -- Lee placed a hand on his bicep. -- "I..."

"Sure, sure," he said a little briskly. "Forget it. What are they talking about?"

"Fucking, mostly."

"Any talk of drugs?"

"Some."

"Lee, give me your phone."

"What for?"

Zach took a tiny metal disk out of his pocket. "Just give it to me."

Lee handed over his phone. "What are you doing?"

"I'm putting a recording device in your phone. I'll be able to hear you. Can you keep it on you all the time?"

"I...I don't know...I mean...Lebeau is planning this party and..."

"What kind of a party?"

"A party, with me, and his friends, and those girls. Look, Zach, I don't know where I'm going to put that phone exactly. I probably won't be...well, I'll be naked."

Their eyes met for a moment.

"Tell him you're tired." Zach's voice sounded harsh. "He claims to care so much, just tell him you have a headache."

"I can't. He's paid and..."

"And you like it. You love being the centre of attention and..."

"No," Lee said. "Zach, it's what you wanted me to do, to stay close and..."

"Yeah, and you've done well," he muttered. "He's in love with you now."

"I don't think he knows the meaning of the word, and besides, I'm not in love with him."

Zach didn't answer.

Lee sighed. "Look, just give me the phone. I'll do what I can. I'd do anything for you. I..."

"What?" Zach blinked.

"Nothing." He yanked the phone out of his hands. "I have to get back. Daniel will wonder where I've gotten to. Get out of here."

Zach nodded, watching until Lee left the bathroom, then, cut out the back door.

* * * * *

Zach sat in his car across the road and put the little listening device in his ear. At first there was a lot of static; then he heard Lebeau say, "What do you think of my fine slut, Carl?"

"I like mine with tits and ass," the man replied in a rough Irish brogue, "but to each his own."

"You can sample him. His ass is yours if you want."

Zach shifted a little in his seat.

"A man's ass is heartier than a woman's. I wouldn't mind a taste," the Irishman answered. "I might hurt that ass."

"Fucking bastard," Zach muttered in his car. "I'll hurt your ass, and it won't be the way you think."

There was laughter, and some nonsense chatter, then Zach heard Lebeau say, "Everything set for next Tuesday?"

"Yeah, no sweat."

"Tuesday, where on Tuesday?" Zach muttered. God, he was so close he could taste it, so close to nailing Lebeau. All this time, and now, finally, the hour was at hand. Just a little longer. Just a little longer.

Over the course of the next hour, the conversation almost put Zach to sleep. It was a mix of travel log stuff, the prostitutes discussing their tan lines, and Lebeau murmuring obscenities in Lee's ear...dirty, perverted bastard.

Finally, they left the club, and things got down and dirty with the two girls in the car who felt each other up in front of "Carl," and what appeared to be his two henchmen.

Lee had been quiet on the ride to the hotel, and so was Lebeau, who only occasionally hollered out some comment about the girls' "big tits," and how much more satisfying it was to "fuck ass rather than pussy."

It was pretty quiet until they got up to Lebeau's suite. Some clinking of glasses. They were making drinks. The Irishman gave instructions to the women, graphic instructions.

Lebeau told Lee to take off his clothes. Zach wasn't sure where Lee had the phone, but it was close by because he could hear everything going on. "Come on, say something I can use." Zach pounded the dashboard, picturing Lee getting naked in front of Lebeau.

Another voice he hadn't heard much of, said suddenly, "Hey Danny, I want to see that whore tied up. We can do what we want, right?"

He was talking about Lee. Zach started the engine of his car. It wouldn't hurt to be closer to the Plaza. The reception would probably be better.

"Yes, he's a whore," Lebeau said with his French accented voice. "He likes it rough, and he's mine. I can do whatever I want with him. I'll share but you have to ask me nice."

Zach accelerated a bit. He felt his pulse race, and then told himself to cool it. Lee was used to this. This was his life, his job, his...

He heard Lee let out a sound. It sounded as if he was in pain. Maybe it was pleasure. Maybe it was... "not so tight..." Those words came through loud and clear. What was tight?

"Nice ass," the other voice said. Zach narrowed his eyes as he heard the two women moaning and groaning in the background. Someone was fucking the hell out of both of them. "I'm going to fuck that ass dry," the voice bellowed, then laughed.

"No, please a little lube...it feels...ahh....no...no...

Daniel...please, don't let him."

That was Lee's voice. Zach swallowed. He heard Lee cry out again. That was not pleasure. Zach didn't hesitate. In fact, he didn't even think about what he doing. He swung the car around in front of the Plaza and reached under his seat. Zach took out his revolver, sprinted over to main door of the Plaza, and took the stairs two at a time up to the sixth floor.

He was out of breath when he reached suite six. He banged on the door, gun drawn. "Open up, room service." Zach didn't see Delaney come up behind him with the ice bucket until it was too late. He turned around, and Delaney attacked.

