



Carol Lynne

OFF-SEASON



Campus  
Cravings

Off-Season  
*by Carol Lynne*

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Warning:

**Warning:** This book contains sexually explicit content which is only suitable for mature readers. This story has been rated *total-e-burning*.

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## Dedication

Dedicated to Nicole, Candy, Chantal and Elka.

Thank you for your continued support.

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NYU—New York University Corporation

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## Chapter One

Grabbing an ice cold beer out of the cooler, Demitri wandered over to the barbecue. It was an unseasonably warm day for this time of year. Demitri smiled to himself. Well at least that's what everyone around him kept saying. He'd never been to Idaho in the fall before this year. He'd spent most of the past eight years in Greece, but he also had a New York apartment where he lived when he taught the odd class or two at NYU. He'd left it all behind, Greece, New York, all because of a man.

Shaking his head, he found a seat on the patio.

So here he sat, in a lawn chair in Idaho, surrounded by a bunch of good-looking gay men, one in particular kept catching his eye. He'd told himself for the past couple of weeks not to follow through on his attraction to Soccer Coach, Aaron Billings, but damn. He watched Aaron move effortlessly through the crowd of people. Talking and laughing like he didn't have a care in the world. It felt like a lifetime since he'd had that feeling.

They talked on the phone most evenings until the nightly news was over. They enjoyed discussing the sports segment before saying their goodbyes for the night. Demitri thought they did it more out of a sense of mutual loneliness than anything else. The problem was, the more he talked to Aaron, the more he liked him and he wasn't ready.

So, as he watched Aaron mingle with his friends, he reminded himself of Basil, it seemed to help get his mind back

on track. He felt a hand on his shoulder and looked up to see his brother, Theron standing over him.

"Someone sitting here?" he asked pointing to the empty chair beside Demitri.

"Does it look like someone's sitting there?" he answered rolling his eyes. Theron was the family psychiatrist and he just loved to poke into people's heads, which was exactly the reason he'd been avoiding him.

Settling into the seat, Theron eyed him a minute before the grin spread across his handsome face. "I just thought by the way you were laughing with that soccer guy earlier, maybe you were saving it for him."

"We're friends, and as you can see, he seems to make them easily," Demitri gestured to the laughing crowd surrounding Aaron.

"Sorry to hear that. It was nice to see you laughing again." Theron took a sip of iced tea, "So are you staying around here or are you coming back to New York?"

"I don't know, I thought about asking Alec if there are any positions opening up at the college." He looked at Theron. "We both know I don't need to work to support myself financially, but I'll never get out of this funk unless I find something to occupy my time." He looked around the pretty yard. "Maybe I'll buy a little house?"

Theron started laughing. "Really, Mr. High-Rise is going to buy a little house in the suburbs?"

"Look around, Bean Head. Do you see any high-rises here? The whole damn town is a suburb." He shrugged, "I like it, it's peaceful."

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Shaking his head, Theron leaned forward and rested his arms on his knees. "Are you ever going to tell me what happened in Greece last year? You've spent every spare minute away from teaching there for the past eight years. Suddenly, you're back and withdrawn. What happened eight months ago that caused you to drop out of life and hide away in Idaho?"

Shrugging again, Demitri took a pull off his beer. He didn't want to talk about this stuff, but he knew his brother. He was like a dog with a bone when he smelled emotional upheaval. This was his problem and no one else's. He knew he had to tell Theron something though, so he simply told him what he needed to hear. "I had a very important relationship end. I guess it's prompted me to re-evaluate my life. I decided I'd had enough wandering, enough parties."

Narrowing his eyes, Theron seemed to be studying him. "I know there's a lot more to it, but at least I understand the catalyst now. Are you expecting to find true love here?"

"No, it's not worth looking for because it never lasts." Demitri set his beer down and slumped down in his chair. Crossing his feet at the ankles, he leaned back and closed his eyes, hoping Theron would get the hint.

"It may not be worth looking for, but it's worth having. Just look at Alec and Max. Have you ever seen our brother so happy? I'm sure if you'd asked him before he met Max if he'd ever find true love he'd have said the same damn thing." Theron reached over and squeezed Demitri's forearm. "The right man's out there. You just haven't met him yet."

Demitri opened his eyes and looked at Theron with raised brows. How the hell ... "What did you just say?"

Standing, Theron reached down and ruffled Demitri's wayward black curls, "You might fool some people, but you don't fool me. I've known since you were a teenager." He smiled in that damn smug way he had and walked off, leaving Demitri open mouthed.

Well damn, wasn't that just like Theron. He'd known all this time that he was gay and had never let on. He wondered if Alec knew. Oh shit, or his parents?

Demitri was so wrapped up in his thoughts he didn't even see Aaron until he plopped down in the chair beside him.

"Hey," Aaron handed him a fresh beer.

Suddenly finding himself smiling, Demitri took the beer. "Thanks."

The two of them sat in companionable silence for a few minutes drinking their beer. "It doesn't look like my team's going to make it into the playoffs. So if you were still interested in catching a game, this will be our last week."

"Sure I am, when do you play?" Demitri asked sitting back up in his chair.

"Monday's an away game, but our last game's Thursday at home."

"Well then I'll definitely be there." Demitri finished his beer and set the empty bottle beside his chair with the other one.

Glancing over at Aaron, he noticed the man was fidgeting with the label on his bottle. Aaron looked up and caught Demitri's eyes. "Can I ask you something?"

"Yeah," Demitri replied.

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"Would you be interested in going to dinner after the game on Thursday?"

Rubbing the back of his neck, Dimitri frantically tried to come up with an excuse. Finding none, he nodded. "As long as you understand it's just a friendly dinner. I'm not looking for anything else right now."

"Oh, sure," Aaron said trying to smile, but Dimitri noticed the sparkle in his eyes had gone. Hell, he hadn't meant to hurt his feelings.

"It's not that I'm not attracted to you because I am. I've just lost someone that meant a great deal to me."

"Yeah, love sucks. My last boyfriend thought it would be fun to break my nose." Aaron ran the tip of his finger across the small bump on the bridge of his nose.

Without thinking, Dimitri followed Aaron's finger with his own. "It's still a nice nose." He caught and held Aaron's gaze for a few moments before removing his finger.

"So how 'bout a friendly dinner? My treat."

"Sure, I'll have dinner, but I can pay my own way."

"I don't mind. I know you're not working..." he stopped abruptly and winced. "Sorry."

"That's okay, but I really do have enough to buy my own dinner. Maybe I'll even spring for a beer," he winked.

\* \* \* \*

It was only ten o'clock when Dimitri walked into his tiny studio apartment. After being outdoors all evening, the small space felt especially cramped. He kicked off his shoes and got another beer out of the fridge before turning on the TV. He

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clicked rapidly through the endless stream of sitcoms and detective dramas, until he stopped on a travel show.

The sparkling blue waters of the Aegean Sea seemed to call to him. Without really seeing or hearing the actual program, Demitri was transported across the Atlantic Ocean to his favourite place in the world. The one place he still considered home, although the memories were too painful to live there.

He pictured himself and Basil sitting beside the pool, looking out over the sea, sharing some joke. Demitri smiled as tears filled his eyes. God he missed him. So much. Some days it took everything he had just to get out of bed, but every time he felt like giving up, he heard Basil's voice in his ear. *You know, you can't just curl up and die because I did. You're starting to get fat and lazy, neither of which are becoming on you. Go out and live, live for me if not for yourself.*

Shaking his head, Demitri flipped off the television and went to bed. Looking up at the ceiling, he thought briefly about Basil's last days. He was so small Demitri was able to cradle him in his arms for hours at a time, his already lean body almost skeletal. The ever present oxygen tube running into his nose was the only medical treatment he'd allowed. Basil had refused to die in a hospital and Demitri had honoured those wishes to the bitter end.

Flipping over, Demitri dug the picture out of the box under his bed. Turning on the bedside lamp, he studied the three-year old picture. They had just rung in the New Year and

Basil's butler, Cyril had snapped the shot for them, the cancer already taking its toll on Basil's former good looks.

Demitri ran his finger over the outline of Basil's face. "I miss you," he whispered. He wiped the tears from his eyes with the back of his hand and put the picture back in the box.

Glancing at the clock he saw it was time for the sports report on the local news. He knew Aaron wouldn't call, they'd already said their goodbyes for the night. At least when he thought of Aaron he felt lighter instead of lonely. Demitri tried to push Basil out of his mind and focus on Aaron. He needed this, this feeling of life.

Light brown hair, tipped gold from the sun, a long sinewy sportsman's body, just begging to be worshiped, Demitri felt his cock begin to fill and kept going. It had been so long since he'd held a healthy man in his arms. He'd had sex only a handful of times in the past eight years. Sadly they were meaningless encounters with one of Basil's employees. Being surrounded by death sometimes became too much for him to handle and he desperately needed confirmation that he was a healthy male. He'd regretted every quick fuck with Christian, but Basil was always the one to soothe his guilt.

Damn, his erection was deflating fast. *Aaron, Aaron*, he said over and over in his mind, trying to bring back the image of the handsome man. Shiny golden eyes came to mind. He knew they were technically considered light brown, but in the sunlight, Aaron's eyes seemed to glow. He thought of rubbing his body against Aaron's and began grinding his renewed arousal against the mattress. The longer he pictured him, the more features came to mind. The slightly crinkled skin around

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his eyes attested to years in the sun, just as the bronzed skin proved he was a man who loved the outdoors.

Riding faster now, Demitri closed his eyes and thought of kissing those beautifully sculpted lips. He thought about the softness of the skin and the sweet taste of Aaron's tongue. Flipping over at the last second, he shot in his hand with Aaron's name on his lips.

"Thank you, Aaron," he whispered into the darkened room. For one night he felt he was in the land of the living.

## Chapter Two

Monday morning, Dimitri knocked on Alec's office door.

"Come in."

Stepping inside the academic office brought back pleasant memories of his office at NYU. "Hey, you got a minute?"

Alec took off his tiny reading glasses and threw them on the desk. "Sure, what's up?"

Taking a seat in front of his brother's desk, Dimitri looked around. "I was just wondering whether the department had any openings. I need something to keep me busy."

Running his fingers through his hair, Alec leaned back in his chair. "I'm not sure. I can go in and ask Logan, he's the department head." Alec stood and walked to the connecting office door. He knocked before entering and then closed the door behind him.

Dimitri took the opportunity to look around. He stood and walked over to the bookcase, seeing if his brother had anything new. Next, he studied the items in the small display case Alec had set up in the corner of the room. Looking at the ancient artefacts brought back to mind Greece, which threatened to overwhelm him.

"Dammit, you need to get over this," he said to himself. He knew he couldn't give up the work he loved just because everything he saw reminded him of Greece and therefore Basil.

"Dimitri," Alec called his name from Logan's office doorway, "would you like to come in and meet Dr. Phillips?"

Demitri nodded and went next door. The man standing behind the desk was definitely not what he expected. Despite the steel grey hair, Logan appeared to be no older than mid-forties. His tall sinewy body bronzed by the sun, Logan was hot. Demitri offered his hand, and looked into Logan's cobalt blue eyes. "Nice to meet you, Dr. Phillips."

"Likewise, and call me Logan." Demitri was impressed by the firm grip. It was evident that he was a hands on archaeologist, not one of those prissy guys who sat under the tent awning and barked orders. That impressed Demitri even more than his good looks.

"I heard you just returned from Egypt," Demitri said, taking the chair that was offered.

"Yes, I had a wonderful time. Your brother tells me you do most of your work in Greece."

Instead of sitting down behind his desk, Logan took the chair next to Demitri, who looked toward Alec, wondering what he'd told Logan. Alec smiled and motioned toward the door. "I've got to get to a class. I'll leave you two to talk." Alec winked and left.

What the hell was that about? He returned his attention to Logan. He wasn't sure how to answer his question about Greece, but if he was going to beg for a job he felt he needed to be upfront. "I've done quite a few digs there, but can I be honest with you?" At Logan's smile and nod, he continued. "I haven't been on an actual dig in quite a few years. My family doesn't know that however. I've been spending my school breaks there for another reason. I ... uh ... was helping a friend through a rather long illness."

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Logan's hand landed on his knee as he looked into Demitri's eyes. "I'm sorry to hear that. Is your *friend* better?"

Swallowing around the newly formed lump, Demitri shook his head. "He passed away."

He could see the genuine sympathy in Logan's face. "Yes, I know how it feels to have someone you care for die. I'm sorry."

"Thank you." Logan removed his hand and Demitri shifted in his chair. "I've left my position at NYU and decided to move here. I was wondering whether there were any openings available now or in the near future."

Scratching his jaw, Logan nodded slowly. "I'm curious as to why a man who graduated with a Doctorate from Princeton and taught at NYU would be interested in North Central Idaho? You could probably get a job almost anywhere, why here?"

Demitri shrugged, "I needed a slower pace. I want to settle down, buy a house, and get to know my brother again. Money is nice, but it can't buy the things that matter the most. I, unfortunately, had to find that out the hard way."

"Well, we've got a part-time position opening in January, but it will only be a couple of classes a week. If you fill those classes, the university might look into expanding them, thus giving you a full-time position next year." Logan templed his fingers and rested them on his chin. "Interested?"

Even though the hair on the back of his neck stood at the way Logan asked, Demitri nodded. "Thank you. I appreciate it."

"Would you like to go get a sandwich?" Logan asked, looking at his watch.

"Uh ... sure," Dimitri replied.

"Excellent, just let me finish a few things up for my next class. I should be ready by eleven."

Standing, Dimitri shook Logan's hand once again. "I'll walk around a bit and meet you outside the building."

"Sound's good," Logan said and sat back down at his desk.

Dimitri felt as though he was being dismissed by a school principal. He walked out of Logan's office, passing Alec's on the way. Stepping out into the crisp fall day, Dimitri decided to go by the athletic department and see if Julian was busy.

Strolling among the students he felt at ease. He loved academia, being surrounded by minds with a thirst for knowledge. Dimitri chuckled to himself, well, most minds. Some, he knew, had a thirst for things other than learning, but college was the place to get that too.

Walking into the weight room, he was surprised to find Aaron talking to Julian. Dimitri hung back, waiting for an acknowledgement before breaking into their discussion. Several minutes later, Julian waived him over.

"Hey, D, what brings you here?"

"I was just talking to Dr. Phillips about a part-time teaching position. We're going to lunch, but he had a few things to take care of, so I thought I'd stop by and say hi."

"Logan?" Aaron asked, suddenly looking uncomfortable.

"Yeah? Why?"

Aaron looked at Julian before looking back at him. "He's got a reputation, but I'm sure there's nothing to worry about."

"What are you talking about?" Demitri crossed his arms, noticing the way Aaron's eyes lit up at the movement.

Aaron looked over at Julian. Picking up his water bottle, Julian took a drink before answering. "They say he tries to *charm* all of his assistants. He's known around campus as quite the man's man, if you know what I mean."

"Are you saying he invited me to lunch because he's attracted to me?"

"Who wouldn't be," Aaron snorted. He seemed to realise what he'd said and turned a delightful shade of red.

"I'll just have to let him know I'm not looking for a relationship." *He wasn't, was he?*

"Oh, that would be like waving a red cape in front of a bull. The bigger the challenge and all." Aaron's face fell just a little. Demitri could tell this whole conversation was bothering him. Logan was hot, but he didn't bring out the lust in him the way Aaron did. No, if he was going to start something with anyone any time soon, it would definitely be Aaron.

"Don't worry." Demitri smiled and flexed his muscles. "I can take care of myself." Aaron's eyes rounded and Demitri couldn't help but notice the growing erection tucked inside Aaron's sweats. Damn.

Julian clapped him on the back. "Yeah, Mr. Muscles, just make sure you don't lose the job."

"If that's what it takes to get it, I'm not interested," he said truthfully. Looking at his watch he saw it was time to go.

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"I'm gonna be late if I don't get back." He winked at Aaron.  
"Don't worry, my virtue is safe."

Aaron tried to smile, but the action didn't quite reach his eyes. God help him, but Demitri had the urge to pull the smaller man into his arms and soothe that lost look. "We're still on for Thursday, right?"

"Yeah," Aaron said, "I'll call you tonight after I get home from the game."

"Look forward to it." He smiled and walked out of the weight room. He was halfway across campus before he realised, he really was looking forward to talking with Aaron. First though, he had to get through lunch with Logan. After the information he'd just received he was beginning to feel a little leery of him.

\* \* \* \*

So far, lunch was going well. They'd stuck to discussing the classes he'd be teaching and Demitri was getting excited about being back in the lecture hall again. That was, until he felt a foot brush up the inside of his calf. Demitri tried to subtly move his legs out of the way, but Logan found them again and repeated the action.

Logan looked at him with heavy-lidded eyes. "Have dinner with me tonight."

Shit, would he lose the job before he'd even signed the contract? "Thanks for the invitation but I'm not interested in dating right now." He was surprised that a vision of Aaron flashed through his mind.

"Maybe we don't have to date. You could just come over and we could..." Logan wiggled his brows and Demitri got the hint.

"No thanks. I've found that sex for sex sake is unsatisfying to me these days."

Logan reached out and stroked the top of Demitri's hand where it held his beer mug. "Pity. I've found a good *fuck* rejuvenates me." He drew his hand back and winked. "I hope you'll keep that in mind for future reference. It won't be the last time I make a play. You're one of the finest looking men I've come across in some time."

"Thank you, but no, I'm not interested." *Please let him escape this uncomfortable situation with his job intact.*

"Didn't you mention you had a class this afternoon?"

"Yes," Logan looked at his expensive watch, "and it's time to get back."