* * * * *

Lee heard the commotion from the other room, and tried to get up off the bed, but he'd been tied down. A few minutes later, Lebeau came in and began to untie him. "I'm sorry, darlin', the party is on hold for now. We have an unexpected guest."

Lee's heart beat heavy in his chest. "Who?"

"An old friend of mine. Now that you're going to be around a lot more, remember your promise of discretion. No one needs to know about..."

Lee sat up. "Who is it?"

"Come meet him."

Lee scrambled off the bed, grabbing one of the hotel robes off the chair and wrapping himself in it. When he came out of the bedroom, the first thing he saw was Zach. Delaney had tied him to a chair, his arms behind his back. The two female prostitutes were fawning over him. "What a sweetie," one of them cooed, pushing some of Zach's hair off his face. "Now that's a man, boys."

The one called Carl was sitting on the sofa, his two henchmen standing nearby, and Delaney and Lebeau were standing behind Zach's chair.

Lee tried to hide his terror. Why in hell would Zach have come to the hotel?

Zach cautioned him with his eyes.

"Very sexy," one of the prostitutes said, leaning over and attempting to rub her huge breasts across Zach's lips. He turned his head.

"Guess he doesn't like tits," Carl commented. "Maybe we should give him your boy," he said to Lebeau.

"No," Lebeau said. "Lee's mine." He looked down at Zach. "What are you doing here, Zach? How did you know I'd be here? Is there a rat in this room?"

Lee swallowed and looked down at the carpet.

"I'm not here for you," Zach said. "I'm here for Carl, or should I say, Erin Jones."

Carl looked over at him. "A bit out of your territory, aren't you, cop? Badge says you're a 'Frisco cop."

"Ah, that accounts for it," Delaney said. "Cops are all fags down there."

Zach raised an eyebrow. "Undo these ropes, Delaney; I'll show you a little bit of what those fag cops in San Francisco are made of."

Lee winced as Delaney came around in front and hit Zach hard in the mouth with his fist. The blood began to flow. Lee bit into his lip.

"Don't hurt his beautiful face," one of the girls protested.

"Shut up, slut," Lebeau growled. "Get your clothes on and get out of here. Take the other piece of ass with you."

Without another word, the two girls left the room.

"One of your pals snitched on you, Erin." Zach looked at him. "Someone in New York. They told me about a drug shipment."

"Who? Who told you that?"

Zach shrugged. "The cops are on their way as we speak."

"Who told you that?" Carl shouted. He motioned to one of his men, who slipped on a pair of brass knuckles. "I'm going to ask you one more time, who?"

Lee shuddered. No. He couldn't stand here and let this happen. He knew Lebeau kept a loaded gun in the nightstand beside the bed. He inched his way into the room and went for the gun.

"What are you doing, Lee?" a voice said suddenly. Lee turned around blindly, his finger on the trigger, and fired.

Chapter Seven

Zach was dreaming of fire. He was tied to what looked like a stake, and the fire leaped up all around him. *I'm not going to die here.* He gasped. His eyes snapped open but he couldn't see anything. He was surrounded by darkness. He coughed, tasting the blood in his mouth. Something smelled damp and musty. He was underground. He tried to move, feeling a body close to his back. He heard a moan. "Lee," he said, coughing again. His mouth was dry, and the heat was searing. Sweat ran down his forehead and stung his eyes. "Lee." He bumped against him, trying to rouse him. His hands were tied. He struggled a bit, trying to get loose. "Lee, please be alive."

"Zach? Zach, is that you? Are you all right? Jesus Christ, where are we? I can't see anything."

Zachary looked up. A stream of light could be seen above him. "Yes, it's me. I'm all right, I think. You?"

"It's so hot. I ache all over. I don't think I can move my leg."

"Fuck. Okay," Zach said. "We have to get out of here. Are your hands tied?"

"No."

"Well, reach over here and untie me."

“Okay.” Lee began to pull at the rope around Zach’s wrists. “I was sure we were dead.”

“Why aren’t we?”

“Well because...hey, I got it.” Zach shook free of the rope. “Where in the hell are we?”

“I think we’re in what could have been the beginnings of an old mine.”

“Mine?”

“Yeah, lot of silver mines in these parts.”

“Are we going to die here?”

“Not if I can help it. Why did you come to the hotel, Zach?”

“That’s not important now.”

“If you hadn’t come, everything would have been all right. You didn’t trust me.”

“No, that’s not it. Forget it for now. Can you stand?”

“I don’t know, yeah, I...” Lee struggled to his feet. “Ahhh.”

“Where does it hurt?” Zach felt around in the dark.

“My lower leg.”

“Maybe a bad sprain, could be broken, it’s hard to tell. Stay here. I’m going to see if I can get us out of here.” Zach walked to the wall. He felt around. There was no ladder, but then he didn’t expect one. There was no rope, but there seemed to be enough erosion on the sides of the wall to allow some footing. Although they couldn’t have been more than eight feet down, how in the hell was he going to get Lee out of here? Well, first things first. “Okay, listen, I’m going to climb up out of here. It’s not too deep. I’ll see if I can find something for you to...”

“No. I’m going with you.”

“But your leg.”

“I’ll manage.” Lee limped over to the wall.

“Okay. You’ll need to hang onto me. This won’t be easy.”

"It must be two hundred degrees down here."

"Probably not any better up there."

Lee laughed a little.

"Okay, put your hands where I tell you."

* * * * *

It took them almost an hour to climb the wall. Twice they got halfway and then lost their footing, and went barrelling back down. Finally, Zach managed to hoist himself up over the edge, then reached back and pulled Lee with him.

They both lay exhausted in the scorching early morning sun. Covered with dust, Zach dragged himself to his feet and encouraged Lee to do the same. He looked around. Desert as far as the eye could see. Then he noticed the bruises on Lee's face and the blood soaking through his pant leg. "God damn it. What happened?"

Lee reached over and tried to wipe the blood off of Zach's swollen mouth.

"Ow," he said.

"Your beautiful face," Lee whispered.

"It will heal. Okay, what happened to you? And why aren't we dead?"

"I-I went for Daniel's gun. Delaney surprised me, and I shot him. Christ, I think I killed him."

"Good riddance, then what?"

"Daniel ran in with that Carl guy. They grabbed me. Daniel was pissed. He accused me of...well...I told him the truth. I told him I... loved...you."

"You told him what?" Zach's heart pounded in his chest.

"I told him...well, I wasn't about to let him kill you. They slapped me around some, and the next thing I knew they were throwing me in the back of a car. You were unconscious. They put you in the trunk. God, I was sure we were both dead."

"They threw us down there," Zach said, "and that would explain what happened to your leg."

"They threw you down here first. They were going to shoot me, and then Lebeau got this phone call. Someone pushed me down or maybe I jumped. I don't remember hitting the ground...but..." He took a breath, looked around. "...where in the hell are we, Zach? Do you know?"

"I believe we're in the middle of the Sagebrush Desert."

"That would explain all the sagebrush."

"Yeah." Zach laughed shortly.

"Now what?"

"We wait until the sun goes down, and then we walk."

"My leg is hurting like hell. I need to sit down for a minute."

Zach held out his hand. "Come on, lean on me, and put your jacket over your head. There's a little rock over there. You can perch on that until the sun goes down. It's not a good idea to sit in the hot sand. We'll try and walk a bit later."

Once Zach got Lee over to the rock, he once again surveyed his surroundings. Nothing, as far as the eye could see except sagebrush, sand, and bloody scorpions, and probably a few rattlesnakes. Tonight it would get cooler, and they could walk, but it would be dark, and the animals would come out, coyotes mostly. Zach looked over at Lee. His leg was bad. Zach didn't know how long he could walk. They could survive a few weeks without food, but not without water, and he doubted they'd find any soon.

He walked back over to Lee. Lee smiled at him. Zach smiled back. Lee reached out for his hand. Zach took it. "If I'm going to die out here, I'm glad it's with you," Lee said.

"Don't talk like that." All of this was his fault.

The sun went down, and they walked. Zach had the idea that they were going nowhere. Lee was having a hard time walking. "I have to rest," Lee said, plunking down in

the sand and placing his hands over his face. Lee looked up at him. “Why’d you come to the hotel?”

Zach sighed. He’d have to give him an answer sometime. “I thought” -- He paused. -- “I thought they were hurting you.” He looked away.

Lee stumbled to his feet.

Zach felt Lee’s hand on his shoulder.

“Zach.”

Zach didn’t look at him.

“You messed up your chance to get Lebeau because of me?”

Zach turned and met his gaze. “Suddenly Lebeau didn’t matter any more. Nothing mattered except you.”

Tears filled Lee’s eyes. “Zach, I...”

“Don’t say anything. Listen, you made me feel something in that hotel room I haven’t felt in a very long time, maybe something I didn’t believe I’d ever feel again. After that little girl died, I felt such pain, and the drinking numbed that pain, and eventually all I felt was dead. Lee, you brought me back to life and...now I’ve gone and...fuck. We’re going to die out here.”

“No,” Lee said, shaking him a little. “No, we’re not. Now that I’ve found you, now that I’ve found the one man who can fill this void in my life, who can elevate me above this shit that I call living, I’m not about to let you go. I won’t let us go, Zach, so get moving.”

Zach gave him a hug. He nodded.

They walked some more. The wind kicked up, and it got cooler, but it felt good. Lee was leaning more and more on Zach, and eventually Zach was half carrying him.

They stopped, both exhausted. They huddled together as the wind grew colder. Lee took Zach into his arms, pressed his lips against his neck. “I love you,” he whispered. “That’s what I told Daniel.”