Demitri dug his wallet out of his back pocket and put money on the table. "No, please," Logan said. "This is my treat."

"That's okay, I like to pay my own way in life," Demitri answered.

\* \* \* \*

It was almost time for the news when the phone rang. He couldn't believe he'd been eager for Aaron's call. Stretched out on the couch wearing only a pair of boxer-briefs, Demitri answered on the second ring. "Hello?"

"Hi, sorry it's late. We had trouble with the team van on the drive home."

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"That's okay. I was just laying here on the couch. So tell me. Did you win?"

"Yeah, but it's not gonna help us reach the play-offs. The teams we were in contention with also won."

"At least you won," Demitri closed his eyes and focused on Aaron's voice, so soft and smooth.

"Yeah," Aaron sighed. "So tell me how your lunch with Logan went?"

"Just like you warned me it would." Demitri slipped his hand under the elastic band of his briefs and idly rubbed his growing erection.

"So ... uh ... what did you do?" Damn, Aaron sounded so cute when he asked.

"I told him I wasn't interested. That sex for sex sake didn't do it for me anymore."

"And?"

"He told me he finds that a good fuck rejuvenates him." Wrapping his fingers around his cock, Demitri began a slow stroke.

"Well there's nothing wrong with a good fuck, as long as both partners get out of it what they need. I'm with you though, my days of one-night stands are behind me."

Demitri could swear he heard a soft moan over the phone. Was Aaron doing the same thing he was doing? The thought excited him even more and he picked up the pace on his cock. "So the sports are about to come on."

"Are they? I don't even have the TV turned on. I just got home. I think I'll skip it for tonight. I'd much rather just talk for awhile."

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Getting frustrated with his underwear hampering his movements, Demitri released his cock and peeled them off. Slinging one leg over the back of the sofa, he took himself in hand again. "Okay, talk to me," Demitri knew his voice had dropped, he just hoped Aaron hadn't noticed.

"Uh..." Aaron panted. Yep, he was definitely doing the same thing Demitri was doing. He found it beyond erotic and ran his thumb over the slit of his cock, gathering enough pre-cum to lube himself. Aaron made a few more groans, and Demitri closed his eyes, picturing that beautiful sinewy body of his coming. He stroked faster, settling the phone between his head and shoulder so he could reach down and insert two fingers into his own ass. The stretch and pinch of pain was all he needed.

He let loose a grunt as his cum shot onto his stomach and chest, almost dropping the phone in the process. Aaron was talking when Demitri's mind began to function again.

"Demitri? You still there?"

"Yeah, sorry, I ... uh ... got distracted. What did you say?" He sat up and retrieved his underwear, and wiped himself clean.

"Um ... can I come over?" Aaron asked.

He almost screamed yes, but stopped himself at the last possible second. He needed to do some serious thinking before he embarked on a relationship. He'd told himself over and over that he'd never get close to someone again. He just didn't think his heart could take losing another man.

"Aaron," he sighed. "I think we both know what just happened, but I'm not ready. As we discussed earlier, neither

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of us is looking for a fast, no-strings fuck, and I need to do some soul-searching before I enter into anything."

"Can I ask you one more question?"

"Sure, I can't guarantee I'll answer it though."

"If you were to try again, would it be with me?"

"Definitely."

"Okay, I'll give you some time then. I really like you, so I can't pretend I don't, but I'll let you have your space. For now."

"Thanks. Are we still on for Thursday?"

"Definitely."

## Chapter Three

Standing beside Koby, Demitri watched as Liam flew down the field past the opposing teams defence to kick for the winning goal. As if in slow motion they watched the goalie catch the ball in mid-air, just as the ref blew for full time. The disappointment of the fans was heard in the silence that followed.

Koby looked up at Demitri, "Oh shit, Liam's screwed."

"I know he'll be disappointed but hardly screwed." Demitri said, watching Aaron wrap an arm around Liam's neck as they walked off the field talking. He couldn't help the spike of jealousy that wove its way threw him.

"No, I don't mean that. I mean once he gets back to the dorm. I've heard some of the other guys have been giving him a hard time. This is just going to fuel the fire."

"What're they giving him a hard time about?" Demitri started walking toward the athletic building with Koby at his side.

"He lives in the jock dorm. He's openly gay, so needless to say, most of the guys don't want him around."

Demitri stopped and turned toward Koby. "Does Aaron know he's having trouble?"

Koby smiled, "I don't know, why don't you ask him on your date tonight?"

Scowling, Demitri narrowed his eyes. "It's not a date, we're just going out for a bite to eat, and who told you anyway?"

"Julian. I guess Aaron must've mentioned it, and I don't care what *you* call it, it's a date when two people who have the hots for each other go out."

Demitri cuffed Koby on the back of the head. "Watch the way you talk about your elders."

"Okay, Grandpa," Koby chuckled. "I wonder if Julian's about done with his meeting."

They opened the door and walked through the weight room to Julian's office. He was sitting with his feet on the desk shooting the shit with Justin. Koby looked over his shoulder at Demitri. "Looks like they're working hard, doesn't it?"

"This is some meeting you've got going on." He walked over and sat on the edge of Julian's desk.

"Oh, we got done about twenty minutes ago, but I figured you'd wanna watch the end of the game. Justin's been keeping me company. Luc's working in the city today so he won't be home until late."

"You guys want to go out to dinner with me and Aaron?" Demitri pleaded with them.

Julian looked at him for several seconds. "Why, you afraid of being alone with him? I can assure you, you'd take him easily in a fight. He's all legs."

Yeah, he'd noticed. Aaron's legs were phenomenal. "I just thought it might be a little less awkward if we all went out as friends," Demitri said, sticking his hands in his pockets to keep from fidgeting. He'd thought all week about dinner and what it could possibly mean. After their actions over the phone the other night, Demitri had talked himself into

opening up a little, maybe seeing where this thing would go before he got all freaked out. As the time got closer to their date though, the nerves were setting in.

Finally taking his feet off the desk, Julian picked up the phone and dialed. "Hey, you about done?"

Demitri looked around the tiny office, anything to keep from looking at the faces of his new friends. He was ashamed of the way he was acting, but it was self-preservation on his part.

"Sounds good." Julian hung up and looked at Demitri with a grin. "He'll meet us in the parking lot in five." Standing, Julian leaned over and gave Koby a quick kiss. "You need anything from your locker?"

"No, I put my bag in the truck after practice." Koby wrapped his arms around Julian's waist. "They lost by the way."

"Oh shit, I didn't even think to ask. Good thing you told me so I didn't stick my foot in my mouth with Aaron."

"Yeah, Liam missed the last goal."

"Ouch. That means he's going to be grumpy if he shows up for training in the morning."

"I thought this was the last game? Why would he still need training?" Demitri asked as Justin locked up.

"He asked if I'd work with him all year-round. The trainer for the rest of the soccer team treats him like a piece of shit." Demitri gave him a questioning look. "He's gay. Evidently Rudy thinks it'll rub off or Liam will come on to him. Doesn't matter, I like the kid. He's quiet and he works hard."

"Hasn't Liam told Aaron about the way Rudy treats him?"

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"Yeah, and Aaron's trying to get him fired, but Rudy's got connections with the Alumni Association, so in the meantime, Liam comes over here."

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Aaron walking toward them. He still wore his grey coach's shorts and red sports shirt. Demitri couldn't help but notice the shapely muscled legs. Mmm, mmm, mmm. The thought of running his tongue up those strong calves, had his cock twitching behind his fly.

"You guys ready?" Aaron asked digging his keys out of his pocket.

"Yeah, where are we going?" Justin asked, walking toward his truck.

"Grog and Galley?" Aaron offered.

"Cool, see you all there." Justin climbed into his truck, Koby and Julian getting into the passenger's side. Because he lived so close, Demitri hadn't thought things through enough and he walked over. Looking at Aaron, he cleared his throat. "Mind if I ride with you? I walked."

"Not at all," Aaron said motioning toward his Jeep Wrangler.

He followed Aaron to the dark grey vehicle. He bet it was a lot of fun to ride with the top off. He could just picture himself beside Aaron as they drove down the winding roads outside of town. Shaking his head, Demitri climbed in. "Sorry about the game," he said putting his seatbelt on.

"Yeah it sucked," Aaron said starting the jeep. "Not much you can do about it though. Everyone tried their best."

They made small talk on their way to the marina outside of town. Pulling into the Grog and Galley, Aaron parked next to

Justin. Before getting out, he reached across and touched Dimitri's arm. "You okay?"

"Sure," he said, and realised that yes, he really did feel okay.

Aaron smiled and released his arm. "Come on," he got out and waited for Dimitri to join him before walking into the restaurant. This was the best place around for surf and turf but it was a little pricier than the places in town.

Reaching the table, Dimitri found two seats open, side by side of course. He looked around the table at his friends and rolled his eyes. Talk about making their wishes obvious.

"Sorry to hear about the game," Justin said.

"It's okay, we'll do better next year," Aaron said after ordering a beer.

"Koby mentioned something to me about Liam having trouble in the dorm. Do you know anything about it?" Dimitri asked Aaron.

Aaron looked over at Koby, and shook his head. "I keep asking him what's going on but he won't talk to me. I'd started to think it was the way Rudy was treating him. That's why I asked Julian to work him out instead." Aaron rubbed his forehead and looked at Koby. "Do you know what's going on? I can't help him if I don't know."

Koby took a drink of his iced tea and cleared his throat. "I've seen him with a black eye a time or two and he's mentioned being an outsider in the dorm."

"Because he's gay," Aaron surmised and nodded his head slowly.

"Yep. I thought about talking to Bear about him."

"Bear?" Aaron asked, with raised eyebrows.

"He's kind of my team bodyguard. A nicer guy you'd never meet. He's about six feet four inches, two hundred-ninety pounds of solid muscle. I'm not sure if he lives in the same dorm though. I'll have to ask him tomorrow at practice."

"Please do, I don't like the thought of anyone, let alone one of my favourite players, being harassed. And if you get a chance, would you tell him he can talk to me, that I'd understand."

Koby nodded. The waitress came over and took their order. They also ordered another round of beers, except Koby who was still underage.

Several times during dinner, Dimitri felt the quick brush of Aaron's thigh against his own. It wasn't purposeful, but Dimitri's body sparked each time. By the end of the meal, his cock was hard and aching.

As the rest of the table laughed and told stories, Dimitri thought about Aaron and Basil. He didn't want to go through the pain of losing someone again, but he was so fucking lonely.

"Dimitri?" Aaron asked.

Looking up from his empty plate, he realised the entire table was standing except him.

"Ready?" Aaron motioned toward the door.

"Yeah, sorry." Dimitri pulled out his wallet and left a couple of bills on the table. He saw the concern on Aaron's face as Aaron stepped back to allow him to lead them out.

After saying their goodbyes, they climbed into the jeep and headed back toward town. "You sure you're all right?"

Leaning back against the head-rest, Demitri looked out the side window. "Just wrestling with myself. I'll figure it out."

Aaron reached over and took his hand. Demitri closed his eyes at the flood of emotion that the gesture created. He'd been so long without someone actually trying to take care of him, trying to make him feel better. He turned his hand over and threaded his fingers through Aaron's. "I've been sad for so long, I don't know what it's like to feel happy, but being with you..." He stopped talking before he said something he couldn't take back.

They drove the rest of the way to town in silence, still clutching each other's hand. "Would you like to come over?" Aaron asked as he broke contact to shift into a lower gear.

"Yes, but no, I think it would be best for me to go on home."

Aaron didn't say anything, merely nodded and turned toward his small apartment. Pulling up, Aaron put the jeep in neutral. "I enjoyed myself."

Looking into Aaron's eyes, Demitri nodded. "Yeah, me too." He reached over and stroked Aaron's cheek. "Thank you." God, he wanted to kiss him so bad. He started to lean toward those soft-looking lips but stopped himself. Opening the door he quickly got out. "I'll talk to you later." He shut the door and went inside.

\* \* \* \*

Aaron put the jeep in gear as he watched Demitri disappear into the building. "Fuck," he said, slamming his fist

against the dash. He'd finally found a genuinely nice guy, and he realised he was going to have to fight a ghost to get him.

Pulling away from the curb, he drove toward home. Well, his house anyway. It had never felt like a home. He bought the small brick ranch-style house when he'd first moved to town three years ago and he still had stuff in boxes out in the garage.

All he'd wanted after his brief stint in Major League Soccer had ended was to move somewhere quiet and meet someone special. Well, so far he'd taken up with nothing but losers. His last relationship had ended with him receiving two black eyes and a broken nose.

Demitri was different though, he could feel it. Now all he had to do was convince the sullen man to give him a chance.

He pulled into his driveway and looked at the house. He hadn't even planted flowers in the window boxes since that first year. Shaking his head, he got out and went inside.

After a quick shower, he began turning out the lights, preparing for bed. A loud knock on the door surprised the hell out of him making him jump. Looking through the peep hole, he saw Demitri. "What the...?"

He opened the door and looked at him. Demitri's black curly hair was in total disarray like he'd worried it to death with his fingers. Before Aaron could say a word, Demitri held up his hand to stop him.

"I just need to know one thing, and then I'll leave." Without waiting for a reply, Demitri pulled him into his arms and kissed him. The kiss was a lot shorter than he'd wanted, but more erotic than any kiss he'd ever experienced. Demitri's

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tongue swept the inside of his mouth like he was looking for answers.

All too soon, he pulled back, and nodded once, "Thank you." He turned and walked back down the sidewalk, leaving Aaron stunned.

## Chapter Four

A week later Aaron sat in front of the kitchen window drinking a cup of hot chocolate. The snow had begun to fall two days earlier and hadn't let up. It had come on so suddenly he hadn't even had time to winterise the house.

With the season over, he'd taken the last couple of days off work. No need to drive to campus when he couldn't do much there anyway. He'd even called several new recruits for next year's season, but mostly he'd thought about Demitri and that kiss, that one awesome kiss. Running his fingertips over his lips he blushed even though he was alone. Jesus, he was acting like a virgin, not a thirty-two year old man who had been up and down the field plenty of times.

The phone on the kitchen wall rang, startling him out of his daydream. Tipping his chair back on two legs, he stretched and picked up the receiver. "Hello?"

"Hi."

"Demitri," he whispered, "how've you been?"

"Miserable. Look, I was wondering if you'd let me come over and make a big pot of chilli. I thought maybe we could watch a movie or something."

"Sounds great, except for one thing, have you seen the weather outside?"

"Hell yes, I've been running around in it for the past hour. I'm sitting outside in your driveway."

Taking the cordless phone with him, Aaron walked to the front window and looked at the big, Red SUV. "Get your butt in here before you freeze to death."

"Thanks, I'd love to," Dimitri said, hanging up.

Aaron watched as Dimitri opened his door and fought the blowing snow while carrying in grocery bags. He probably should have gone out to help, but it was cold and after he'd been left for a week to think about that kiss, he thought Dimitri deserved to suffer a bit.

Watching him stomp the snow off his jeans on the front porch, Aaron decided it was time to show him mercy, and he opened the door. "Come on in," he said stepping back. Taking the bags from Dimitri, Aaron walked through to the kitchen while Dimitri took off his boots.

After setting the bags on the counter, he went to the linen closet and extracted a fluffy blue towel. Coming around the corner he saw Dimitri standing beside the door looking a little lost and a lot nervous.

"Here," he said, handing over the towel.

"Thanks." Dimitri dried his shaggy black curls before swiping his face and hands. "I hope you don't mind me popping over like this. I'm not used to the isolation that snow brings, too much time to think, too many things to think about."

Looking at him, Aaron could see the loneliness in his eyes. In the lines of his face, which were too deep and drawn for a thirty-four-year old man. He took a deep breath and restrained himself from moving in for another one of those kisses. "The kitchen's this way."

He turned and hoped Demitri would follow. "I just made a pan of hot chocolate. Would you care for a cup?" he asked turning toward Demitri.

Aaron received his first smile of the day. As handsome as Demitri was, he was devastating when he smiled. "I'd like that." Damn those teeth were white against that olive skin.

Nodding, Aaron walked over to the cupboard and got down another cup before turning the burner back on. "I'll need to reheat it." He stirred the creamy brown liquid, trying to figure out what Demitri's presence meant.

"Aaron," Demitri said, coming to stand beside him. "I like you, but I need to ease into this thing between us. I thought we could try getting to know each other. See if we're comfortable just hanging out before all the physical stuff happens."

Taking the pan off the burner, he filled Demitri's cup before reaching for his own. Dumping the now cold drink into the sink, he poured the remainder into the 'Coach of the Year' mug he always used. All the while he was thinking. Could he be around this man without touching and kissing him? Well he knew he could, but did he want to?

Gesturing toward the kitchen table, Aaron took a seat and waited for Demitri to settle in. "I can't promise I won't try to kiss you. I mean, I'll try not to, but you have to understand I'll always want to."

Looking out at the falling snow, Demitri nodded. "As long as you understand there will be times I'll let you and times I won't." Demitri sighed and shook his head. "See that's my

problem. I do want you to, but I'm so damn afraid of falling for you."

Taking a chance, Aaron reached across the table and covered Dimitri's hand. "Who taught you that being in love was such a bad thing?"

"No one. I've never been *in* love. I loved Basil with all my heart, but we weren't lovers."

Aaron gripped Dimitri's hand. They weren't lovers? "What? I don't understand. I thought that was the reason you were holding yourself back?"

Pulling his hand back from Aaron's, Dimitri ran his fingers through his hair. "I've never talked about this."

Standing, Aaron went to the fridge and grabbed a couple of beers. "Come on into the living room and drink a beer with me. I think we're both going to need it."