"That's probably why he threw you down the hole." Zach chuckled, brushing back Lee's matted hair, kissing his mouth ever so gently with his bruised lips.

"I lied to myself for so long," Lee said softly. "I told myself that all the money I earned gave me respect, but no one respected me. I didn't even respect myself. I only began to care about that after I saw your face. Suddenly, I wanted you to respect me. I wanted you to love me, Zach."

"I do love you," Zach whispered against his cheek. "What in hell do you think we're doing out here?"

Lee started to laugh. He laughed so hard, the tears came and he sobbed against Zachary's chest.

* * * * *

They fell asleep eventually out of exhaustion, then Lee felt Zachary shake him gently. "Don't move," he whispered.

"What?" Fear seized him.

"Don't...move." Suddenly Zachary stood up and stomped a few times on the ground.

Lee gasped. A dead scorpion lay a few feet from him.

"Holy Christ," he said, jumping to his feet, and then wincing from the pain.

"Come on let's walk some before the sun comes up."

Lee nodded. He didn't want to say it, but he doubted he could go much further. Each step he took was excruciating. "I'm so damned thirsty."

Zach reached over, and kissed him. "Don't think about it."

That kiss gave him courage, and he started to walk, trying to keep his mind off the pain. God, he was so in love. This man walking out in front of him, reaching back to grip his hand every few seconds was everything he'd ever wanted. Just looking in his eyes was heaven, and the time he'd spent in his arms now seemed more precious now than words

could say. They had to survive this. He had to have him again, over and over, for the rest of his life.

When the sun came up, they stopped, waiting it out. Zach placed Lee's jacket over his face, and then lay down next to him. As the day wore on, Zach knew Lee was getting weaker and weaker. He wasn't sure if he'd be able to walk again that night when the sun went down, and without water himself, he wouldn't be able to carry him for long.

When he tried to get Lee to stand up later on when the sun started to descend, he seemed a bit disorientated. "I can't," he murmured, "leave me, just leave me."

"I'm not fucking leaving you," Zach growled. "Now, stand up. Come on. We're going to make it. We're not going to give up."

"Because you want Lebeau."

"No, because I want you."

Lee pushed him away and sank back down to his knees in the sand. "It's a losing battle. We're never going to make it out of here alive."

Zach sighed and plunked himself down beside him. He placed an arm around his shoulders and hugged him, letting his chin rest on the top of his head for a moment. "Don't give up." His parched throat barely made the sounds anymore. "I love you."

Lee looked up at him. "You know, no one's ever said that to me before."

"Well, they should've."

Lee buried his face in Zach's shirt. "I don't want to die out here, but...at least it's with you." He looked up at him again. "It just occurred to me, that if I have to die..."

"Lee..."

"Wait, if I have to die, I want your face to be the last thing I see."

Zach wiped the tear off Lee's cheek. He nodded. "Me too. Now, come on, let's go."

* * * * *

Zach began to stumble now. He had waited for the sun to go down, and then began to walk again. It was dark, and he couldn't see anything, and the sounds of the night came alive, and mingled with the wind. He fell a few times, exhausted, but each time he hit the dry sand, he thought about how Lee wouldn't survive without him, and he'd force himself back up to his feet again, half dragging Lee along with him.

He was beginning to see things, images that weren't there, and he knew the dehydration was causing him to feel dizzy. It was the dizziness that caused him to lose his balance and hit the ground. This time when he fell, he saw a snake dancing in front of him in the murky distance, a snake which looked remarkably like Lebeau. Zach pushed himself up onto his feet, swallowing the nausea that crawled up into his throat. He reached out a hand for Lee, and found it, lying motionless. He groaned from the pain, and got up to his knees, crawling over to where he lay. He couldn't ever remember feeling this much desperation. He reached down, placed his arms around Lee, and with every ounce of strength he had left, he hoisted him over his shoulder.

* * * * *

Zach saw Lee walking toward him, and he smiled. He looked so beautiful in the sunlight. "Goodbye, baby," Zach said. "I love you."

"Zach," Lee said, meeting his gaze. "Please, help me. Don't let me die out here."

Zach gasped and sat up straight, only to have hands push him gently back down to the bed. "Take it easy now," a woman's voice urged. "Here, have some more water, just a little."

Zach felt the cool liquid hit his mouth and he let his tongue savour it. He choked a little then lowered his head to the pillow. "Where am I?" he whispered, trying to focus on the woman in front of him. She had long brown hair, and was wearing what looked like a canvas shirt and jeans. "Where's Lee?"

“If you mean the fellow that was with you, he’s been taken to the hospital. He wasn’t doing so well, but he’ll make it. What’s your name?”

“Zach, Zachary Freeman. I’m a cop.”

“Cop?” She raised an eyebrow. “I hope you’re not...”

“Look, no worries, whatever you got going here right now...”

“A bit of pot growing, nothing more. We don’t sell it.”

“Don’t worry; I have other things I have to take care of. Where am I, exactly? I need to get to a phone.”

“There’s no phone here. This is a commune. We live natural, no technology, no phones. We’re about six miles from the next town.”

“Do you have a vehicle?” He tried to get up.

“Hey, not too fast. We have a vehicle, yes, but Jerry has gone with it. We spotted you a few miles from here, just as we were leaving. I told him to go on without me...take the other guy into the city.”

Zach forced himself into an upright position. “Thank you. You saved my life. What hospital did he take him to?”

“The big general one, I suspect. What were you doing out here, anyway, with no water, no...?”

“It’s a long story. I’ve got to get to a phone.”

Just then a small girl came into the room. She looked to be about four years old. For a minute, Zach froze. She looked like Valerie King. He thought he was hallucinating again. The child walked over to the bed and regarded him quietly for a second; then she jumped on the bed and threw her arms around him.

“Monica,” the woman chastised, trying to pry her away from Zach, “what are you doing? This man is not well...he...”

The child hugged his neck tightly for a second then kissed Zach on the cheek before allowing the woman to pull her off the bed. "I knew you'd come, mister," she said meeting his gaze. "I knew you'd make it all right. You'll be okay now, and so will Lee."

Zach blinked. How in the hell did she know his name? She must have heard him say it.

The woman laughed slightly, embarrassed, holding onto the child. "I'm sorry; my daughter is...can be a little strange sometimes. What was that all about, Monica? What are you talking about?"

The little girl broke away from her mother and ran out of the room. Zach could only stare. "It's okay, no problem. I think she thought she knew me."

"Yes, well," she said with a laugh, "you look a little like her daddy, and Monica can be a bit creepy for a four-year-old."

Zach threw his legs over the bed.

"Are you sure you're...?"

"I'm fine. I need to get to town."

"Six miles is a long walk and you're not well."

Zach looked around at the small dwelling that had been slapped together with clapboard. "I'll be all right. Can you give me a bottle of water?"

"Of course."

He made his way outside, grateful it was early evening. Copies of the little clapboard dwelling duplicated themselves several times around him. A few people came out to shake his hand, ask him how he was. He thanked them all and asked for directions to the next town.

The woman handed him a big plastic bottle filled with water. He'd never look at water quite the same way again. "Are you sure you won't wait for a few days? My husband will be back with the vehicle and..."

"No, I can't. Sorry. I'll never forget you." He kissed her cheek.

Without delay, he started off again, pausing only once to look back at the little girl called Monica, who stood alone in the distance watching him.

* * * * *

The first place Zach spotted with some signs of life was a gas station, but it was all locked up. He banged on the door in vain, letting out a scream of frustration. He kicked it then continued on down the road. An hour later, he stopped at a dumpy café asking a skinny, short order cook if he could use the phone. “There’s a pay phone in the corner,” he said, hooking his thumb toward the door, “and you got to at least buy a coffee to...”

“Listen,” Zach said, reaching over the counter and pulling the guy forward by his T-shirt, “I’m a cop and I need to use the fucking telephone, and right now you’re obstructing justice. You got it?”

“Ah...he-here...” he muttered, shoving a quarter across the counter. “Knock yourself out bud-dy.”

Zach released him and took the quarter. “Thank you,” he said, giving him a terse smile, then walked over to the phone, and dialled the operator. “This is Lieutenant Zach Freeman,” he told the operator. “I need to reach the San Francisco Police.” He rattled off the number of the precinct.

When Simon finally answered, Zach said, “Thank God.”

“Zach. Where are you? I thought you’d be coming home today. We’re going nuts here without you and...”

“Today. Simon” -- Zach clutched the phone. -- “what day is it?”

“It’s Saturday.”

“Saturday, like I’ve been gone how long?”

“A week. Zach, are you okay?”

“Lee. Fuck. Lee’s in the hospital and...”

“What? Zach?”

“Okay,” Zach said. “Put an APB out on Lebeau. Get a warrant for his arrest.”

“For what?”

“Attempted murder, for one.”

“Attempted murder of whom?”

“Me, God damn it. Me. Find him. I don’t care if you have to call out the fucking National Guard, find the son of a bitch, and get a police helicopter out here to” -- He turned and looked at the fry cook. -- “where in hell am I again?”

The cook gave him an address, which he passed onto Simon. “There’s a field near here. I’ll wait, and hurry up.”

“Are you all right?”

“Yeah. Just hurry, okay? Oh, and Simon, if you find him, I don’t want anyone making a move until I get there, you hear me?”

“Yeah, I hear you.”

“And I want you to call the hospitals, find out which one Lee Hastings is in.”

“Hastings. Fuck, Zach, what in hell happened out there?”

“I’ll tell you when I get in,” he said, and hung up.