\* \* \* \*

Following Aaron into the living room, Dimitri once again questioned himself. He wasn't sure how much of his story to tell, and he sure as shit wasn't looking for sympathy from Aaron.

When Aaron settled on the sofa, Dimitri decided to play it safe and sat in the wide leather chair. He moved around, finding the chair incredibly comfortable. Which prompted him to wonder why such a small man would need such a big chair?

"Nice isn't it?" Aaron asked handing him a beer.

"Yeah, it's great."

"I like to curl up in it at times and nap. I tend to feel comforted sleeping in a confined space." Aaron's cheeks pinked a little, "Makes me feel not quite so alone."

The statement prompted his hand to stroke the soft leather arm of the chair. Silently thanking it for comforting Aaron. Deciding he couldn't put off this conversation any longer, he took a deep breath and began. "I met Basil at Princeton, my sophomore year, and began running around in the same circle of friends. After graduation, he went back to Greece and I continued my education, eventually getting my doctorate. For several summers after I finally graduated, I went to Greece to work on research or excavations. I always hooked up with Basil for a couple of weeks before and after I started my summer job. He'd take me out with his group of friends and we'd party like no ones business. Basil was extremely wealthy so he had a large entourage of friends back then. He didn't find out until he got sick that they weren't friends at all, but leaches. As soon as the partying stopped, they abandoned him. I was back in the states teaching at NYU when I got word of his cancer. I called several times, but he never wanted to talk. The following summer, I went to Greece with one goal in mind, to get Basil to talk to me. When I showed up at his house I didn't recognise the man he'd become. It wasn't the cancer eating away at him that made him different, but the utter isolation and loneliness. You see, he was one of the rare cases of male breast cancer, and he felt nothing but shame. He was raised to be a manly Greek man. The fact that he was gay was hard enough for him to come to terms with, but the addition of

that type of cancer seemed to crush him. Without asking his permission, I just moved myself in that same day. I stayed the summer and then had to return for the next school term, but every break for the next eight years, I went to stay with him."

Stopping, he looked up at Aaron and took a long pull off his beer. "Basil went through chemotherapy and radiation and we really thought he'd beaten it. Until a year later when the doctors discovered the cancer had moved to his bones. More chemo and radiation followed and he even came to the States for treatment. For years he lived in pain. I watched my best friend slowly deteriorate before my eyes."

Demitri shook his head and wiped the moisture from his eyes with the bottom of his T-shirt. "I never want to go through that again." He looked back over at Aaron who had scooted to the edge of the sofa. It was easy to tell Aaron was holding himself back from offering him physical comfort. It was in the clenched hands and jaw. "That's why I'm afraid. I promised myself on the day of Basil's death that I would never love someone that deeply again. And since then, I've kept that promise. I've pulled away a little from my family and friends, never sharing too much, just being."

"But are you happy?" Aaron asked in a soft voice.

"Happy? Of course not, but I'm safe." He watched as Aaron started to lean toward him, and he stood. "Is it okay if I start the chilli? I picked up a couple of movies, too."

Aaron looked at him for several seconds before nodding. "I'll show you where everything is."

\* \* \* \*

Two big bowls of chilli and an action movie later, Aaron awoke sprawled on the couch, and looked over at a still sleeping Dimitri. He looked good in that chair. With his head tilted to the side a small amount of drool was slowly escaping his separated lips.

The sight made him smile. For a big gorgeous Greek, he thought Dimitri was probably one of the loneliest, most vulnerable men he'd ever known. He'd never really had anyone close to him die. Both his parents were alive and well, living in Indiana. Grammy and Pappy Billings were both still alive, as well, and his mom's folks had both died before he was old enough to really mourn them. What would it be like? Would it change him, like it had obviously changed Dimitri?

Earlier, he longed to sit in his lap and comfort him with kisses, but he'd held himself in check. The last thing he wanted was to scare Dimitri away before he was given a chance to show him that happiness can be a wonderful thing.

Looking at the clock, he saw that it was almost six. Picking up the two empty chilli bowls, he went to the kitchen and rinsed them before putting them in the dishwasher. Turning the chilli pot on low, he gave it a quick stir, before making two tall glasses of iced tea.

Setting Dimitri's glass on the table beside his chair, he couldn't resist bending over and placing a kiss on the man's forehead. Dimitri started to stir and Aaron quickly went back to his perch on the couch.

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Wiping the side of his mouth, Dimitri opened his eyes and looked at him. Aaron couldn't tell whether he knew about the kiss or not so he decided not to bring it up.

"I'm reheating the chilli, and I brought you something else to drink."

"Thanks," Dimitri said, sitting up in the chair.

"News?" he asked, holding up the remote.

"Sure, lets see how much longer this snow is going to last."

Chuckling, Aaron shook his head. "It's Idaho. I'd say it'll pretty much last until April."

Picking up his tea, Dimitri moaned. "Maybe coming here wasn't such a good idea after all."

Ouch. Did that mean Dimitri was thinking about leaving? The mere thought felt like a fist squeezing his heart. His face must have shown his internal reaction to the statement because Dimitri reached out and took his hand. Looking him in the eyes, Dimitri raised it to his mouth and kissed Aaron's palm.

"I'm sorry, that didn't quite come out the way I'd intended. I didn't mean coming here to your house. I meant moving to Idaho."

Aaron tried to smile, "Its okay." He stood and pulled up his jeans which were forever threatening to slide down his narrow hips. "I'm going to go check on dinner." He turned and walked back into the kitchen. Giving the pot a stir, he determined the chilli was warm enough. Turning off the burner, he heard Dimitri come into the room. "It's hot. Go ahead and sit down and I'll bring you a bowl."

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He was surprised when two strong arms wrapped around his waist, but not as surprised as when Demitri's lips pressed against his neck. He didn't know what to do. If he turned around and kissed Demitri back, would he scare him off, cause him to shut down again? Instead, he decided to stay as still as he could and let Demitri take the lead.

After a few more kisses, Demitri let out a groan and released him. Aaron closed his eyes and tried to be happy he got what he had. He waited a few moments before getting two more bowls out of the cabinet.

With the bowls full, he had no more excuses for not sitting down at the table with Demitri. Trying to seem calm, he took several bites of his chilli. "This is really good."

"Thanks." Demitri's hand came across the table and wrapped around his. "Why are you shaking?"

Releasing his spoon, Aaron bowed his head. "You excite me," he confessed.

## Chapter Five

Half-way through the comedy he'd rented Demitri looked over at Aaron. Curled in the corner of the sofa, he looked ... sad, alone? Knowing he put that look on Aaron's face tore at his restraint. He'd spent all day trying to talk himself out of what he really wanted, but he still wanted it.

"Would you like to sit with me?" He opened his arms and waited.

After looking at him for several moments, Aaron stood and walked over to the chair. "Think real hard about what you're asking."

"Believe me, I've done nothing but think. The only thing I know for sure is if I don't hold you in my arms, I might as well go back to New York tonight, because as long as we're in the same town, I'll want you. Now, please." Demitri beckoned with his arms. He was uneasy, fearing he'd held out too long.

Aaron studied him for several more seconds before climbing into his lap. Turning sideways, Aaron curled into his arms like he'd always belonged there. Burying his face in the smaller man's neck, he sighed. "Thank you."

"Can I kiss you?" Aaron asked.

"Please," he whispered, tilting his head up. Aaron's soft lips skimmed over his a few times before settling against his mouth. The electricity created by the touch of their tongues could have lit up New York City for a month. With a groan, Demitri closed his eyes and tangled his fingers in Aaron's hair, drawing him closer.

Shit, he realised, after this, he knew he could never go back. He felt more alive at this moment than he ever had. Dimitri realised he'd never been truly happy, even before Basil had become ill. His had been a lifetime of pretending to fit in, of doing the right thing, and he had done the right thing with Basil. But now, he was alive.

Aaron shifted on his lap to straddle his thighs, rubbing his groin against Dimitri's hungry cock. God, so long, it had been forever since he'd felt anything this good. The taste of chilli and beer was strong as he swept his tongue across Aaron's.

"Need you," Aaron panted, sliding against his cock.

Pausing for a moment to make sure it was the right step, he nodded. "Yeah, want you, too."

They hastily went to work on each other's clothes, pulling and unzipping. Naked, Aaron wrapped himself around Dimitri, licking his face and neck. When Aaron started to move his ass back and forth across Dimitri's shaft, he thought he'd lose it. "Not going to make it in you," Dimitri moaned.

"We have time, just feel." Aaron pinched his sensitive nipples as he picked up the pace.

Oh fuck, he felt like his head was going to explode. He looked into those beautiful golden eyes of Aaron's and let himself go. "Aaron," he howled as he shot his heat between them.

"Right here with you," Aaron grunted as his seed mixed with Dimitri's.

A wave of protection overwhelmed him, and he drew Aaron against his chest. Kissing the soft honeyed hair, he began

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worrying again. He felt Aaron stiffen and lean away enough to look at him. "Don't."

"Huh?"

"Don't pull away again. Just give us a chance."

Looking away he sighed. God he wanted that, but the thought of getting hurt...

"Demitri, please, just look at me." When his eyes wandered back to his gold beauties, Aaron continued. "I can't promise I'm not going to die, but you can't live your life being afraid all the time. Sometimes you have to live in the here and now, and I'm here, now. Please don't throw it away. I'll go get a physical, every blood test available if that'll set your mind at ease."

How damaged was he that the thought of Aaron proving his good health made him feel better? His feelings must have been transparent because Aaron nodded. "First thing in the morning I'll make an appointment."

Rubbing his hands over the smooth skin of Aaron's spine he closed his eyes and nodded. "Thank you. I've had two physicals since I've been in town. The doctor's starting to think I'm paranoid."

Aaron leaned in and kissed him. "You are, but I think it's understandable. If it takes a piece of paper to prove that I've no plans to leave, then I'm more than willing to do it."

Yawning, Aaron blushed and covered his mouth. Demitri kissed his forehead. "I should get out of here and let you get some sleep."

"Or, you could refrain from going out in that blizzard and stay the night?"

"You don't mind?" Demitri asked. He'd wanted to spend the night, but he didn't feel right about asking since he didn't know whether he'd be able to make love to Aaron.

Kissing him once more, Aaron climbed off his lap and looked down at the sticky mess on his skin. "Come on." He pulled Demitri up. "Let's get a quick shower before bed."

Demitri held Aaron's hand as they locked up and turned everything off. Walking into the bedroom, he looked around. The room was decorated in a mishmash of old and new, no theme whatsoever, and he was surprised how comfortable he felt. "Great room."

Aaron looked at him like he was crazy. "Are you kidding? It's crap. I've never cared anything about pictures on the walls or matching drapes and bedspreads. It's just ... me."

Demitri tugged on his hand and brought Aaron against him. "I think that's why I like it." He bent slightly and kissed him, pushing in to roam over Aaron's tongue and teeth. His cock started to ache as it seemed to throb against his lower stomach and he pulled back. "Let's get that shower."

\* \* \* \*

Stepping under the warm spray, he reached for the soap before turning toward Demitri. He looked at the wide expanse of muscles and swallowed. Oh shit, it was finally real. The soap was spun in his hands getting them nice and slick before he ran them over Demitri's chest. "You look bigger without clothes," he said as he circled the dark brown discs in front of him. They immediately pebbled and he smiled. It was nice to know he wasn't the only one affected.

Demitri took the soap and lathered Aaron's back. "And you're even more perfect without them." He ran his hands down to Aaron's ass. He knew he didn't have nearly the muscle mass Demitri had, but he did have excellent definition. Although his body was lean, he worked out everyday with his players and this was the first time in ages someone noticed.

He felt a finger slide down the crack of his ass and moaned. When Demitri applied pressure to his pucker, Aaron couldn't help himself and lifted his leg to rest on the tiled wall. "Feels so good," he panted as he tilted his head up for a kiss.

The finger in question applied even more pressure until it pushed inside. "Oh fuck you're hot," Demitri whispered against his lips.

Aaron suddenly realised something. "Damn. I didn't bring any protection with me."

Moving his finger in and out of Aaron's body, Demitri groaned. "I'll get you clean and ready in here before I take you back to bed."

"Okay, but you're going to have to wash me one handed because that finger stays where it is." He started moving, feeling like he would come on the spot when Demitri slipped in another finger.

Finding the soap again, Aaron went to work on Demitri's cock. "Perfection," he said in awe as he got his first real look at Demitri. Long and thick, Demitri's cock stood proud out of a nest of closely shorn black hair. "I want to taste you."

A deep chuckle rose out of Demitri's throat. "If you do that, not only will I have to take my fingers out of their happy home, but I'll come down your throat instead of in your ass."

"Oh, yeah, right, okay, continue." He was almost incoherent with lust, riding those long thick fingers.

Demitri picked him up with one arm and Aaron wrapped both legs around his waist. The water was turned off and Demitri stepped carefully out of the tub, still fingering his hole. "Grab a towel and give us both a quick dry," he growled in Aaron's ear.

A towel was grabbed and swiped across their bodies before Demitri carried him to bed. Following him down, Demitri withdrew and wiped his hands on the now damp towel.

"Where's the rubbers? I need in, now."

Shit, he hoped they were still good. He dug in the bedside drawer and came up with three. The expiration was a little iffy but since Demitri was such a stickler about getting tested, he knew he would be safe regardless.

Opening one of the packets, he couldn't help teasing the thick cock in front him. Running his tongue up the heavily veined length, Aaron dipped the tip of his tongue into the slit. Demitri grunted and Aaron smiled to himself. Nipping the soft ridge around the crown, he was rewarded when a drop of pre-come slid over the tip and onto his tongue. Moaning at the intense flavour he looked up into Demitri's eyes. He could tell Demitri was at the end of his rope, so with one last good lick and suck he smoothed on the condom. Back into the drawer, he pulled out a tube of lube and handed it to his lover. "Slick me up?"

"With pleasure," Dimitri said as he took the lube and squirted some on his fingers.

He was once again pulled into Dimitri's embrace as his ass and his lips were attacked with a passionate need that seemed to surprise them both. "Now," he panted, climbing on top of Dimitri.

Aaron planted his feet on the bed on either side of Dimitri's hips. As Dimitri held his cock by its base, Aaron impaled himself an inch at a time, relishing in the slight burn as he lowered himself. "Oh fuck," he moaned. The stretch was incredible and he wondered if he'd ever been so full. When he felt Dimitri's heavy sac under his ass, he swivelled his hips and delighted in Dimitri's quick intake of breath.

With his body in a squatting position, he began moving up and down on Dimitri's thick shaft. "Yes, oh Christ, yes."

Strong hands settled under his ass as Dimitri held him up. Looking into his lover's eyes, he saw the need. After a quick nod, Dimitri began thrusting up inside of him as fast as his hips would go. It still didn't seem enough, and Dimitri flipped him so he was on his back under the much bigger man. With his legs slung over Dimitri's broad shoulders, his lover pistoned in and out. Dimitri began rocking them both so Aaron's back came up off the bed. He was balancing himself on his shoulders as Dimitri stood on the bed and began ploughing downward into the depths of Aaron's ass. He cried out on every thrust as Dimitri pegged his prostate gland. Over and over the rubbing of his gland began to make him shake. It started to become too much and he almost pushed Dimitri away. How could too much pleasure be a bad thing?

He sighed and looked to where their bodies were joined. "So sexy," he panted. "You're gonna kill me."

"No, I'm gonna make you fly," Dimitri grunted as sweat began to drip off the ends of his hair and onto Aaron's chest.

Before he even had a chance to grab his cock, he felt his balls draw up close to his body. "Shit, gonna come," he warned, seconds before his chest and neck were painted with his seed.

"Beautiful," Dimitri growled as he buried himself as deep as he could get.

Even though he understood the reason for the condom, he wished he could have felt the splash of Dimitri's cum as it erupted inside of him. Later, he promised himself as he held on to a shaking Dimitri. He licked the sweat off Dimitri's neck as he untangled his body and pulled him down. Wishing he could tell Dimitri that he was falling in love, Aaron bit his tongue. He knew it would only drive him away this early in their relationship.

"Thank you," Dimitri said as he leaned up on his forearms to look him in the eyes. "You have no idea what you've done to me."

"What? Did I do something wrong?" He quickly searched for something, anything he could have done.

His worries were met with a passionate kiss. "That was the single best experience of my life. How can I keep my distance after something like that?"

Feeling overwhelmed with warmth, Aaron ran his fingers through Dimitri's sweaty curls. "You don't. You have faith

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that everything will work out for the best. Just let yourself be happy, Dem."

Demitri reached over and retrieved a tissue to dispose of the condom. After dropping it into the wastebasket, he picked up the towel and cleaned them both. When he brought Aaron back against his chest he sighed, "I am happy."

## Chapter Six

Over his breakfast the next day, the two of them laughed and talked about various things going on in their lives. Aaron knew he'd be having blood tests so he refrained from eating but eyed Demitri's bacon like it was a long thick cock.

They'd made love twice more, once in the middle of the night, and once earlier that morning. He smiled to himself. It got better every time which was hard for him to believe. Realising Aaron had asked him a question he blushed. "I'm sorry, I was thinking about making love to you."

"So soon? Damn, you're gonna wear me out," Aaron said, moving out of his chair to straddle Demitri's hips.

Pulling their bodies together, he moaned. "As much as I'd like to just take you back to bed, I can't. I've got another meeting with Logan at nine."

Aaron's eyes narrowed. "You won't let him steal you away from me, will you?"

"Absolutely not," he kissed Aaron's still swollen lips, "but I want this job. I'll just make it clear that I only want a working relationship with him."

"I'll follow you in. I need to make sure Rudy checked all the equipment in."