“Now,” the cook called to Zach across the room, “you going to eat something or what?”

Chapter Eight

Simon was there when the helicopter touched down, and so was the director of Special Investigations. They both had plenty of questions for him, questions he would do his best to answer all in good time. They were working on the warrant and had issued the APB. “We’ve got a state-wide manhunt,” Director Kevin Warner announced. “Are you all right, Zach? We need to get you to a hospital and...”

“I’m fine,” Zach told him as they lifted off the ground. He began to fill them in the as best he could.

“He really dumped you in the desert?” Simon shook his head.

“Yeah. Lee Hastings is in the hospital and I...”

“Zach,” Warner interrupted, “you should have come to me on this. Hastings is a prostitute and...”

“We’ve used snitches before,” Zach muttered, not wanting to hear what Lee was.

“Yes, but...there’s a lot I don’t understand,” Warner persisted. “Why didn’t you let things play their course at the hotel and...?”

“I had my reasons,” Zach said. “It was a judgment call and...maybe I... but...” He stopped, took a breath. “We have Lebeau now. He tried to kill a cop. We have enough to put

him away. I've got to find out how Lee is. Hasn't anyone gotten any information on what hospital he's in?"

Simon glanced at him. The director's cell phone was ringing, and he didn't have time to answer his question. Simon placed a hand on Zach's. "Is there something...between you and Lee?" Simon knew that Zach was gay. He'd had dinner with him and Peter plenty of times.

Zach nodded, and lowered his head.

Simon gave his hand a fast squeeze, and then released it.

* * * * *

Zach was out of the helicopter as soon as it touched down, heading for the police vehicles waiting in the wings. "Take me back to headquarters," he told a uniform as he crawled into the backseat of one of them. Simon slid in beside him.

Simon glanced over at the director's car. "He's not finished with the questioning."

"Is he ever?"

Simon laughed. "No. Where do you think Lebeau is?"

"I have an idea but I have to put my thoughts together. Lee told me some stuff. Right now it's all a jumble in my mind."

"You've been through a lot, Zach."

"Yes, and I haven't had a drink." He looked at Simon.

Simon placed a hand on his shoulder, and nodded. "Good."

* * * * *

Lee was at a hospital in Reno. The uniformed officer told Zach he was doing well. Zach breathed a sigh of relief. He wanted to go to him, but right now, he was being bombarded with information from his team. They wanted Lebeau almost as much as he did. They'd put a lot of work into this. He poured over the data that had been collected by his team in his

absence. His mind raced. Lee had told him about this Carl guy. Zach knew that “Carl” was really Erin Jones, a small-time hood connected to the mob. They were planning to pick up a drug shipment Tuesday. Suddenly, something went off in his brain. Lebeau was headed to New York City.

Zach jumped up from his desk and raced out into the squad room. They had three days to find out which port that shipment was coming into. Lebeau was going to be there to meet that shipment, along with Jones...and so was he. “Someone get me Captain O’Hara from the Fifty-Third Precinct in New York on the line,” he said, walking over to Simon who looked up at him in expectation. “Okay, requisition me a gun, a badge, and a cell phone, and get me transport to New York.”

Simon opened his mouth to say something. Someone called out to Zach, “Lieutenant, Captain O’Hara on the line from Manhattan.”

“I’ll take it in my office,” Zach said.

As soon as he was off the phone, Simon walked into his office. “What’s the story?”

“The NYPD is hunting down Erin Jones as we speak,” Zach replied. “The Port Authorities have been notified, and they’re going to try to find out the details on the shipment.”

“Great. Why do you need to go to New York? They can handle it out there. We should...”

Zach held up a hand. “You keep on it here, in case I’m wrong and there’s been a change of plan. O’Hara and I have an understanding. The NYPD gets credit for the drug bust, but Lebeau is mine. If they find Jones, they’ll offer him a deal, a reduced sentence if he goes through with the drug operation as planned.”

“How in hell did you manage that?” Simon laughed.

“O’Hara and I are old friends, plus, I told O’Hara that Lebeau tried to kill me.”

Simon nodded. "Okay, I'll hold down the fort here. I'll have everything you need waiting for you downstairs in half an hour. Good luck."

"Fine. I'm going to take a shower in the locker room. Can you send a uniform over to my house to bring me back some clothes? Clean underwear, socks, jeans, and a T-shirt should do it."

"I was going to suggest that. You have a hell of a puffy lip there. Are you sure you're --?"

Zach interrupted him. "I'll get checked out when this is all over, I promise. And, Simon, send that uniform back to check on Lee Hastings, and have him call me immediately with the details. See if he knows anything more. And remember, he's not a criminal, he's an informant. I want him treated like one, okay?"

Simon nodded, and Zach headed downstairs to the showers.

* * * * *

Zach had been working with the New York City authorities almost non-stop for the last two days, grabbing an hour of sleep here and there on the captain's sofa in his office. Lee was doing well and had confirmed that the drop was indeed New York. It made Zach that much more determined.

O'Hara came to sit beside him, a big man with nerves of steel. He put a hand on Zach's shoulder. "You need some sleep, Freeman."

"I'll sleep later."

"This is personal for you, isn't it?"

"Yeah. Very personal, for a variety of reasons."

The captain nodded, putting a cup of coffee into his hand. "We just got word. They found Jones. They're bringing him in. You want a crack at him?"

"Hell, yeah," Zach said, getting to his feet.

"He's on his way."

“Thanks, Thomas.”

“The Port Authorities got it narrowed down to two possibilities.” He grinned. “I’m sure you’ll be able to convince Jones to tell us which one of those it is.”

“Don’t worry,” Zach said, “Jones will lead the way.”

* * * * *

Jones was sitting behind the table smoking when Zach walked in. A uniform stood by the door. Zach told him he could leave. “Hello, Jones,” Zach said.

“Who the fuck are you?”

“Don’t play cute with me. We met in the hotel room of a mutual friend of ours not too long ago. Daniel Lebeau?”

“Never heard of him.”

“Well, that’s funny because you were in Reno with him just a few days ago. I’d get checked out if I were you, could be a brain tumour.”

“Fuck you.”

“Listen, shithead,” Zach said, coming closer, then reaching out and taking Jones by the scruff of the neck, “you’re up to your ass in this drug deal with Lebeau. We know everything, even where the shipment is coming in tonight. Now, you got two choices: you can go up for a long time and take the rap for Lebeau, or you can sing now, and maybe the D.A. will cut you a deal. Either way, you’re doing time. The only difference is that Lebeau walks or he doesn’t.” He released him.

“You got nothing.”

Zach smiled. “You like gin with lemon, a little ice, and you like your women with big tits. You really don’t like Lebeau much. You told one of your men that he’s a French fag, and he...”

“Okay,” he said, breathlessly. “What do you want?”

Zach smiled. "You're going to take us to that drug drop tonight. You're going to act like nothing is up. If you play it cool, do everything we tell you to, I'll speak to the D.A. You'll do a few years, no more."

He nodded.

Zach came closer. "Tell me something. When was the last time you spoke to Lebeau?"

"This morning."

"On the phone?"

"Yeah."

"Where did he call from?"

"I don't know, man."

"Where-did-he-call-from?"

"The International Hotel."

"He's in a heap of trouble. He almost killed a cop, not to mention Lee Hastings."

"Who cares about some fucking hooker?"

Zach struck Jones in the face with his fist. Jones flew out of his chair from the impact and landed on the floor.

"Ow, fuck. What did you do that for?" He started to pick himself up. "That's police brutality or something." He held onto his jaw.

"Watch your mouth. I'm going to get a detective in here, and you're going to tell him every detail about tonight. Is that clear?"

Jones nodded sullenly, sitting back in his seat.

"Don't leave out anything, 'cause if you do, I'm coming back in here."

Jones reached for another cigarette. Zach noticed his fingers trembled when he tried to light it.

Zach left the room, and nodded to the captain. "He's ready to sing."

The captain motioned to one of his detectives, who got up and entered the interrogation room.

“Get your men ready,” Zach said. “And put a car outside of the International Hotel. I want to know the minute Lebeau leaves.”

“It will be done.”

“Did Jones have a cell phone on him when he was arrested?”

“I’ll have someone check the evidence room.”

“Okay. He talked to Lebeau today on the phone.”

O’Hara nodded. “Let’s do it.”

* * * * *

Jones was nervous, but he went through the routine. The police were well hidden. Lebeau and his cronies didn’t suspect a thing, but then again, Lebeau thought he was a ghost.

When Lebeau heard the collective click of artillery, he put down his gun, kicked it away from himself, and got down on the ground as he was instructed. Jones was taken away, and so were Lebeau’s boys. The other cops backed off, nodding at Zach, as he stepped out from behind the container.

“Hello, Daniel,” Zach said, causing Lebeau to glance up. The look on his face was priceless. “If only I had a camera.”

Lebeau looked bewildered, then fearful. “I always liked you, Zach. I...” He was damned near pleading.

“Are you scared?”

“No, I --”

“You do realise you’re going to prison?”

“Ah, I thought maybe you wouldn’t let that happen.”

“What? Kill you, you mean?”

"Come on, Freeman, you've wanted me for a long time, built your life around me. An obsession. That's why we should have been friends."

"Um. Well, it's over. You tried to kill a cop. That's not good." He came closer.

"Are you going to beat the crap out of me now?"