"Speaking of Rudy..."

"Yeah, I know, I need to sit him down and have a long talk with him. I hate what's being done to Liam."

Giving Aaron one last squeeze, he kissed him. "Dinner tonight?"

"And more," Aaron said, heavy lidded.

Standing with Aaron still on his lap, he let him slide to his feet. "I'll bring over hot dogs and fixings. Chilli dogs sound damn good."

"Sounds like a good plan."

\* \* \* \*

Walking into Logan's office, Demitri felt almost giddy. "Logan?"

Those dark blue eyes met his as Logan smiled. "Good to see you," he said standing.

They shook hands and Demitri took a seat in front of Logan's desk. "I'm a little early. I thought I'd bug my brother but he must be in class." He wasn't at all surprised when Logan came around the desk to sit in the chair beside him like he'd done the previous week.

"That's all right. We can visit a few minutes before the meeting officially gets underway. So tell me what do you think of all this snow?" Logan leaned back in his chair and stretched his legs out in front of him, crossing them at the ankles.

Demitri thought it a rather odd position for a meeting but he knew what Logan was up to when he rested his hands in his lap, drawing attention to the tented fabric.

Logan looked him in the eyes. "Interested in getting some ... lunch later?"

In a different time and place, he'd have been all over the man, but now it almost disgusted him. Knowing Logan was actually a nice guy, he decided to give it to him straight.

"Listen, I'm flattered, but I'm in a new relationship. Aaron Billings caught my eye right after I moved to town, but I've waited until recently to get involved." Demitri watched as the spark in those cobalt eyes dimmed.

"Pity." Sitting back up in his chair, Logan looked at the clock. He really was a devastatingly handsome man. "Shall we begin?" Logan asked and reached for a file on his desk.

\* \* \* \*

Walking carefully across the icy patches in the parking lot, Aaron made his way to the athletic department building. Shaking the snow from his coat and hair he stomped on the floor trying to get rid of all the excess from his boots.

"Coach Billings?"

Aaron turned to find a huge young man standing between him and his office. "Can I help you?"

"Yes, sir, I hope so. I'm Nate LaCroix, uh ... Bear. Koby told me to come and talk to you about Liam?"

"Oh, yes, I'm sorry." He extended his hand, shocked as it was completely swallowed by Bear's big paw. "Won't you come in?" He walked past Bear and unlocked his door. Flipping on the lights, he threw his gym bag in the corner and took off his coat before sitting behind his desk.

Bear took off his stocking cap but left his coat on as he sat in the chair in front of Aaron's desk. "I went to introduce myself to Liam after I talked to Koby the other day, but he wouldn't speak to me. I don't live in that dorm anymore, too much testosterone for me."

Aaron found that hard to believe. As big as Bear was, he imagined he had testosterone to spare. The real problem was, if Liam wouldn't talk to Bear and he wouldn't talk to him, who would he talk to? Before he got too far in his thinking Bear broke in.

"I went to see him earlier to try again and it looked like he'd been roughed up pretty bad. He wouldn't let me into the room, but what I could see looked pretty swollen and bruised." Bear turned the hat around and around in his hands nervously.

Standing, Aaron put his coat back on. "I'm going over. Would you like to come?"

"Yes, sir. I can't stand it when small fellas get picked on," Bear said, putting his hat back on over his completely bald head.

Deciding it would be better in the long run to be honest with Bear he stopped in the doorway. "Did Koby tell you why they're picking on Liam?"

"Yes, sir. Doesn't matter to me. A person's a person in my eyes."

Aaron reached out and clapped him on the shoulder. "You're my kind of guy, and please, call me Aaron."

Walking across campus was probably pretty brutal in that weather, but Aaron was too busy thinking about Liam to really notice. He couldn't believe someone would beat that sweet boy up just because he was gay. After stepping inside the lobby and taking off his coat, he turned to Bear. "What room's he in?"

"Four-Twenty-three," he replied, leading the way to the elevator.

On the ride up, Aaron chewed his lip and tried to think of what to do with Liam. "I wonder if it would help if I got him switched to another dorm."

"I doubt there are any rooms left right now. They might have an opening after semester though."

"Shit, I'll have to figure out something. I can't leave him here knowing he's not safe." He looked up at Bear. "Do a lot of gay kids have this problem?"

Bear was about to answer when the doors opened on the fourth floor. He stepped out and waited for Aaron to go first. With the big guy trailing behind him, he made his way to Liam's door and knocked.

"Go away," Liam yelled.

"Liam? It's Coach. Open up."

It took several minutes before Liam finally peeked out the door. "Something wrong, Coach?"

"Yeah, and we need to come in and talk to you about it."

It was then that Liam finally must have noticed Bear. "Sorry, I'm not feeling well. I'll stop by your office in a couple days when I'm better."

"Please, Liam, let us in. We just want to help."

Liam eyed him and then Bear. "You sure about that? He's about the same size as the one's who did this to me in the first place." Liam nodded his head toward Bear. "You're on the football team aren't you?"

"Yeah," Bear's deep voice echoed through the hallway. "But I'm also a friend of Koby's, and he's worried about you."

With a sigh, Liam stepped back and opened the door. Aaron was shocked by the condition of Liam's face. "Did you report this to campus police?" he asked, checking Liam's black eye and split lip, not to mention the bruises to his jaw.

"No, it wouldn't stop them." Liam gingerly sat down on the side of his bed.

Aaron didn't miss the wince of pain as he lowered himself. Kneeling in front of him, Aaron reached out. "Can I see?"

After several seconds, Liam nodded and lifted his shirt.

"Holy fuck, who did this?" Bear growled.

"Your friends and a few that I thought were mine."

Checking out the large black and purple bruises on Liam's torso, Aaron shook his head. "Well you can't stay here. Pack a bag. I'll figure something out." He pulled out his cell phone and gestured toward the hall. "I'm gonna make a quick call while you pack."

As he stepped out the door, he heard Bear's voice talking gently to Liam. Aaron shook his head. Koby had been right, he was a Teddy Bear. He looked at his watch and saw it was a few minutes after ten. Hopefully Demitri would be out of his meeting by now. Taking a chance, he called Alec's office number.

"Professor Demakis," Alec's voice boomed.

"Hey, it's Aaron. Is Demitri still there by chance?"

"Hold on." Aaron heard Alec's muffled voice talking low before the phone clattered and Demitri got on.

"Hi."

"Hey. I'm sorry to bother you but I have a problem and I was hoping you'd help me come up with a solution. I'm at

Liam's dorm and he's been beaten up by some of the jocks in the building. He hasn't given me names yet, but Bear's in talking to him. Anyway, I don't think he should stay here and I'm not sure how it would look if I invited him to stay at my place. Any ideas?"

"Well that depends," Demitri answered.

"On?"

"On whether or not you feel like having me for a houseguest until we can find somewhere else for him to live. He can stay at my place until then."

"Really?" Aaron felt like pinching himself. He really hadn't thought of that particular scenario but it sounded perfect to him. "I'd love for you to stay with me, but are you sure you're ready?"

"No, but the way I feel, I know I'll want to spend a hell of a lot more time with you. I just figure this will save me from driving home every morning to change clothes."

The thought of sleeping with Demitri every night had his cock filling. "Oh shit, that reminds me. I need to run over to the clinic and see if the doc can fit me in today. Maybe I'll drag Liam with me."

"So I can stay?" Demitri asked chuckling.

"You bet that sweet ass of yours. I'll expect you home for dinner around five, if not before." He knew he had a big sappy smile on his face, but he didn't care. "I'll go tell Liam the good news. Too bad you don't have a spare room. I think Bear's gonna be sticking to him like glue."

"Good, it sounds like Liam could use the company, and there's always the couch. It's pretty comfortable."

Off-Season  
*by Carol Lynne*

"Thanks, Dem. I'll see ya later."

"Bye, babe."

\* \* \* \*

Smiling, Demitri hung up the phone.

"So it's like that is it," Alec said putting his feet on his desk.

"Shut up. Liam was beaten up at the dorm. He needs a place to stay and Aaron can't have him at his house, so I offered mine."

"Seems to me that Koby's staying with Julian and he's a coach." Alec grinned.

Demitri growled at his brother, imagining Aaron and Liam living together like Koby and Julian did.

Laughing, Alec stood and wrapped his arms around Demitri. "It's good to see you've gotten back in the game. Aaron's a damn fine looking man, too."

Growling a little louder, Demitri picked up the phone. "I'm calling Max. We'll see what he has to say about you noticing other men."

"Do it and die, baby brother."

"You're so whipped."

"Oh, speaking of, I got an invitation to a really big Halloween party up in the mountains. I thought maybe we could all get together and rent a couple of cabins or something. We could ski, go riding on the snow mobile trails and then attend the party. What do you say?"

Narrowing his eyes, Demitri looked at his brother. "Is this one of those kinky D/s parties?"

Off-Season  
*by Carol Lynne*

Alec looked completely shocked. "No, I would never invite you to one of those. This is more of a kinky-costume party. Come on, it'll be fun. We can make it a long weekend."

"Okay, I'll talk to Aaron, but he and I will share a cabin with Justin and Luc. No way would I survive catching my big brother gettin' busy on the sofa."

"Better than getting caught on the kitchen table," Alec laughed.

## Chapter Seven

After putting his clothes in the spare bedroom, Dimitri started dinner. Aaron had called and said he wouldn't be home by five, so he'd told Dimitri where the spare key was hidden and urged him to go on in and make himself at home. The funny thing was, he already felt at home.

Finding the small indoor grill, he put the hotdogs on to cook while he heated up the chilli. Costumes, he kept thinking about the damn costume he'd have to come up with for the Halloween party. Damn, he hadn't even been to a party in almost nine years. Well, he'd been to backyard barbecues, but a real party, no. He was sure there would be some kinkiness going on. It was Alec's friend after all. Dimitri wondered what Aaron would say about it.

Hearing the front door open, he reached in the fridge and took out a beer as he heard Aaron taking off his winter garb. "I'm in the kitchen," he yelled.

"Be right there, I got my jeans wet trying to dig my way out of a snow drift. I'm gonna slip on some sweats."

Just the thought of Aaron's lean body in something with such easy access, had Dimitri's cock filling. Popping the button on his denims, he stirred the chilli and waited.

It wasn't long before he heard Aaron come into the kitchen. He turned around and leaned against the counter, handing him the beer. "So how'd the tests go?"

Aaron smiled and held out his arm. "Well I feel like a human pin cushion, but it was worth it." His eyes zeroed in on

Demitri's jeans. "I stayed and waited for the results from the HIV test."

Opening his arms, Demitri beckoned him. "What'd you find out?" he asked running his hand across the tented fabric of Aaron's sweats.

"That I'm officially clean. The other blood tests will take a while to come back but I think my cholesterol might be a little high."

Pulling Aaron's sweats below his balls, he kissed him. "If it is we'll have to work on your diet." He moaned as he grabbed Aaron's ass and pulled him tight against his own erection. Closing his lips over Aaron's, he gave the sexy man an erotic tongue lashing. "Want you," he growled, pulling Aaron's shirt over his head.

With his head thrown back, Aaron started laughing just as the smoke detector began to beep. Demitri looked up and saw Aaron reaching for the grill. "Be careful, baby," Demitri instructed. He stepped back so Aaron would have more room to work.

Aaron held up one of the burned hotdogs. "I think we'd better start some new ones and this time, I'll watch them. There's plenty of time after dinner for what I have in mind."

Stepping up behind him, he rubbed his jean covered cock against Aaron's bare ass. "You're mean."

"No, realistic. I know that once I start touching you it may go on for hours and I haven't eaten since last night."

Sighing, he rubbed Aaron's six-pack abdomen. "My poor baby, I completely forgot." His hands pushed upward,

pinching Aaron's nipples as he licked his neck. "I missed you today."

Aaron turned the hotdogs over and rested his head back against Dimitri's chest. "I'll let you take good care of me while we chill out in front of the TV."

Aaron's skin was so soft his mouth began to water at the thought of licking every inch of Aaron. He dropped one hand and circled the exposed, nice-sized cock.

The hotdogs were done and Aaron put them on a platter. Turning off the grill, he thrust into Dimitri's hand. "You're trying to distract me."

"No, I'm trying to make my man feel good," he whispered.

"You're succeeding." Aaron's stomach rumbled and Dimitri laughed and pulled away.

"Let's get you fed."

\* \* \* \*

Fighting to get his breath back, Dimitri held on tight to Aaron. "If we don't put another log on, the fire's going to go out," he panted.

"Let it, I'm not moving," Aaron said curling into Dimitri.

He ran his hand down Aaron's sweaty torso to his spent cock and covered it protectively. "We've been invited to the mountains for Halloween weekend. Alec thought we could rent a couple of cabins."

Aaron thrust against Dimitri's hand. "Sounds like fun."

"Yeah, well you haven't heard all of it yet. There's a costume party Alec wants us to go to, some friend of his has a house up there."

Aaron pulled away and sat up. "What kind of costume?"

"Kinky's what Alec said. We don't have to go if you don't want to." He tugged Aaron back down into his arms.

"Oh I want to go. I love costume parties. It lets me release my inner demons in a fun setting."

*Wait a minute*, Demitri thought. "Are you trying to tell me something, babe?"

Shrugging, Aaron chuckled. "You'll find out."

"No, you need to tell me now, otherwise I'll just worry about it." He framed Aaron's face with his hands and kissed him. "There's nothing you can say that'll make me run away screaming, but I need to be prepared."

Closing his eyes, Aaron's skin turned the prettiest shade of pink. "I'm a bit of an exhibitionist when I get to partying."

"You mean like stripping in front of a room full of people?" Demitri didn't think he'd be able to handle that. Aaron was his dammit.

"No, not stripping, but I'll probably wear something revealing and a little ... well ... kinky."

"I don't think that's such a good idea. Our friends will be there and I'm not crazy about them looking at you like that. I'd hate to knock my own brother's teeth out." Even though he'd said it, the thought of Aaron in a sexy costume had his cock stirring.

"Well, there are two things wrong with that statement. First of all, if I know Alec and Max, they'll be dressed in something even worse, and second, I'm a grown man, and if I want to look sexy for my boyfriend it's my right. Now stop

grumbling and decide what you're going to wear. We only have a week to get costumes in order."

"Do I at least get to approve your costume before you wear it out of the house?"

"Nope, I'll surprise you." Aaron bit Demitri's nipple before laving it with his tongue.

Fuck, how could he fight with a man that knew how to make his body hum like this? He spread his legs as Aaron worked his way down toward his cock. In the last second before all thoughts left him, he decided to worry about the costume when he saw it. He could tell he wasn't going to get anymore information out of Aaron than he already had.

"Oh fuck yeah," he growled as Aaron took his cock down his throat. Yep, he had plenty of time to worry about the party.

\* \* \* \*

Several days later, Aaron was on the internet in his office looking at costumes. He'd found a couple that would work, but nothing really jumped out at him. Seeing something that sparked an idea, he picked up the phone.

"Hello?"

"Julian, it's Aaron, can you come over to my office for a minute?"

"Sure, let me finish up and I'll be over."

Ten minutes later, Julian knocked on his door. "Come on in," he called out.

Walking in Julian shut the door and stood with his hands on his hips. "What's up?"

Looking up from the computer screen he grinned. "Have you and Koby picked out your costumes yet?"

"Who knows? Koby said he wanted to take care of them. I suppose they're going to be matching or something. Why?"

"I'm having a hard time trying to decide which way to go. Demitri doesn't like the idea of me wearing anything sexy, but I've got a couple of ideas and they're all sexy."

"So, wear what you want. I'd imagine most of the people there will be half-dressed."

"I just don't want to do anything to push Demitri away. It's been hard, but I've finally got him closer than I thought possible. I don't wanna jeopardise that."

Coming further into the office, Julian sat down. "Even if the two of you have a fight, so what, it's just a fight for Christ sake. If he's that fragile it'll never last. You have to be true to yourself, man."

"I know, but it's a party, not some major issue we're trying to work out."

"I think it is. Why doesn't he want you to let loose and have some fun? Doesn't he know you're not the type to fuck anyone but him?"

"Our relationship is too new, I think. I haven't proven myself trustworthy yet."

"Well then, this party is the perfect opportunity." Julian stood and started walking toward the door. "I can't tell you what to do, but the sooner you get these issues worked out, the better."

"Julian? I have one more question."

"Yeah?"

Off-Season  
*by Carol Lynne*

"How good are you at applying latex body paint?"

## Chapter Eight

Riding in the backseat, Aaron tapped Koby on the shoulder. "So the other night I asked Demitri what he was going to the party as, and he said he couldn't come up with anything. So then I said, 'Why don't you go as a Grecian urn?' And he says, 'What's a Grecian urn?' to which I replied, 'Oh about ten Euros per hour'."

Aaron and Koby started cracking up and Julian looked at Demitri in the rear view mirror and rolled his eyes. "So what costume did you finally decide on?" Julian asked.

"Well I bought a white bed sheet and some gold cording and that's all the hints you're getting." Demitri smiled and pulled Aaron back into his arms. "I thought about just staying home with Justin and Luc, but Aaron has his heart set on going."

"Tell me again why they aren't going to the party?" Koby asked, turning around in his seat.

"I think it's the whole ick factor of seeing their son parade around half-naked with his lover. Besides, I think they want to have the cabin all to themselves for an evening." His stomach growled loud enough for everyone in the SUV to hear. "Sorry, I guess it must be time for lunch."

Julian chuckled and pointed toward a nearby mountain. "We're almost there and Luc promised to have something ready for us."

Aaron leaned over and licked the side of Demitri's neck before whispering in his ear. "I'd let you eat me for lunch."

"Oh, I plan on doing plenty of *eating* this weekend." He finished off his statement with a quick grope to Aaron's cock.

"Hey you two, enough of that, I'm trying to drive here," Julian said looking at the two of them in the mirror.

Grinning, Koby reached over toward Julian. "Is someone feeling left out?"

Demitri couldn't see what Koby was up to but he watched Julian's eyes go from big to heavy lidded in a matter of seconds. "Keep that thought," he said with a wink.

They wound their way up the mountain toward their little cluster of cabins. Demitri had learned earlier that Justin had also invited Coach Williams, his son Rocco and best friend Joe Pressman, the psychologist who was working with Julian.

When they pulled up to the cabin, he let out a sigh of relief. "I have to admit I was a little worried about how much I'd be expected to rough it this weekend, but this looks great." Demitri looked at the glass and log A frame houses. He would have never called them cabins.

Piling out of the car, Julian and Koby helped them carry their stuff in. "Which one is yours, do you know?" Demitri asked gesturing toward the surrounding cabins.

"Not sure, but Alec was supposed to pick up the keys earlier when they came up with Justin and Luc." Julian chuckled. "Hell, if I know Alec, they've probably already tried out the bedroom."

After stomping the snow off their boots on the covered front porch, they walked inside the warm inviting great room. Demitri looked up at the exposed beam ceiling and the two story stone fireplace. "Wow, this is beautiful." His mind

immediately started thinking. "Maybe I need to build a place like this closer to town," he mumbled to himself.

"Hey, it's about time you guys got here," Max said coming out through a swinging door. He was followed by Alec, Justin and Luc.

"Where's the rest of the gang?" Aaron asked.

"It seems Liam was jumped again last night. He called Bear who took him to the clinic to get checked out. The doctor at the clinic called Joe, stayed to talk to him, but they'll all be up in the morning," Justin said. "None of them planned to go to the party anyway."

"Why didn't someone call me," Aaron roared.

Demitri wrapped his arm around his man and tried to calm him. "Sounds like it all happened pretty fast, babe. Just be thankful he's got a friend like Bear."

"You ain't just whistling Dixie. Bear's the best protector Liam will ever find," Koby said. "And I know from experience."

"Does a lot of this kind of thing go on? I know you had a hard time with that quarterback, but in general, do gay guys often deal with this kind of abuse?" Demitri asked. He was used to New York where anything goes. He was ashamed to say he'd really never dealt with this kind of prejudice.

Koby shrugged and looked over at Max. "The openly gay guys get harassed on occasion, but I think most of them stay in the closet because of it."

"That's terrible." He looked around at his friends. "Isn't there something that can be done?"

"Not really, considering they have to live in the same dorms as the people harassing them."

Rubbing the back of his neck, he sighed. "Do you think it would help if they had a safe place to live while they went to school?"

"Sure, but I don't see the college building a dorm for gays, do you?" Max asked.

"No, but it's given me something to think about." His stomach rumbled again breaking the tension in the room.

"I think that's my queue to get lunch on the table," Luc said, disappearing back into the kitchen.

Everyone started following Luc, but Alec blocked Dimitri's path and narrowed his eyes. "What have you got going through that thick head of yours?"

"Building a place big enough to keep kids safe. Why, you got a problem with that?"

"Dimitri, you're talking about a ton of money." Alec stepped a little closer and bent to whisper in his ear. "I know Grandad left you the same amount he left me and Theron, and although it's a damn good sum, it's not near enough for what you're thinking."

Kissing his brother's cheek, Dimitri smiled. "You don't know everything about me, big brother." He turned and followed the group through the swinging door.

\* \* \* \*

After lunch, Justin suggested everyone go snowmobiling on one of the trails up the side of the mountain. Dimitri was looking forward to it, he'd never been and it sounded like a lot of fun. That was, until he found out that Aaron wouldn't be joining him.

Aaron, Koby and Julian took off to Julian's cabin as soon as lunch was finished. According to Aaron they were going to help him with his costume. Demitri still had no idea what kind of costume Aaron was wearing or why in the hell it would take two other people to help him with it.

He thought about just staying home, but Alec punched him in the arm and told him to stop pouting. Demitri felt incredibly childish when he realised he'd been doing just that. After changing into his new ski pants and snow boots he piled into the SUV with Luc, Justin, Alec and Max. Once again he was the odd man out.

They rented their snowmobiles and Justin gave him a quick lesson on how to handle it. The longer he rode the more fun he had. Before long he was riding as fast as the rest of the group and feeling comfortable doing it.

Coming up over a hill at a high rate of speed, Demitri saw nothing but blue sky. "Oh shit," he screamed and tried to stop the snowmobile. He could tell he wasn't going to be able to stop in time so he made a split second decision and jumped off.

The machine sputtered and died. It slid toward the cliff on its side, finally coming to rest teetering on the edge with its nose in thin air. Demitri crossed his arm over his face and tried to take it all in. He heard other snowmobiles coming at a slower speed.

After topping the rise, they immediately surrounded him and Alec was by his side. "Fuck, you okay?" Alec asked looking from him to the snowmobile.

Was he okay? No, he didn't think he was. "I'm not hurt if that's what you're asking. Just let me lay here for a minute." He closed his eyes and saw himself fly over the edge of the cliff to his death. Instead of being rational and concluding that life was precious, Demitri went the other route. It could have been Aaron. Despite the apparent good health, someone else he loved could be dead right now. Loved? Oh no, no, no. He wasn't about to put himself through that again.

Demitri heard the others trying to get his machine away from the edge, but he didn't help them. Let the damn thing fall off for all he cared. He was too busy trying to figure out what to do about Aaron.

"Come on, let's get you up and home," Alec said tugging Demitri to his feet.

"I don't think I want to ride that thing anymore."

"Yeah, well you don't have much choice. We don't have a spare person to drive it back for you." Alec's hand landed on his shoulder. "We'll go slow this time and stick together." Alec grabbed him and hugged him. "I'm glad you're okay. I nearly had a heart attack when I came over that hill and saw you down."

Reforming the ice around his heart, Demitri pulled away and sat on his snowmobile. He was pleased to see it started because he needed to get the hell out of there, away from his brother's knowing looks. "I'm ready."

Following the group, he made it back to the rental shop. After turning in his machine, he went to sit in the SUV and wait for the others. His thoughts kept returning to Alec having

a heart attack, Aaron sailing over the edge of the cliff, his parents getting old and dying. It was all too much.

When the others piled into the car, he didn't even acknowledge them. What was the point of caring about people? They all died sometime, and he didn't have a damn bit of control to stop it. He thought of Basil and those last few months of his life. The fight had left him and he'd begged Demitri over and over to help him end his misery. He'd refused on every occasion, telling Basil he wouldn't help him die. And at the very end, he realised he'd let his best friend down. No, he didn't deserve another love like that.

Hell, the love he already felt for Aaron was too strong. It was different from the feelings he'd had for Basil, more intimate, more everything. "No more," he said out loud.

"What?" Alec said from beside him.

"Nothing. I'm just talking to myself," he replied before going back into his own safe world.

When they got back to the cabin, he went straight to his bedroom and shed his clothes. Crawling under the covers, he hugged a pillow and sighed. He knew he had some more thinking to do.

## Chapter Nine

Knocking on Demitri's door, Justin waited.

"Go away."

Shaking his head, he opened the door. "Aaron just called and said they were on their way." He looked at his friend buried beneath the comforter. Shit. "Don't you think you should get up and get your costume on?"

"I'm not going to the damn party," Demitri grumbled from under his pillow.

Sighing, Justin walked over and sat on the edge of the bed. "I know you had a pretty good scare earlier, but you need to get up and get dressed, if not for yourself, for Aaron. He's really looking forward to this."

Demitri lifted the pillow and looked at him. "I'm in a really bad mood. How much fun do you think I'd be at a party? Besides, Aaron'll have a better time without me."

Standing, Justin bent over Demitri and looked him in the eye. "What are you doing this for? You've got a good thing going with Aaron. Are you trying to fuck it up?"

Without answering, Demitri covered his head back up.

Justin put his hands on his hips and looked down at his friend. "That's a shame because I heard that Aaron looks damn hot in his costume. Too bad you're going to let him go by himself without you there to make sure no one handles your merchandise."

After a few seconds, Demitri stirred. "Fucking fine, I'll get up and get dressed if that'll get you off my ass."

"Yep, that'll get me off your ass. They'll be here in about ten minutes. I suggest you hurry." He turned and left the room.

Finding the man he was looking for in the kitchen, Justin wrapped his arms around Luc and kissed his neck. "I think we've got a problem."

"Oh really?" Luc asked, reaching behind himself to run a hand down the front of Justin's jeans.

"Not that kind of problem, but keep that thought. No, our problem is Demitri. Remember what he was like when he first came to town after Alec was in the car accident?"

"Yeah," Luc said, turning in his arms.

"Well he's worse. I'm not sure what's going on in his head, but that close call today seems to have unravelled all the good Aaron's done for him."

Luc looked at him for several seconds. "I think we should call Joe. Maybe they'd be willing to come up early, like in a few hours."

"Do it," he finally said, hoping he wouldn't lose a friend over the interference. He gave Luc a kiss and went into the great room to wait for Aaron.

Several minutes later, Aaron walked through the front door. "Is he ready? Alec just told me about the accident he had earlier. Is he okay?"

Justin looked at the smaller man in the gigantic trench coat. He had black spider webs painted on his neck and cheek. "What the hell are you supposed to be?" He just couldn't figure it out.

Off-Season  
*by Carol Lynne*

Aaron smiled and with a flourish, removed the coat. "Oh shit," Justin said taking in the naked man in front of him. Spiders and webs were painted directly onto his skin. Feeling a little pervish, his eyes were drawn to Aaron's groin. A larger, thicker spider web was surrounding his cock with a big, real-looking hairy spider covering his shaft. "How's that thing attached?"

Laughing, he blushed. "Fishing line attached to a cock ring."

"Well you're damn lucky the spider's a big one."

"Thank you," Aaron giggled.

Justin heard a loud growl emanate from across the room and looked over at Demitri. He was dressed as a Greek God complete with short toga and lace up sandals. Sexy, was Justin's first thought until he looked at the man's face.

"Take it off," Demitri ground out, coming to stand in front of Aaron.

Aaron looked at him, confused. "What?"

"Take. It. Off."

"No," Aaron said, his spine visibly stiffening.

Taking a step closer, Demitri towered over Aaron. "I will not have you going to a party naked. Now go back out to the car and tell the guys we're staying in."

"No," Aaron replied, crossing his arms. "I like this costume. I think Julian and Koby did an excellent job and I won't stay home just because you say so."

"Costume? You call a bit of paint and a spider a costume?"

"Well I'm sorry that some other piece-of-shit bought the last Goddamn white sheet." Aaron grabbed up his coat. "I'm going to this party, with or without you."

"Fine, fucking stay there for all I care, I'm through." Demitri turned and stalked back to the bedroom.

Justin looked at Aaron as he fumbled to button his coat. He could see the tense set of his jaw and those beautiful golden eyes fill with tears. "Wait," Justin said, as Aaron walked toward the door. "You have to understand. Something happened to Demitri up on that mountain today. I'm not sure what it was or how to help him, but Luc's in the kitchen talking to Joe right now. We're hoping he, Collin and Rocco can make the trip up tonight."

With his hand on the doorknob, Aaron looked over his shoulder at Justin. "Maybe Dr. Pressman can help him. I've had enough of being bullied in the name of love by ex-boyfriends. I won't take it from Demitri, too." He opened the door and disappeared.

\* \* \* \*

With his 'little boy' sitting safely on his lap, Alec called Luc's cell phone.

"Hello?"

"Hey, it's me. I just wondered how my brother was doing? Better than Aaron I hope."

"I doubt it. He's in the bedroom with Joe, they just got here. Demitri put up a hell of a fight, but Joe's been in there for fifteen minutes and I haven't heard him screaming for his life, yet."

Alec barely silenced his groan of pleasure as his bad boy began wiggling around in his lap. The look he gave Max was one promising discipline when they got back to the cabin. Max licked his lips and smiled.

"What's Aaron doing?" Luc asked.

"Getting drunk, trying like hell to fight off pervs. Julian and Koby are trying to protect him, but Aaron doesn't seem to care. He just keeps drinking and staring off into space. We thought about taking him home but he goes nuts every time we mention it."

"Maybe we'll send Joe over to the party when he finishes up with Demitri. Call me before you all leave and if Aaron's still refusing, we'll figure something out."

"Okay," he replied, hanging up the phone.

Looking at his baby boy dressed in a red and white beanie hat and short pants, Alec was in heaven. "I love you."

"I love you, Babas."

"Thank you, baby. But don't forget, you still have an ass whipping when we get home." He rubbed his large hand across Max's ass.

Wiggling around, Max looked pleased. "I look forward to it." He leaned in and kissed him. "What did dad have to say?"

\* \* \* \*

When Alec was finished telling him about the conversation with his dad, Max looked over at an obviously miserable Aaron. "I'm going to go talk to him." Standing he turned back to Alec. "Are you going to be good while I'm gone?"

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Alec grinned and looked down toward his cock. "I just came. I think I can be good for a couple of minutes." Alec gave his ass a swat as he turned to leave.

Rubbing the delicious burn, he went to talk to Aaron, who was standing in a corner with Julian and Koby in front of him. Although the two were heavily involved in making-out, he knew they wouldn't let anything happen to Aaron. Walking up to the pair he smiled. "Hey, guys, why don't the two of you have a dance while I talk to him."

Breaking their kiss they looked back at Aaron and nodded. Max watched them walk hand in hand toward the dance floor, Julian's bare ass flexing in the cowboy chaps and Koby's long black wig covering the barely-there loin cloth. Before he could get turned back around, a Gladiator was already trying to rub against a drunk Aaron.

Max stepped up and tapped the guy on the shoulder. "Take a hike, fella."

"No fucking way. I've been trying to get close to this sweet thing all night." The guy started to reach for the big spider covering Aaron's cock when a big hand wrapped around the guys wrist. Max didn't even need to look over his shoulder to see that it was Alec.

"Get lost before you lose the arm," Alec growled.

Grumbling obscenities, the loser walked off rubbing his wrist. "Thanks for coming to my rescue, Babas."

Alec gave him a brief but erotic kiss. "I'll stand guard while you talk to him," he whispered against Max's lips.

With a nod, he moved behind Alec to stand beside Aaron. Finishing off his drink, Aaron looked around. "I need another."

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"I think you've had more than enough." When Aaron started to speak, Max held up his hand. "Listen to me." He went on to relay the phone conversation Alec had had with Luc. "You see, it's not you, it's Demitri. There's something he's not sharing with anyone and it's tearing him up inside."

Aaron set his empty glass on the windowsill. "All my life I've been bullied. I don't know if it's because of my size or sexual preference, but I thought Dem was different." Max watched Aaron subconsciously rub the small bump where his nose had obviously been broken.

"He is different," he said, "he's just really confused right now. According to Alec he hasn't seen his brother this happy since he was a teenager. You're good for him. Don't let one fight change that."

"Excuse me," a rough voice said from behind him.

Max looked over his shoulder and saw Demitri staring at Aaron. "Can I have a word with you?" Demitri asked Aaron.

Max was pleased when Aaron nodded. He motioned toward Alec. "I'm gonna make my Babas dance with me." He turned and pointed his finger at Demitri's chest. "You play nice."

## Chapter Ten

Demitri watched Max drag Alec toward the dance floor. He could tell by looking at Aaron that the man he loved was drunk. Taking a step forward he brushed his hand down the side of Aaron's cheek. "Can we go somewhere and talk?"

With tears in his eyes, Aaron slowly nodded. "We can probably use one of the bathrooms."

"All right," he agreed. He'd rather have just taken Aaron back to the cabin, but he could tell his man wasn't going to make this easy for him. That was okay, he deserved it the way he'd acted earlier that evening.

Aaron led him to an empty bathroom at the back of the house just off the service porch. Shutting the door, Demitri made sure it was locked before he began.

After closing the toilet lid he sat down and held out his arms. "I know I have a lot to apologise for, but it would sure be easier if you'd sit with me."

Head down, Aaron finally walked over and sat on his lap but continued to stare at his hands.

Trying his best not to notice the bare ass sitting on his leg, Demitri ran a hand down Aaron's back. "I guess they told you I almost went off a cliff earlier?"

"Yes. Alec told me on the way over to pick you up. He said he didn't want to tell me earlier because he was afraid I'd run to your side and he had the feeling you wanted to be alone."

"I did. I had a lot of thinking to do." He ran a hand through his wayward black curls. "Aaron, I'm really screwed up where

love and death are concerned. I can't seem to get past my feelings surrounding Basil's death. I talked to Joe about it earlier and he got me to admit a few things that I've never said out loud."

When Aaron rested his head on Demitri's chest, he stopped talking. God, he loved this man, and although Joe told him he needed to open up to Aaron, he was afraid. What would Aaron think when he told him what he'd done?

"Talk to me," Aaron whispered.

"Basil was really bad for the last year or so. In the months leading up to his death, he continually begged me to help him end his life. I refused, every time because I wasn't ready for him to die." Tilting Aaron's head up, he looked him in the eyes. "One morning I found him crying. He looked at me like he hated me and told me that I had failed him. That if I'd truly loved him I would have helped end his misery. And I realised in that moment he was right. I was a selfish asshole who didn't deserve to be loved by him or anyone else."

"Don't say that," Aaron replied. "Let me ask you a question. If Basil wanted to die so badly, why didn't he just inject himself?"