Zach shook his head. "I've fantasized about what I was going to do to you, but not anymore. You'll be where you should be, and I have better things to fantasize about now." Zach leaned down and lowered his voice. "You're going to rot in prison, Lebeau, and as you do, just think, every night, I'm going to be holding Lee in my arms, and I won't share him with any other man. His days of selling himself are over, and best of all, Lee's in love with me. So, keep thinking about him when you're lying on that cold, hard bunk" -- Zach stood up straight and backed away. -- "think about how he makes love. Picture him making love to me. Bye, Daniel. I'll see you in court." Zach beamed. "Take him away, boys," he called out, then louder, blocking out the sounds of Lebeau's curses, "take the cop killer downtown."

* * * * *

Lee had been transferred to a San Francisco hospital, and was sitting up in bed drinking water when Zach finally walked into his hospital room.

Zach smiled at him from where he stood near the door.

Lee held his breath. There was a time when he thought he'd never see Zach again. After he'd been brought back here, all he saw was some damn rookie cop who kept telling him that Lieutenant Freeman was out of town.

"I thought you'd...well, I didn't think you would come."

"Not come? How could I not come?" Zach replied, moving closer to his bed.

"Some cop told me you'd gone to New York and..."

"I did. I went after Lebeau. It's all over."

"What will happen to him?"

“He’s in police custody. He’ll be charged with attempted murder and importing illegal drugs into the country.”

“He won’t get out, will he?”

“No.” Zach shook his head. “It’s doubtful they’ll give bail to someone who tried to kill a cop.”

Lee fell silent.

“You don’t need to worry about him anymore. I wanted to bring flowers but I couldn’t wait to get here. I’m sorry I didn’t come right away. I didn’t have a minute. How are you feeling?”

“Better now.” Lee smiled and held out his hand. “As long as you’re here.”

Zach took his hand and leaned over to kiss his mouth softly. “The doctor says you can go home tomorrow.” He paused. “Come home with me, Lee. Please.”

Lee’s heart sped up in his chest; lost in Zach’s eyes. “Am I being released into your custody, Officer?”

“Would you like that?” He smiled at him.

“Oh, yeah. I’d like that a lot.”

Zach’s grin broadened. “You’re not being charged with anything, but we can pretend.”

Lee met his gaze. “Play cops and robbers.”

Zach laughed. “If you like.”

“I like,” Lee whispered.

Zach sobered. “You do realise your testimony will be critical in putting Lebeau away. Your...ah...clients...you may lose them.”

“Time for a career change, wouldn’t you say, Lieutenant?”

Zach nodded.

“Tell me Officer, are all police lieutenants big, beautiful hunks of men like you?”

“Oh no, I’m the only one.”

Lee laughed.

* * * * *

The following day, Zach arrived in the morning to take him home. This time, he brought flowers, which made Lee laugh. An hour later, they walked into Zach’s somewhat disorderly living room. Lee studied Zach. He looked as if he hadn’t slept in a long time. “You look exhausted, baby.”

“I’m all right. You?”

“I feel great. You didn’t even get yourself checked out, did you?”

Zach reached over and pulled him close. “I didn’t have time. It will be all right now, Lee. I promise. I’ll take care of you.”

“Take care of me? Ha! Who will take care of you?” Lee smirked, playfully pushing him away. “You’re hopeless.”

Zach frowned. “Hopeless, eh? Well, I suppose I do need you to look after me then.”

Lee pulled him closer. He kissed his cheek, ruffled his hair. “You suppose?”

Zach pressed him against the wall, kissed his mouth hotly, then stepped away.

Lee licked his lips. “Ahem. I thought you were tired?”

“*You* said I was tired, not me, but you know, I can’t wait to go to bed.” Zach winked at him.

They laughed on the way down the corridor to his room, jostling back and forth like two boys.

“A double bed,” Lee remarked. “You know what that means?”

He watched as Zach stripped off his clothes, then as he jumped onto the bed and lay down, hands behind his head. Lee traced the curve of Zach’s erection, and stifled a groan.

Beautiful. And the fact that he was his, made his heart flip-flop a little. “No,” Zach replied seductively, “what does it mean, Lee?”

“It means that I get to wake up next to you tomorrow.” Lee peeled off his shirt and pants. He walked over to the bed and leaned over him for a kiss. Zach pulled him on top of him and willingly obliged.

“And how about every morning after that?” Zach murmured against his mouth, uttering a sound of contentment as Lee’s hand moved over his sex.

“Sounds like a plan, Officer. Can we discuss it later?” Lee moved his lips down across his chest to his stomach. “I heard that it’s not polite to talk with your mouth full.”

Zach said something, but somehow it got lost in the translation.

 THE END 

D. J. Manly

D. J. writes for the pure love of writing, and always with the reader in mind. If D. J. doesn't enjoy reading it, it won't be written. There is nothing quite as exciting as beautiful men falling in love, and "the boys," get themselves into some pretty sticky situations!!! Come taste a piece of D. J. Manly's work, but be careful, you may become as addicted to reading it, as D. J. is to writing it.

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