"In the beginning he said he couldn't, that it went against his religious beliefs and then later, he didn't have the strength to even lift his arm, let alone fix a syringe and inject himself."

"Excuse me for saying this, but he's the one who sounds like a selfish asshole. How dare he ask you to do something like that? What? It's not okay for him to go to hell for killing himself, but it's acceptable for you? That's bullshit. I've never

dealt with a situation like that so I can't say what I would've done, but no matter what, you did what you could for him."

"I don't want to argue about that. You weren't there, so you can't know what it was like, but he asked me to do it because he thought he could count on me. Anyway, by then Basil could no longer walk. It hurt him if I even touched him, but he asked me one last time to help him." Demitri stopped and pulled a tissue out of the box on the vanity to blow his nose and wipe his eyes.

"Our favourite thing to do together had always been to watch the sunrise over the sea. So I filled a syringe with morphine and picked him up. I could tell it hurt him, but he never protested. Carrying Basil out to the patio, I sat in the lounge chair and cradled him in my arms. He was so small by then. As the sun rose in the sky we both cried knowing it would be our last together. Finally, Basil looked up at me and whispered the word 'Now'. I gave him the shot and held him until his breathing slowed and finally stopped. Once he was gone, I clutched his body close to mine and cried for what felt like hours. Eventually his butler came out to check on us and discovered his employer had died."

Wiping his eyes again, he shook his head. "The strange thing was, no one asked how he'd died. I think they all might have known or at least suspected, but no one mentioned it. It wasn't until they took him out of my arms that I really looked at him for probably the first time in years. He'd always just been Basil, my best friend. But when I saw him laid on the gurney, I saw what the cancer had really done to him. I think it was because for the first time in years, I actually saw a

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peaceful look on his face. It was then that it struck me that he'd been in more pain than I'd ever realised. I could have ended that pain before it ever got to that point, but I was too selfish."

"Stop," Aaron said, covering Demitri's mouth. "I won't listen to you talk bad about yourself anymore." Aaron removed his hand and placed a chaste kiss on Demitri's lips. "You were there for Basil when no one else was. That's truly who you are. And you're forgetting one very important thing. With all the pain the man obviously endured, he died peacefully in your arms. I can't imagine a better way to go."

"But that's just it, don't you see? I don't think I can live through that again. I'm in love with you. Do you even understand what that means to me? I knew Basil for years both before and after he got sick, but I never loved him as much as I already love you. I honestly think it would kill me if something were to happen to you."

"So the alternative is to not love me? You'd actually give up the life that we could have together because I might die? That doesn't make any sense. You have to live for today, with only an eye to the future."

Closing his eyes, he sighed. "I've agreed to see Joe once a week for awhile. Theron will probably have my hide for not going to him, but my family doesn't know anything about Basil."

"What? Why would you keep such a large part of your life from your family? They love you."

Shrugging, he blew out a loud puff of air. "Alec and Theron met Basil one night at a party when we were still in college.

They hated him. He was a rich, conceited prick, but hell, so was I. Alec threatened to beat him up and well, I just didn't want to tell them I was spending all my free time with someone they hated."

"He must have changed because I don't see you caring for someone that much who was a prick."

"Yeah, he changed. I'm not sure if it was the cancer or the fact that suddenly he was without friends. We both did a lot of self discovery in the first year or so."

"So tell Alec what you've been through."

"There's something else that no one in my family knows." He leaned in for a kiss. This one was longer than the last, more truthful, more everything. "Basil left a large portion of his estate to me. The money's just sitting in a bank account and the house is basically empty except for the housekeeper and butler who're married. I made sure before I left that they would continue to draw their weekly wages even though I told them I probably wouldn't be back. Basil left money for them too, but the island is their home and someone should enjoy it."

"Island?"

"It's small, but yes. I own a Greek Island that I'm too scared to even enjoy."

"Maybe someday."

"Maybe," he replied. With a shake to his head, he hugged Aaron. "Will you let me take you back to the cabin now?"

"Yes."

Standing, Demitri carried Aaron toward the door. "Uh ... I think I'm sober enough to walk on my own."

"I know, but I like carrying you like this." He winked down at Aaron.

"Well I enjoy it, too, but my bare ass is plenty exposed in this position."

Demitri stopped and looked down at Aaron. "Shit, I forgot." He set Aaron back onto his feet. "You stay here and I'll go get your coat."

Slapping his arm, Aaron chuckled. "Don't be ridiculous," Aaron said, trying to adjust the spider attached to his cock ring.

He was pleased to see that the spider wasn't sitting in the same position it had earlier. Seemed he wasn't the only one looking forward to getting home.

Aaron kept trying to adjust the spider but nothing he did helped. With an exasperated sigh he threw up his hands. "I guess you will need to get my coat."

"Good. While I'm gone, take that damn spider off. It looks like it wants to eat your stomach." Aaron laughed and waved him out the door.

\* \* \* \*

Cutting the engine, Demitri looked at their cabin. He could see that the lights were still on and wondered who was still up. Looking at his watch he saw it was after midnight. Turning to Aaron he shrugged. "I guess we're not going to be able to sneak in."

"Guess not," he answered opening his door. "Come on, the quicker we say our goodnights, the quicker we can get naked."

"You mean I can get naked and you can get peeled."

"Ooh, I never really thought of that part. Cool."

With the drifted snow up to his knees even on the shovelled walkway, Demitri picked Aaron up. "I know you can walk, but you've got bare legs. Just indulge me."

"Gladly, I was freezing my ass off," Aaron laughed.

Slipping a hand down to squeeze the firm globe of one cheek, he shook his head. "Nope, still there." He walked up the porch steps and let Aaron down.

Opening the door he was surprised to see Rocco and Joe facing each other from opposite ends of the couch. They appeared to be in a pretty serious discussion when they were interrupted by Demitri clearing his throat. "Sorry," he said. "Everyone else already down for the night?"

"Yes," Joe replied. "It was too late to stop and get the key to our cabin so we're bunking down here for the night." He gestured to the two pallets on the floor. "Collin's up on the couch in the loft," he whispered pointing to the small reading nook overhead.

Standing, Joe walked over to him. "Is everything okay?"

Pulling Aaron into his arms, he nodded. "We're working on it."

"Good, that's all either of you can ask."

"Well, we're going to bed. We'll see you all in the morning," Demitri said as he led Aaron toward the bedroom. Walking toward Rocco he was once again struck by the sheer perfection of the man. Demitri couldn't help but notice the look of sadness and defeat on Rocco's face. He gave him a smile as he passed. Maybe Joe was treating Rocco as well?

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From the look of it, the boy, man, whatever, was clearly depressed.

Deciding to worry about his own problems, he passed the bathroom and led Aaron into their bedroom. Locking the door, he pulled off his clothes in seconds. "Now, tell me how to peel this stuff off of you?"

\* \* \* \*

Goddamn, he was hard. Demitri seemed to enjoy torturing him for some reason. Every time Demitri pulled off a strip of the latex, he laved the area with his tongue. Evidently his groin was being saved for last because Demitri had worked his way around it without even giving him a courtesy suck. He was flipped to his stomach as Demitri started on his back.

When he began pulling away the large painted area of his butt, he groaned. "Please tell me you painted this on yourself?"

Chuckling, he spread his thighs so Demitri could get all of it. "I did the web around my cock, but Julian did my ass. Don't worry though, Koby kept a very close eye on him."

His butt received a slap before it was licked and nibbled. "From now on, I'll paint you if that's what you want. Of course I probably wouldn't be able to do this good a job, but at least I'd know who had touched you." Demitri finished the statement by running his tongue up the crack of his ass.

Shit that felt good. Scooting his knees under him, he gave Demitri more room to work in hopes of ending his torture. He groaned as Demitri took the bait and slid his hot tongue over Aaron's hole. "Yes," he sighed.

Balancing on his shoulder, he reached back and opened himself even further with a hand upon each cheek. Demitri attacked his hole with nips and laves and fingers. "Fuck me," Aaron cried.

"Not yet," Demitri said pulling back. "Turn over. I've saved the best for last."

Rolling to his back he spread his legs and presented himself for Demitri's inspection. The webbing around his cock was much thicker and he couldn't wait to see Demitri's face when he peeled it away. His cock was painted, too, leaving a small hole for him to pee out of.

As Demitri started peeling he gasped. "You shaved?"

"Yeah, I didn't like the thought of putting the paint over my pubes. You like it?"

"Mmm hmm," Demitri moaned as he licked Aaron's nude groin.

Feeling his cock swell even more as a finger thrust deep inside his ass, Aaron decided to finish the rest himself. He pulled away the latex at the base of his cock and in one fluid motion pulled it up and off. He looked at the hollow black latex cock in his hand. "Damn, that's neat."

"Save that one," Demitri mumbled as he went to work on Aaron's cock.

Reaching over, Aaron put the latex cock on the table and dug into the drawer for the tube of lube he'd slipped in there when they first arrived. Demitri's mouth felt so fucking fantastic wrapped around his cock, he knew he'd blow any second. Grabbing a handful of black curls he tried to slow him down. "Wait, I don't want to come until you're inside."

With one last kiss to his cock, Demitri looked up and reached for the lube. "Gonna fill you so full, babe."

"Yes," he said as his lover began slicking and stretching his hole. "Now," he panted.

Tossing the tube, Aaron watched as Demitri ran a hand over his own engorged cock and positioned himself at his entrance. Pushing the head of his cock past the ring of muscles Demitri stopped. Aaron looked from where they were joined to Demitri's face.

Smiling, Demitri leaned down and kissed him. "I love you," he said as he buried himself to the root.

"Oh fuck," he cried as his body stretched to accommodate Demitri's large size. "So good," he mumbled as his lover started a slow rhythm. Aaron could swear he felt every ridge and vein of Demitri's shaft as it filled him.

Reaching down he stroked himself to Demitri's rhythm, picking up speed when his lover did.

"You feel like ... home," Demitri whispered.

Aaron noticed the tears in Demitri's eyes and pulled his head down for a kiss. "I love you, and you are home," he gasped as he came.

"Oh, love," Demitri growled as he stiffened in Aaron's arms, burying himself deep.

Collapsing, Demitri kissed him again. "Thank you for forgiving me."

Licking the sweat off the side of Demitri's face, he nodded. "Just don't ever try to strong-arm me again."

"I won't, I promise, and if I do, you have my permission to kick my ass."

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"Hmm, I'm not really sure that I could, but I bet I could get Bear to pay you a little visit."

## Chapter Eleven

Sitting down to a big breakfast the next morning, Dimitri felt better than he had in years. "Where's the rest of the gang?" He asked noticing Julian, Koby, Alec and Max missing.

"Max called earlier, he said they were sleeping in, but they'd meet us on the slopes later," Luc said, passing the big platter of buttermilk biscuits to him.

Dimitri took three and passed it on as he split his biscuits in half, preparing them for the sausage gravy which he then poured over the top. He looked up at Rocco. "You ski?"

"No," he said quietly. "I'll probably just sit in the lodge while you guys do your thing."

"Nonsense," Collin grumbled. "You can go up the mountain with me and Joe. If you're going to stay around here, it's time you learned."

Rocco looked down at his plate. Dimitri watched as his jaw tensed and he squeezed his eyes shut. "Let him alone. If he decides to try once we get up there, great, if not, no harm done." Joe added, narrowing his eyes the slightest bit.

"It's okay," Rocco said, still in his soft voice. "Dad's right, I'm going to have to start trying new things if I'm going to fit in up here."

"Maybe you'd better take some lessons first, before you try to follow me and your dad up the mountain. The instructors will help you learn the basics, and then if you want to try you can come up with us."

"Thanks."

Demitri watched Rocco pick at his food a little longer before excusing himself. "I'm gonna clean up before we leave."

Collin nodded and he left the kitchen. When he was gone, Collin turned toward Joe. "I know its part of your job to coddle people, but please don't do it with him. He's a good boy, but he's gonna have to toughen up if he's going to make it in this world."

Joe put his silverware down and turned toward Collin. "It's not my job to coddle people. My job is to help them. And please tell me why Rocco needs to toughen up. He's not an athlete, he never will be. What he is, is brilliant. Have you even taken the time to look at the photographs he's taken of his pottery? Or the amazing graphic art he's created on the computer? Your problem is that you want a son who's just like you. Well, wake up call, friend. Your son is spectacular at a number of things but athletics is not one of them."

Demitri could tell Collin was about to blow his lid. He quickly shovelled in the last of his breakfast and wiped his mouth. He could tell everyone else at the table had the same idea. "I'm gonna follow Rocco's lead and get ready to go." He stood and looked down at Aaron. "You about done?"

"Yep," Aaron replied, standing up. "Thanks for breakfast, Luc."

"No problem," Luc said carrying dirty dishes to the sink.

It was Justin who finally spoke up. "Why don't you two hotheads take your discussion out to the back deck and cool off."

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*by Carol Lynne*

Collin pushed his chair back from the table. "Naw, I'm done. I'm going to go get the key to our cabin." He looked over at Joe. "I should be back to get the two of you in an hour or so."

"Fine," Joe said.

"Fine." Collin turned and walked out the door.

After he left, Joe looked at everyone still in the room. "Sorry about that. Seems Collin and I don't see eye to eye when it comes to Rocco."

"That's an understatement," Justin said, grinning.

\* \* \* \*

By the time they got back to the cabin that evening, everyone was tired and a little sore. "Damn, I'm getting old," Luc said unlocking the door.

"You're not the only one," Demitri replied. "I've got bruises on top of bruises."

"Well what do you old men say about just having sandwiches for dinner? I don't think any of us feel like cooking." Aaron said, stopping to give Demitri a kiss on the way to the kitchen.

"Sounds good. I'll help you." Luc followed Aaron through the swinging door.

Making his way over to the couch, Demitri sat down and stretched out as Justin plopped down in one of the chairs. "I'm either gonna have to take a nap or go to bed before seven."

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"I'm with you. Let's talk the guys into a quick snooze after we eat and then we can wake up later and play some cards or something." Justin yawned and closed his eyes.

"Yeah, after we eat," Demitri's voice drifted off as he fell asleep to Justin's light snore.

\* \* \* \*

Sticking his head into the great room to ask the guys what they wanted to drink, Aaron smiled. He turned around and looked over at Luc. "They're both sound asleep. Should we wake them?"

"No, let them sleep. I'll just wrap up their sandwiches for them."

As Luc got out some plastic wrap he'd found in the cupboard, Aaron dug in the fridge. He retrieved a small container of pasta salad along with some onion dip and set them on the table. Picking up the big bag of chips, he grabbed two beers and sat down.

When Luc joined him and passed him a plate with two sandwiches, he grinned. "You must think you're feeding Justin or Demitri. No way can I eat two of those damn things." Heck, the darn things were about three inches thick with meat, cheese and lettuce.

"Oh, yeah I guess I'm used to making a lot of food. You can wrap the other one up and save it for later."

"Sounds good," he took a bite of his sandwich and opened the bag of chips.

"Are things going okay between you and Demitri? I mean, you both acted fine today, but the way things went last night, I wasn't sure."

Eating a chip piled high with dip, he nodded. "We're good. We've got a few things to work out, but who doesn't. I think it'll help if he starts talking to Joe once a week."

"It should. I think he's done wonders for Julian. Sometimes as men, we think asking for help with a problem makes us less Alpha. I think it makes us human."

After swallowing a bite of his sandwich, he took a drink of his beer and looked at Luc. "Can I ask you something?"

"Sure."

"You and Justin have been together for several years now, is it still as good as it seems between the two of you?"

"Do you mean ... sexually?"

"I mean everything. I've never had a relationship that I felt held real promise, until now. I guess I was just looking for some kind of reassurance that two strong men can be happy in a long-term partnership."

"Well, I think a lot of it depends on the two men involved, but it can happen. It takes work, compromises, hell, I guess it's like any other marriage."

Aaron nodded, feeling better. "Thanks. I'm relieved to know I'm not dreaming of the impossible."

Luc stood with his plate in his hand. "Nothing's impossible if you want it badly enough."

"Good, because I do."

\* \* \* \*

Freshly sated, Aaron kissed Demitri's chest. "After we figure out what to do with Liam, would you consider moving in with me permanently?"

Demitri didn't say anything for a few minutes and Aaron could tell he was trying to work things out in his mind. "That's okay. You don't have to give me an answer right now."

"No, it's not that. I want to, I really do, but I think it would be best if I had a few more sessions with Joe before I make such a big commitment."

"Okay," he whispered against Demitri's skin. He understood where Demitri was coming from, but it still hurt.

"Hey," Demitri said, pulling him up to eye level. "I love you."

"I know," he said.

"And if what I've got planned goes through, Liam will be staying at my apartment through at least next semester. I'm only asking for a few more weeks to be sure. I just don't want to say yes and then disappoint you."

"What have you got planned to help Liam?" He asked, snuggling back down against Demitri's chest.

"Something that will hopefully change NCIU forever." Demitri went on to tell Aaron of his plans. Listening earnestly, Aaron ran his fingers over the ridges and dips of Demitri's torso.

When he was finished, Aaron ran the tip of his tongue around Demitri's nipple. "I think it sounds wonderful, you're wonderful."

"I thought I'd talk to everyone else before we leave here. Maybe at lunch, just before we head out."

Off-Season  
*by Carol Lynne*

Even though a part of his brain heard what Demitri said, his body was taking control, fast. He climbed on top of the big solid man and began caressing Demitri's body with his tongue.

Spreading his legs, Demitri moaned. "You're so good to me."

Laving his way around the heavy sac between Demitri's thighs he nodded. "For as long as you'll let me."

\* \* \* \*

Because the dining table wasn't big enough to accommodate eleven people, they decided to do lunch buffet-style and sit in the great room. Demitri filled his plate and wandered in to sit next to Alec on the couch, leaving enough room for Aaron. He didn't have to worry about Max because he always seemed at home sitting on the floor between Alec's legs. Theirs was an odd arrangement, but it seemed to work well for them.

Once everyone had filled their plates and found somewhere to sit, Demitri took a drink of his lemonade and cleared his throat. "I wanted to talk to you guys about the problems on campus."

One by one the faces in the room looked up at him. He looked over at Alec knowing this would all come as a shock to him, but it was time. "I want to buy or build someplace close to campus for the gay students to live."

Alec closed his eyes and shook his head. "It'll not only cost you a fortune, but there'll be no guarantees that the kids will

be safe once they leave the house. You can't police the entire campus."

"No, but I can put pressure on the University Board of Directors to better enforce the zero tolerance policy they have. I think most of the security officers think it's a suggestion rather than a policy. Maybe the threat of a law suit will get the Board's attention. Because it's not just about the gay kids, this kind of bullying probably goes on with the disabled students as well. I'm going to strongly suggest they hire a friend of mine from NYU to help train the security officer's and other campus officials in discrimination. Charlie Salinger runs their Diversity tolerance program, and I think I could convince him to take on this new challenge." Demitri crossed his fingers. "And with any luck, he'll agree to live and oversee the new dormitory housing that I have in mind."

"And who's gonna pay this man?" Alec asked.

Wow, this was the hard part. He rubbed his hands together, suddenly feeling extremely nervous. Aaron's hand landed on his thigh, his man obviously picking up on his feelings. Taking a deep breath he looked out at the room and not his brother. "Well, the University would pay him for his campus duties and the foundation I'm going to set up will pay his wages for the dorm. You see, I had a friend..." he went on to tell his friends the basics of the past eight years and how he'd inherited enough money to do damn near anything he wanted.

As soon as he finished, Alec stood up and walked outside. Demitri started to go after his brother, but a hand to his shoulder stopped him.

"Let me talk to him, please?" Aaron begged.

He wasn't sure what Aaron could say that would make a difference, but he looked into those caring gold eyes and nodded. Aaron kissed him before grabbing his coat off the hook and stepping out onto the porch.

\* \* \* \*

As soon as the door closed behind him, Alec spoke. "If you've come out here to defend him, you're wasting your time."

"Nope," he said, going to lean on the railing next to Alec. "I just came out to tell you that I had a lot of the same feelings you're probably having right now."

"Really," Alec said sarcastically.

"Yeah, really. I'm sure you could tell that Dem left a lot of stuff out of that little speech he just gave. I also think you need to know some of the rest of it. Like the fact that I think Basil was a selfish prick who took advantage of Dem's loyalty and big heart."

Alec finally turned toward him. "Basil was a prick, the biggest ass I probably ever met. Demitri worshiped that fucker and the one night I was around him, all Basil did was put my brother down, not to his face of course. Basil it seemed, wanted me. Why he thought he'd ever get me by telling me my brother meant nothing to him, I have no clue. I actually remember him telling me that everyone needed a lapdog that'd fetch anything they asked." Alec scrubbed his hands over his face.

"Then to find out that Demitri had missed almost every holiday with his family to take care of a guy like that? I don't think I even know him anymore. To think that we missed him so much when he was off playing the ultimate lapdog for Basil kills me."

"Now, you stop right there," Aaron shouted. "I agree that Basil was an asshole, but the love and care Dem showed him is a testament to his big heart. I will not have you question that. He truly believes he did the right thing by taking care of a man that had been abandoned by everyone else."

"Basil was abandoned because he didn't know the true meaning of friendship. He treated everyone around him like they were beneath him. You can't form real friendships like that."

"Yeah, you're right. I won't pretend to know Basil or if he changed over those eight years, but I know one thing. For Demitri, that friendship was real. Isn't that what really matters? Doesn't that tell you how good a person Dem is? Would you be willing to put your entire life on hold for eight years for a friend?" He shook his head and turned around, facing the cabin. He knew Demitri was in there probably kicking himself right now.

"There's one other thing I think you should know. I think it's the thing that's really screwed with Dem's head." Aaron told Alec about Basil asking for help in dying and the final outcome. When he finished he put his hand on Alec's arm. "Don't think about Basil in the big picture. Think of your brother. You can hate Basil forever if you need to, hell, I plan to. But I'll never tell Dem that. I think in time, he'll work

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things out and he'll see for himself that Basil asked him to do the unthinkable. Right now though, he's trying his damndest to get on with his life and if he wants to use Basil's money to help other people, great. Let the bastard redeem himself by doing something good for other people for a change."

Alec looked at him for several moments before nodding. "You're an incredible man, my brother's very lucky to have found you."

"I'm the lucky one. I'm deeply in love and proud of it."

## Chapter Twelve

"So how's the teaching going?" Joe asked after one of their weekly sessions.

"Good, and only teaching a couple classes a week has left me with plenty of time to get the new building underway. Thanks for approaching Tony Bianchi for us. We were so grateful when he stepped up to donate the lot. It'll be nice for the guys to be safe *and* only two blocks from campus."

"Tony's a great guy. We went to college together. I think the whole town was surprised when he moved back a couple years ago to open his software company. He always seemed like a city person."

"Yeah, well I used to be a city person, now look at me. I'm building my dream house, in love, and building BK House. Life can't get any better." Demitri looked at the snow outside the window. He couldn't believe it was January.

He heard a knock on the door and realised his time was up. "Sorry, you get me talking about the new dorm and you can't shut me up. I'll get out of your hair and see you at the poker game on Saturday."

"Make sure to bring plenty of money," Joe joked.

"Yeah, but it's not like you're going to go home with any of it," Demitri laughed as he walked out.

Getting into his SUV he looked at the slushy streets and wondered how long until spring. He missed the green grass. They'd been lucky enough that there had been two weeks of pretty dry weather in mid-November to pour the concrete for

the new building and the cabin. The weather still hampered the workers, but both projects were slowly making progress. He'd had Charlie down from New York to look over the town and discuss the program. Well, not really look over the town, since the man was blind, but get the feel for it. He'd navigated his way around campus and from BK House, and then he walked to the bus stop to gauge how easy it was to get around on the public transportation system. Charlie had been excited, like Demitri had known he'd be. His friend had always lived for the next challenge in his life, never liking what came easy.

Demitri decided to drive passed the building on his way home. He was pleased to see the windows finally in. Now the workmen could really get started on the inside. Their goal was to have the house ready for the fall semester. They'd already put word out and flyers up advertising BK House. Hopefully, come fall they'd have enough residents to break even on the monthly utility and grocery bills.

It had been Aaron's suggestion that they incorporate a big kitchen into the design. He thought it would feel more like a real home that way and if the students wanted, they could team up and cook their own meals instead of having to go to the cafeteria on campus. When finished the house would have twelve rooms. Ten of which would accommodate two people per room but the two wheelchair accessible rooms on the main floor would be singles. A small apartment had also been carved out on the bottom floor for Charlie.

Arriving at the house he walked in to a wonderful smell. That was his Aaron. He always made sure dinner was waiting

for him after one of his sessions with Joe. He wasn't sure how much longer he'd need weekly appointments though. Things were getting easier all the time, and although he'd made the decision to name the new dorm BK House, after Basil, he was starting to see things a little more clearly.

"I'm in the kitchen," Aaron called.

Smiling, he took off his coat and boots and went into the kitchen. He gave Aaron a hug and kiss. "Something smells good."

"It's fried chicken and mashed potatoes." Aaron gave Demitri another kiss before turning back to the counter.

"The windows are up on BK," Demitri said, opening the fridge for a beer.

"That's good." Aaron said without turning around. "Liam called earlier and wanted to know if he could keep the apartment until it's ready. He's decided to stay here over the summer and take more classes."

"Yeah, if you talk to him again, tell him its fine. The cabin should be done within the next couple of months." He sat at the table and took a drink.

"So you went by the cabin, too?"

"No, I didn't feel like driving out there, but Clark dropped off the keys earlier. The doors are finally in place so they can start bringing in the more expensive materials."

"That's nice," Aaron mumbled stirring the gravy.

When the last of the food was set on the table, Aaron finally sat down. Demitri couldn't tell what was wrong, but it was obvious something was bothering him. "You okay?" he finally asked.

"Sure. I'm just tired. I always feel like this by this time of year, stir crazy I guess. I miss the soccer field and the sun," Aaron replied as he put small helpings of food on his plate.

Filling his own plate, Demitri wondered how Aaron managed to stay alive on the amount of food he ate. He still got the feeling something was wrong, but maybe it was just the weather like Aaron had said.

"Hey, would you like to go see a movie after dinner?" Demitri asked trying to perk Aaron up.

Aaron took another small bite of chicken and looked up at him. "No thanks. I've got some work I need to do in my office before I leave in the morning."

"What?" He set his fork down, "Where are you going in the morning?"

Aaron rolled his eyes. "I told you last week that I was flying to Indiana to talk to that player that lives just a couple of towns over from where I grew up. Remember, he wrote me the letter and sent those tapes of his games? We were sitting on the couch when we discussed it."

"No you didn't," Demitri growled.

"Yes I did. You were probably just too busy with the contractors to pay attention." He waved his hand in the air. "Anyway, I'll be back on Saturday in plenty of time to make the poker game."

He looked down at his plate, trying to remember a conversation about Aaron going somewhere. He vaguely remembered Aaron telling him about the letter from the guy who'd heard about BK and thought it would be a good fit for

him, but he sure as hell didn't remember Aaron saying he was going to meet the guy.

Aaron stood and carried his plate to the sink. Demitri watched as he rinsed it and put it in the dishwasher before tackling the pots and pans. He could tell Aaron was pissed by his stiff posture, but he was starting to get a headache and he honestly didn't feel like arguing. Deciding they could talk later in bed, he finished his dinner thinking about the paperwork he needed to file with the college.

Charlie had sent him a proposal for a new Compliance program and he'd agreed to take it to the Board. He just hoped they went along with it.

Finishing up his dinner, he took the plate to the sink where Aaron took it out of his hand. "Thanks for dinner," he said, giving Aaron a kiss on the cheek. He went back to clear the table when Aaron stopped him.

"I'll take care of cleaning up. Why don't you go watch TV or something?"

With a shrug, Demitri got another beer out of the fridge. "I'll clean the kitchen next time," he said walking out of the kitchen. He knew he should have insisted on helping, but it was one of those situations where he was damned if he did and damned if he didn't.

He walked into the living room and picked up his briefcase, retrieving the proposal. Maybe he'd just call Charlie and go over everything again in case the Board had questions when he dropped it off. Perhaps by then Aaron would be approachable enough to talk to him.

\* \* \* \*

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Waking to an empty bed the next morning, Demitri covered his face with the pillow and screamed. He'd tried his best to stay awake while Aaron continued to work in his home office behind a closed door, but at some point he fell asleep. He didn't even remember waking when Aaron had come to bed.

Demitri looked at the clock and new by the quiet house that Aaron was already gone. "Shit," he shouted. He reached over and picked up the phone.

Aaron's cell phone rang three times before he picked up. "Hello?"

"Hey, why didn't you say goodbye before you left?" Demitri swung his legs over the side of the bed.

"I didn't see any need to wake you. I already had my suitcase packed, so I just left you a note on the table."

Demitri ran his fingers through his curls. "What's going on? And don't tell me nothing when I know there's something."

He heard Aaron sigh. "I've just been trying my best to give you the space you seem to need right now. It's hard, ya know, but I've been doing it. Look, they're calling my flight, I'll call you later."

The phone cut off and Demitri was left open-mouthed. "What the hell?"

## Chapter Thirteen

Demitri pulled his ringing cell phone out of his coat pocket hoping like hell it was Aaron. He'd tried calling him the previous evening but his phone had been turned off. Now, looking at the caller ID he saw it was Tony Bianchi. He answered, trying to keep the disappointment out of his voice. "Hi, Tony."

"Hi. I was wondering if you'd have time to show me around the dorm this afternoon. I've been talking to my vice-President and we've come up with a couple ideas to put on the table."

Always eager for more funding for his pet project, Demitri smiled. "I'm headed that way now. Do you have time to meet me?"

"Uh, sure. Let me talk to my secretary about rearranging my schedule a bit and I should be over within the hour."

"Sounds good, see ya then." Demitri hung up and dialled Aaron's number.

"Hello?"

"Hey, babe."

"Hi. Sorry I didn't get a chance to call you back last night. I didn't get back to my hotel until pretty late."

"Hotel? I figured you'd be staying with your folks."

"Um ... no. Not this trip."

Demitri could tell there was something going on with Aaron. Why wouldn't he stay with his parents? They'd just been to Indiana over Thanksgiving and everything seemed

fine between them. Deciding not to get into it over the phone, he tried to change the subject. "How's it going with the kid?"

"Well, he's not a kid exactly. Sam's almost twenty-one. If things work out he'll be transferring as a junior."

"Oh," Dimitri said, suddenly feeling like a lead weight had landed on his stomach. Is Sam the reason Aaron had been so distant lately? Fuck, is he the reason Aaron got a hotel room in the first place?

"Dimitri?"

"Yeah, I'm here."

"A little something's come up and I won't be able to fly out until later in the day on Saturday. I should still be there in time to catch a couple games of poker though."

Pulling up to the job site, he turned off the engine and put his head on the steering wheel. "Does this something that came up have anything to do with Sam?"

"Well yeah, actually it does."

Dimitri heard someone calling Aaron's name in the background. Feeling like he was about to either break down or start yelling, Dimitri decided to wait until Aaron got home to deal with this latest development. "Look, you sound busy. I'll just see you at Alec's."

He hung up the phone and tossed it onto the dashboard. "Fuck." Dimitri didn't know how long he sat there, but a knock on the driver's side window startled him. He looked over to see Tony's smiling face.

Quickly trying to get himself into a schmoozing frame of mind, Dimitri opened the door. "Hey."

"You okay?" Tony asked, following him to the building.

"Oh, yeah, I'm fine. I was just trying to process some information I received." Stepping inside the building he motioned toward the large room in front of them. Although some of the sheetrock had been installed, the majority of the walls were still studs and electrical wires. "This is the gathering room. We'll have a big screen TV and couches and stuff. I thought about putting some game tables in but then figured the guys could just use the dining room for that."

"Impressive, it's a nice size space," Tony said looking around the room.

"Thanks," he motioned to two rooms off the gathering room. "Over here will be the laundry room and computer room."

Tony walked into the computer room and looked around. "How many computers are you looking to fit in here?"

"Well, we hope to have around twenty-two students living here, so we thought four computer stations would be enough."

"Hmmm, okay," Tony nodded. "Where to next?"

Demitri showed Tony the rest of the main floor. "We'll have two handicap equipped rooms down here along with the house director's apartment." He led him back through the gathering room and into another room. "We decided to make the dining hall accommodate thirty. That way if students have visitors or their parents are in town they can eat with the rest of the group."

He kept walking into the next room. "And this will be our kitchen."

"Wow, great space," Tony remarked.

"Thanks. This room was Aaron's idea. We wanted to make sure it was big enough to accommodate the expansion we're hoping to have a need for someday. There's plenty of room behind the building to add on another wing of rooms so the kitchen needed to be big enough for that we wouldn't have to update that too.

Tony smiled, "You've thought of everything. Can I move in too?" Tony jokingly asked.

"As long as you're a registered student we'd love to have you," Demitri teased back.

"I like you," Tony said. "The reason I wanted to meet with you is because my company Bianchi Bytes would like to donate some computers to BK House."

"Anything your company would be willing to do would be appreciated."

"We were thinking about donating a computer for each dorm room and after seeing your computer room, I'd like to add four more for that."

Bursting with pride, Demitri was happy that someone else seemed to believe in BK House as much as he did. He reached for and shook Tony's hand. "That's so generous of you and your company. The less we have to spend on items like that, the more we can spend on our scholarship program. Speaking of which, would you be interested in serving on the board for BK? Your business experience would come in handy. I've set up a foundation. We have a small Board made up of a few faculty members, Dr. Pressman, Charlie, Aaron and of course me. We'll meet once a month to go over issues that

come up both in the house and on campus. We also plan to award scholarships."

"I'd love to serve on the Board. This house, well it's a cause pretty close to my heart. I went to school here as you know, and I didn't dare come out of the closet. College is supposed to be a time of freedom to explore who you are, but I never felt comfortable doing that. I'm glad there's going to be a program set up on campus to deal with the issues of discrimination, and I'm happy the students will have a place like this," Tony said, spreading his arms wide.

Demitri didn't know why he should be surprised that Tony was gay, but he was.

"If it's okay, I'd like to send some of my crew in to wire the house for internet access. I also wanted to volunteer a couple of hours at the beginning of the school year for those residents that need computer help. I know most kids today grew up with them, but I've found there are still a few who barely manage to get by."

"I'd like that and so would the students. Feel free to visit BK House whenever you'd like."

"And by the way, so you know, I'm not planning on coming here to troll for fresh college men. I'm in a relationship already that's working out wonderfully."

"The thought never crossed my mind," Demitri said.

After showing Tony the upstairs layout, he walked him back down to his car. "Thanks again for all your support."

"You should be proud, and I'm happy that I'm able to help."

Demitri watched Tony get into his luxury car and drive off. Stuck with going home to an empty house, he decided to call Joe, one of his only single friends. He climbed into his SUV and retrieved his phone from off the dash where he'd thrown it earlier.

"Hello?"

"Hey, feel like grabbing some dinner with me?"

"Sure, you going to pick me up or should I meet you somewhere?"

"Well, I'm over by the college, where are you?"

"I'm on the other side of town at my office. Why don't I just meet you somewhere in the middle."

"How about McGilley's?"

"McGilley's it is. I'll be there in fifteen minutes."

"See ya then." Demitri hung up and drove toward the pub. He wondered if it would be right to talk to Joe about his concerns regarding Aaron.

The music was lively as he stepped into the Irish pub. Motioning toward a booth in the back well away from the trio playing instruments on the tiny stage, the waitress nodded. He'd been coming to this little pub since he'd first moved to town and most of the waitresses knew him by name.

Jenny came over and Demitri smiled. "Hi, Miss Jenny, how're you doing this evening?"

"Not bad, the crowd's not at capacity yet so I consider myself lucky. What can I get you?"

"Two of the biggest, frostiest glasses you have filled with Michelob."

"Is Aaron joining you?"

"No, he's out of town recruiting. Joe Pressman's meeting me."

"Well speak of the devil," Jenny said as Joe weaved his way toward them. "I'll bring those drinks right out."

Joe took a seat and picked up the menu. "I already ordered you a beer. I hope I wasn't being too presumptuous."

"Not at all, beer sounds great." Joe looked at the menu a few more seconds and put it aside. "I don't know why I always look at that. I get the same darn thing every time I come in here."

Jenny appeared with their tall glasses of beer and set them on the table. Taking out her order pad she looked at Demitri. "You want the usual?"

"Yep," he answered, winking.

"And what can I get for you?"

"I'll have the steak and baked potato. Have them cook the steak medium-rare."

"You got it."

After Jenny walked off, Joe took a drink of his beer and looked at Demitri. "Can I talk to you about something?"

Chuckling, he nodded. "Only if I can talk to you about something."

"Two old sorry-asses aren't we?"

"Something like that, and since you're so used to listening to my problems, I'll let you go first." Demitri took another drink of his beer and waited for Joe to begin.

"I need your advice on something. Rocco told me he wants to live in BK when it's finished."

"Okay, he's in."

"Well, the hard part is telling Collin."

"Let me get this straight, if you'll excuse the pun. Collin doesn't know Rocco's gay? Is he blind? I knew before I even talked to him for the first time."

"Well Collin lives in a world of his own making at times. He seems to think Rocco acts like he does because he hasn't been around any real men for most of his life."

"And Rocco's afraid to tell him?"

"You bet. Rocco isn't comfortable with confrontation of any kind, especially with his father. He tends to withdraw into some secret place in his head and it takes hours of talking to bring him back."

"It seems to me that every time I see him the least bit happy he's talking to you. As a matter of fact, I'd say he's got himself a crush."

Finishing off his beer, Joe signalled for two more. "It's not a crush. I think it's the real deal."

"What are you saying?"

Joe started to speak but stopped when Jenny came with their food and fresh drinks. After making sure everything was cooked properly, she left. Joe pretended to be engrossed in his baked potato for a few more minutes before continuing. "I think I'm in love with my best friend's son."

"Oh fuck," Demitri said, almost choking on his piece of corned beef. "And Rocco?"

"He says he feels the same. We've had these feelings for each other for a while." Joe held up his hand. "I haven't done anything sexual with him. Well, except he did kiss me the

night at the cabin. But I told him we couldn't until I figured some things out."

"Like how to keep Collin from killing you?"

"Yeah, something like that. I can't explain it to you because I don't understand it myself. Hell, I'm damn near old enough to be his father, but no matter how many times I tell myself its wrong I can't get him out of my head."

"At least he's eighteen, so you wouldn't be breaking any laws." Demitri tried to think of something to say to comfort his friend. "I'm sorry, man. I don't know how to help you. I believe you love him and I personally don't see anything wrong with it, but I'm not his dad."

"I'm afraid it's going to come down to sacrificing one relationship to have the other." Joe said, pushing his half-eaten steak away. He ran his fingers through his thick brown hair and sighed. Finally he looked at Demitri. "So I've told you my problems, let's hear yours."

"Shit, Joe. Compared to you, I don't think I have much of a problem."

"Just tell me. It'll help get my mind off things."

"Something's going on with Aaron. I don't know what it is or what I've done, but he's been pulling away from me for the last month or so. We got in an argument the other night because he mentioned he was flying out to do recruiting the next day and I didn't remember him telling me about the trip at all. He was pissed off, and said that he'd talked to me about it the week before." Demitri looked into Joe's eyes. "I honestly don't remember the conversation. Aaron said it was because I had my mind on BK House and just didn't pay

attention. Hell, he could be right. I should've never started two construction projects at once. I feel like I've been spreading myself pretty thin."

"Did you try to tell Aaron that?"

"No, that's the thing. I thought I'd talk to him that night when we went to bed, but I fell asleep and he was gone in the morning. I couldn't figure out how I hadn't awoken when he came to bed, but then I found a pile of blankets on the couch. Since then, I've tried calling him and when I finally got the chance to talk to him, he sounded distracted. Then he springs on me the kid I thought he went to recruit isn't a kid but a twenty-one year old named Sam. And even though this Sam only lives about twenty miles from Aaron's parent's house, he's staying in a damned hotel."

"So that made you jealous." Joe surmised.

"Hell yes I'm jealous. I can barely get him to talk to me and I found out he's spending time with a twenty-one year old gay soccer player. You bet your life the green-eyed monster's paying me a visit."

"When's he coming home?"

"Sometime tomorrow. He told me something had come up and he had to change his flight plans. Aaron said he'd meet me at the poker game."

"Ouch," Joe said.

"Yeah, ouch," he said taking a drink of beer.

"Unfortunately, the only thing you can do is wait until he gets back into town and talk to him. Then, if the two of you would like to talk to me together, I'd be more than happy to be the buffer between you."

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"Thanks. I'll keep that in mind, but I hope we don't need it."

## Chapter Fourteen

"Shit, I fold," Alec said, throwing his cards on the table. He got up and went into the kitchen.

Demitri, who'd already dropped out of the game, followed him. "Hey," he said watching Alec get another round of beers out of the fridge.

Looking over his shoulder, Alec stood and passed him a bottle.

"Are you still mad at me?" Demitri asked when Alec didn't say anything.

"I honestly don't know." Alec sat down at the table.

Taking a seat across from his brother, Demitri opened his beer. "Working with Joe's been good for me. I just want you to know, that although I've realised there was still some of the same old Basil left in him when he died, he had changed. We both had. There were a lot of reasons why he was like he was and I think he saw himself from the outside looking in when he got sick." He took a drink. "Aaron told me that you know what I did at the end. I still don't know whether I did the right thing, but I can't undo it. I can't undo any of it. I just need you to know that I thought I was doing the right thing for the entire eight years."

"Stop," Alec said, reaching out to take his hand. "The thing that's bothered me the most was that you kept it a secret from me. We used to be so close. I was pissed that you lied to me every time you flew to Greece, but Max and I've been talking and I realised it was jealousy. Basil got you for eight

years and I missed you like hell during that time. But he's gone and I have you back and to waste that time being bitter isn't going to do either of us any good."

Demitri stood and opened his arms. "Can I have a hug?"

Grinning, Alec stood and stepped into his hug. "I love you."

"Thank you," he said. They were still hugging when his cell phone rang. Knowing it had to be Aaron he didn't want to answer it.

"Better get that," Alec said, stepping back.

"It's probably Aaron telling me he's staying in Indiana longer. If he were coming, he'd have already gotten here."

With an understanding squeeze to his shoulder, Alec picked up the bottles from the table and headed back to the game. "Answer the damn phone," he said as he disappeared.

Although his phone had stopped ringing, Demitri took it out of his pocket and looked at the display. Taking a deep breath, he called Aaron.

"I'm glad you called back," Aaron said, sounding nervous.

"What's wrong, did you decide to stay in Indiana?" he asked, unable to keep the contempt out of his voice.

"Nope, I decided to come home and call you. I can't face the guys tonight. Can you leave the game early? I need to talk to you."

*No, no, no*, he screamed in his head. He did not want to have the conversation he could feel coming. Deciding to take the chicken's way out he sighed. "I'm right in the middle of a game, I'll be home later."

"Please, Dem. I need to talk to someone," Aaron said.

So now he was just someone to talk to, huh? Well too fucking bad. He'd tried to talk to Aaron for the past couple of days and his lover hadn't had time for him.

"Later," he growled and hung up. Deliberately turning his phone off, he finished his beer and grabbed another before going back to the dining room.

Alec looked up when he walked in. "You spoke with Aaron?"

"Yep."

"He coming over?" Alec asked.

"Nope."

Everyone stopped playing and looked at him. "Well? Are you going to tell us what the hell's going on?" Alec asked. His face telling Demitri he was worried.

"He said he wanted me to come home because he needed someone to talk to. Someone, not me, not his lover or partner, just someone."

Joe threw his cards in the middle of the table and leaned toward him. "That should tell you something."

"Huh?" Demitri looked at Joe like he was the crazy one. "Yeah, it tells me that he's going to break up with me."

"No it doesn't. If he was going to do that he wouldn't have said someone. I think whatever's bothering him is a personal problem. Not the two of you as a couple, just him."

He thought about what Joe said, dissecting the conversations he'd had with Aaron over the past couple of days. "You mean you think his problem doesn't have anything to do with me?"

"That's exactly what I think."

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"Fuck, and I was a grade A asshole to him on the phone." Without picking up his chips, he left the house.

\* \* \* \*

It was dark and quiet when he entered. He'd beat himself up on the drive over and knew he deserved everything Aaron threw his way. What an ass he'd been. Not just earlier, but for the last couple of weeks at least. Aaron was his partner and he should've noticed that something was going on with him.

"Aaron," he called.

After several seconds, he heard a strangled, "Back here."

Taking off his coat and boots, Demitri walked toward the bedroom. He opened the door and saw the silhouette of Aaron sitting on the side of the bed. "Why are you in the dark, babe?"

He started to turn on the light when Aaron stopped him. "Don't, leave it off."

Deciding to do what he was asked, Demitri crossed the room and sat next to Aaron. "I'm sorry," he said. "I know I was acting like a jerk. I thought..." He stopped, unwilling to voice his concerns.

"What? What did you think?"

"It's not important."

"It is to me," Aaron said in a whisper.

"I thought you were having an affair and you wanted me to come home so you could break it off with me."

"No!" Aaron shifted and wrapped his arms around Demitri's neck. "I'd never do that to you."

"Then what? What's been going on lately? Not just since you took your trip, but before that. I can't seem to please you anymore."

"A lot of things have been going on. When you first started BK, I felt ignored. You didn't seem to have time for me anymore. Then you bought the land for your cabin and started building your dream house. I tried to be patient. To give you the space you needed to make up your mind about moving in with me, but when you bought that land ... well, that pretty much gave me my answer."

"Stop right there. You think I don't want to be with you?" He stood and pulled Aaron off the bed. "Don't say another word. I've something to show you." He drug Aaron toward the front door and handed him his coat.

"What? Where are we going?"

"Shhh, no more questions. You'll see when we get there." He put his own coat and boots back on and led Aaron to his SUV.

Pulling up to the cabin, he felt Aaron's questioning eyes. "Wait," he said. Unlocking the front door he flipped on the light and marched Aaron over to the fireplace. He turned Aaron to face him and finally noticed the big black eye marring the otherwise flawless skin. "Goddammit, who did this to you?"

Aaron winced and pulled away from his touch. "Don't, its sore. And that's what I wanted to talk to you about."

"Tell me who hit you, Aaron," he ground out, feeling his composure slipping.

"My dad. We got in a fight earlier."

"Your dad?" That didn't make sense. Aaron's dad seemed to be the typical mild-mannered farmer.

Aaron blew out a sigh. "I'd better start at the beginning."

"Yeah, I think you'd better," he said, wrapping Aaron up in his arms.

"The letter I received from Sam shook me. I didn't know why at the time, but I've come to realise it was because I recognised the name somewhere in my subconscious. I'd heard it before, whispered between my folks during several arguments."

Aaron stopped and Demitri held him a little tighter, giving him the strength to continue.

"Anyway, after I got the letter, I knew I had to go see this guy. Turn's out he's my half-brother."

"What?"

"Dad had an affair years ago with a lady at the feed store. She got pregnant and Dad was forced to confess to Mom what he'd done. They decided to work things out between them, and I guess he had regular visits with Sam. I was eleven when he was born. My folks decided it would be best if I never knew anything about him."

Aaron stopped and ran his fingertips over the bruise surrounding his eye. "I went to confront Dad earlier this morning. I wasn't angry because he had another son, but that he'd kept me away from my brother for twenty-one years. I always hated being an only child, and to find out I had a brother two towns over? Well let's just say that I took my frustrations out on my Dad's nose as soon as he finally

admitted what he'd done. I can't blame him for punching me back."

"So did you work things out with him before you left?"

"Kind of. It'll take a while, but at least all the secrets are out on the table."

Demitri tilted Aaron's face up and kissed him. "I'm so sorry I wasn't there for you."

Aaron shook his head. "I didn't let you be there for me. I was sulking because you didn't want to live with me and you were spending all your time on outside stuff."

Sliding his tongue across Aaron's lower lip, Demitri moaned. "I want you in my life, always and forever. I thought you already knew that. I thought I made it clear over Christmas when I took you back to New York with me to introduce you to my parents. I guess I need to learn to tell you exactly how I feel instead of just assuming you already know."

Aaron pushed Demitri's coat off his shoulders and went to work on his shirt buttons. "Make love to me," he asked, looking into Demitri's eyes.

"First things first. Turn around. I want to show you something."

Aaron gave him a funny look and turned around. Demitri smiled, "What names are carved into that mantel?"

Following the grooves with his finger, Aaron sighed. "Demitri and Aaron," he whispered.

Turning him back around, Demitri gave him another kiss, this one longer and deeper. "This is our house. I thought you understood that when I talked about having it built. It's far

Off-Season  
*by Carol Lynne*

enough out of town that we don't have to live here full-time, but I thought it would be nice to come up on the weekends during off-season."

"And Sunday's during the season," Aaron piped up smiling.

Demitri looked around the small A frame cabin. It was essentially one big room except a bathroom and laundry room off the side. The bedroom was located in the overhead loft that opened onto the great room. It was just the right size for a weekend retreat. He could easily see him and Aaron coming up here until they both got too old and senile to drive.

Looking down at Aaron, Demitri was overwhelmed by the love he saw on Aaron's face. He took off Aaron's coat and spread it out on the bare floor with his own. Demitri quickly undressed and Aaron did the same.

Both naked, they knelt facing each other. "No more secrets. If you need something from me that I'm not giving, I expect you to tell me. I know I've been preoccupied and I'm sorry. You come first, and you always will."

"Shhh, enough talking," Aaron said as he pulled him down.

The resulting kiss lit a firestorm between them. Suddenly, Demitri couldn't get close enough. Aaron must have felt the same because he spread his legs so Demitri could settle between them. His hard cock rubbing against Aaron's was almost his undoing. Spitting into his hand, he reached down and ran his fingers over Aaron's hole. "God, it's been so long."

"Too long," Aaron moaned.

He continued to stretch Aaron until he thought he'd go crazy. Breaking contact, he knelt back on his heels and applied more spit in the absence of lube. "Let me help you

out," Aaron crooned as he sat up enough to engulf Demitri's cock in his mouth.

"Oh shit", the feel of Aaron's tongue circling his cock caused his body to jerk. "Okay, I won't last if you keep that up."

Aaron pulled off and stretched back out. Bringing his knees to his chest, he looked up. "Love me."

Positioning his now wet cock at Aaron's hole he slowly rocked in to the root. "Uhhh," he grunted, feeling Aaron's body close around him. After taking several calming breaths he started to move. His lover's body seemed to suck at his cock every time he withdrew, silently begging for more.

Demitri smiled, knowing he had even more to give. Picking up his pace he watched Aaron's face contort in delight as he ran his stiff cock over his prostate.

"Yes," Aaron screamed to the vaulted ceiling. Reaching between them, Aaron gripped himself and started stroking.

Rising to his knees, Demitri used his strength to hold Aaron's lower body off the floor as he thrust harder and faster. Aaron looked like he was lost in passion, his mouth continued to open but nothing intelligible came out.

This is what he'd needed, to see Aaron in this state of utter rapture. He watched as the veins in Aaron's neck popped out in stark relief as he grunted with his release. Demitri looked from the beautiful face to Aaron's spurting cock.

Demitri smacked his lips at the site of his lover's seed. Smiling, Aaron lifted his cum covered hand to Demitri's open mouth. Running his tongue across Aaron's palm and fingers he groaned at the taste.

"So sexy," Aaron whispered.

The taste of Aaron's desire tipped Demitri over the edge and with one final thrust his cock erupted. "Aaron," he howled as he came. His climax seemed to go on and on as Aaron tightened his muscles around Demitri's pulsing cock. With the last of his release came the last of his strength and he collapsed to the side of Aaron, unaware he was lying on the bare floor.

Aaron must have noticed though because he was pulled into his arms and his shirt placed over his back. "I'd love to stay here all night in your arms but its damn cold in here," Aaron chuckled.

"Give me some time just to hold you. I'm still hot anyway so I can help warm you up," he replied kissing Aaron again. "I love you."

"I love you, too."

Demitri ran his hands over Aaron's chest. "I hope you never get tired of dealing with my shit and leave."

"Can't happen, my name's on the fireplace," Aaron winked.

## About the Author

An avid reader for years, one day Carol Lynne decided to write her own brand of erotic romance. Carol juggles between being a full-time mother and a full-time writer. These days, you can usually find Carol either cleaning jelly out of the carpet or nestled in her favourite chair writing steamy love scenes.

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